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Jung's Science in *Answer to Job* and the Hindu Matrix of Form

No single work of Jung's – or indeed of analytic psychology – has inspired more controversy among scientist and theologian alike than *Answer to Job*. Since the text is unusually devoid of proper nouns and terminology – aside from cabalistic and Biblical references from Genesis to Apocalypse – the reader must be relatively steeped in the Jungian canon to properly situate the writer's thought. Over its rambling course, the purpose of that complex essay emerges as an attempt to differentiate what is real from what exists (“Matter is an hypothesis”). This abstract distinction is epitomized and dramatized through the profoundly perplexing encounter of creature and Creator, and through other momentous pairs of opposites drawn from Eastern and Western creation mythologies. In the Prefatory Note for *Answer to Job*, Jung cryptically volunteers that the inspiration for the book derived from the “problems of Christ as a symbolic figure . . . represented in the traditional zodiacal symbolism of the two fishes”. Such images, we are told in a well known formulation, “clearly relate to a few basic principles or archetypes” of which the deep structure is “unknowable as such.” As the essay progresses, the formulation of this iconology becomes sharper:

Religion means precisely the function which links us back to the eternal myth . . . myth is not fiction: it consists of facts that are continually repeated. The fact that the life of Christ is largely myth does absolutely nothing to disprove its factual truth – quite the contrary. I would even go so far as to say that the mythical character of a life is just what expresses its universal human validity. It is a *symbolum*, a bringing together of heterogeneous natures.¹

Despite this emerging clarity, the enigmatic allusion to the icons of Christological myth becomes a motif that both accounts for the philosophical fuzziness (e.g., the ontological status of the nonphysical) with which Jung is still occasionally charged and yet – for those conversant with Jung, as Hans Shaer implied long ago – enriches our understanding of the

functioning of contentious yet basic terms in the lexicon of analytic psychology. What some see as a loss of skeptical scientific rigor is actually an attempted return to a para- or pre-mechanistic theological attitude of mind. At the same time, as the Jung/Freud correspondence makes clear, Jung's polyvalence corresponds roughly to the shift of attention in twentieth-century mathematics from ratios and proportions to functions, which has had many important consequences in other fields. In the study of maxima and minima functions, for instance, it is customary to substitute unusual and unique trial values for one variable at a time, and to watch the result in the values taken on by the other variables and by the whole function in consequence. Sometimes the result is an indeterminate or nonsensical expression, and sometimes it is a transformation into another class of functions whose unsuspected relation to the original class is thus discovered. The mathematical result is a clarification and definition of the properties of the ideas involved. The physical universe is increasingly viewed as an organism of organisms, or at least as an organic mechanism in which biological function and mathematical function are comparable. Accordingly, in *Job* and elsewhere Jung propounds psychological analogies with the biosphere in order to countervail against an exclusive and dogmatic determinism in physics – held over from the waning nineteenth century – that was applied uncritically to fields in the humanities and social sciences. The fallacy, as Jung perceived and demythologized it, is simple: take any formula, find a similar form or plastic material, select a suitable analogy, condense the analogy to a metaphor, take the metaphor literally, and you have a scientific philosophy. The solar system was thus derived from conic sections, and Bohr's atom from the solar system. Thus did the analogy of the world to an organic mechanism enter psychology as *Gestalten* or forms devouring the faculties of the soul, the complexes of the psyche, and the reflexes of the nervous system. Thus did the marxist theory of history originate in both mechanics and Christian theology.

Most recently, *Job* has become the center of renewed attention by Mary Wolff-Salin in *No Other Light: Points of Convergence in Psychology and Spirituality*.² Concentrating largely on the Apocalypse, Wolff-Salin's underlying thesis is acceptable enough: "In order to respond to this book, one has to understand it." The point is well taken that "He is writing psychology based on empirical experience"; we will see that the observation places Jung squarely within the tradition of philosophical rationalism (but with an important qualification), which from Plato to Kant had insisted that all knowledge be constructed after the pattern of geometry. The essence of the qualification is the fact that since the advent of non-Euclidean geometry, mathematical geometry has been reduced to analytic truth, whereas synthetic geometry has been surrendered to empiricism; Jung's implicit commentary in *Job* on this dualism has important implications for the psychology of geometric form. Yet

Wolff-Salin's search for clues to the core of Jung's cryptic theory about the law of opposites tends to discuss the exceptional opaqueness of Jung's allusions seriatim without finding a unifying image, metaphor or idea. The ambivalent nature of Yahweh – transcendent yet immanent, wholly prior to yet fulfilled through creation – which emerges in the concept of Sophia/Wisdom is left in shadow, merely juxtaposed to the mysterious pact of Virgin and Son without illuminating it. Jung's sense of urgency ("There must be some dire necessity responsible for the anamnesis of Sophia") is more observed than explicated. And the possible Eastern mythological derivation of such a Creator is queried yet left unresolved and isolated.

As *Job* unfolds, it is apparent that Jung's essay is really about the subjugation of the Old Adam to the "pairs of opposites" and the anamnesis (re-membrance) of the New. From its prefiguration in Daniel to its sanctioned prophecy in the Apocalypse, the most arresting symbolic representation of this coexistence is Christ of the Apocalypse seated in the almond-shaped womb (*mandorla*) of the universe – the form of Pisces – attended by the four mythical beasts of the zodiac quadrants in the measuring wheel of time (p. 383). In the *mandorla* of the virginal womb, *Christos* opens the door of light, through contemplation of the humble or invisible world, as the passage beyond form to a new perception of being. Pisces is the end of the signs of the zodiac and thus of the domination of the spirit by the stars; the coming of the Christian era coincides approximately with the entry of the sun into Pisces in the equinoctial precession, as derived from the philosophy of Babylonian mathematical speculation. Pisces thus represents both fulfillment and dissolution, and therefore as the Christian sign it marks the dissolution of the spirit's subjection to elemental forces. Although the *mandorla* was found by nineteenth-century art history to be the standard measuring unit of Gothic architectural sculpture, and from Augustine through Dante symbolizes the incarnation of Christ triumphant (Paradiso 26: 2), Jung uses it as a polymorphous icon precisely to undermine dogmatic formulations by discussing its separable features in concert with earlier symbology of Eastern derivation: "Hence the unmistakable analogies between certain Indian and Christian ideas" (p. 441; cf. p. 437). In unrelated contexts throughout the eighteen volumes of his collected works, he comments on its universal return, for instance, in the establishment by Jacob of the mythical city of Luz, the forerunner of Beth-El; in the calling of Jeremiah where Yahweh puns on the etymological affinities in Hebrew between "perception" and "rebirth"; in the annunciation to the virginal Nana – the daughter of Cybele and mother of the dying and reviving Eastern deity Attys, who conceived by placing an almond in her bosom; and so on.

While the substance and conventions of the argument appear to be drawn primarily from Judeo-Christian symbolism and related iconography, then, they are complemented at key junctures by both reference to

traditional mathematical speculation and complex mythic references from Hindu philosophy and art that best exemplify the symbolic role of the pantocrator pictured in the last sentence of *Job*, “whose form has no knowable boundaries, who encompasses him on all sides, fathomless as the abysses of the earth and vast as the sky.” The mathematical and mythical components of Jung’s thought are so complicated yet so basic to the paradoxes illustrated by *Job* – which James Joyce labeled as the “mythametical” dimensions of modern art – that they should be winnowed for separate commentary.

The recurrent and familiar aphorism in philosophy that summarizes this feature of Jung’s thought says that reality is a sphere having an infinite radius and a center at every point. Jung’s particular formulation takes in the projective fields made by Bruno and Leibnitz as well as some of the dark remarks of Einstein about the shape of the universe. Far from being nonsensical, its principal of order can be stated. The infinite sphere in mathematics denotes a series of spheres each of which represents a stage of discovery. A set of assumptions is laid down and developed by deductive and intuitive methods into a system. The system so generated is a finite sphere. As soon as it is sufficiently developed, there is discovered an underlying set of assumptions within a larger system than the former as its consequence. When this is developed, it is a sphere including the former as one of its dependent parts. Modern multidimensional geometry thus includes Euclidean geometry. This latter sphere is in turn a subdivision of a still more inclusive sphere, and the expansive process apparently never ends. Modern comparative literature shows similarly ordered sets of allegories. The microcosm of the individual mind is similar to the cultural macrocosm, and the corresponding series of spheres is an intellectual biography, a mind in the making. The infinity of spheres is suggestive of the Pythagorean numbering system with its densities, compactness and continuities. Paradoxes of counting are solved by correlating the members of one series with those of another. Jung implies that we can bring a similar analogical calculus to bear on the series of mathematical and mythical spheres. Alan Watts has commented perceptively on Jung’s analogical syntheses in coordinating scientific and spiritual absolutes, with the restricting caveat that religious and any other experience of inspiration and enthusiasm can be expressed only analogically.³

Let us now reconsider the arabesque, mythic dimensions in the concluding sentence of *Job*, with its convoluted image of an enlightened person possessed (in both senses of the term) of the ever-evolving, involuted One “whose form has no knowable boundaries, who encompasses him on all sides”. Jung’s intentionally troubling language corresponds to the notion in Vedanta that reality is not an empirical datum, since separation of experience into facts is fundamentally a convention of language and thought. To assert that reality has no knowable boundaries

does not mean that it is boundlessly large but rather that it is indefinable, and that differentiated things are created by the world-and-thought of the Logos, which is "no-thing." Through his omnibus study of Eastern religious philosophy and of the culture of Southwestern American Indians, Jung the polymath was struck by an engaging coincidence: in Sanskrit "being" and "becoming" stem from the same word (*bhu*); Uto-Aztec and Athabascan Indian languages of New Mexico and Arizona contain verbs but no nouns, so that the world can be described only as process.

The most essential of the mythic images drawn from the Subcontinent is the matrix of all worldly shapes which informs *Job* as "the pneumatic nature of Sophia as well as her world-building Maya character". Jung thus hypostatizes Sophia and Maya as the *prima materia* which was the original Womb of Creation. This seems to capture the sense of the Office of St. Mary: in the time before time was, "a new thing is done in both natures"; the two natures are the divine All of "that which was" (Logos) and the Void of "that which was not" (Sophia). Before his Incarnation as the "only-begotten Son," Jesus was simply the Word and Wisdom of God. Hence, in a typical Jungian formulation of thought, *Job* opens with an image that epitomizes the Christian mystery and closes with an allusion to one of the most daunting notions in Indian thought (cf. 10: 237; 11: 963).

The concept of Maya was introduced to European critical discourse in the first great wave of Indophilia by Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie* (1810), which, according to Jung's account to Freud one century later, absolutely "fired" him. Maya is the symbolic manifestation of the Hindu trinity of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and Shiva the destroyer. She is the universal Mother, the world in its natural "appearance" of delusion. Engendered as *prima materia* by the breath of God, her epiphany as the universal bodily reflection of divine thought is present in the syllable OM and symbolically represented in the *mandorla* shape of the hands in prayerful attitude (cf. pp. 391, 401).⁴ This is the same shape in which God the Son (not as Jesus but as Sophia/Wisdom) is pictured in icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church, enthroned in the midst of concentric lines; the superimposed amygdalate shapes symbolize the intersection and interpenetration of heaven and earth, and the perpetual sacrifice that regenerates creative force through the dual streams of ascent and descent. In the sixteenth century Bruno's *De monade numero et figura* represented androgyny by two interlocking circles – the marriage of heaven and earth – whose common *mandorla* section is "the space in which two are one".

Both the issue and wife of Brahma, Maya and her unimaginable consort compose an androgynous couple, since Maya reconciles all pairs of opposites, one pole balanced against another through the ceaseless interplay of existence. A mindbender to conceptualize, Maya is the very warp and woof of the cosmic veil which conceals the origin and passing of

our life's dream (p. 394). She is conventionally yet variously embodied in the mythological images of world tree, almond, cosmic egg and lotus. Her epiphany in such world forms coincides with and arises from the Sacred Union (*hieros gamos*) which weds the primal forces of heaven (circle) and earth (square) to produce as a compromise form the vulva-matrix in which (to return to the example at hand) Christ is bodied forth in the tympanum of cathedrals from Istanbul to Northern France (cf. p. 421). Throughout the nineteenth century Maya's praises were sung as the supreme anima and Femme Fatale, and the etymology of her name was dissected by writers and philosophers whom Jung either admired or assaulted: Michelet, Quinet, Heine, Schopenhauer, Leconte de Lisle, Laforgue, Rilke and Joyce. This is to say nothing of the volumes of dreamwork analysis where the art therapy of patients returns time and again and with stunning uniformity to the same thesaurus of mythic prototypes.⁵ As a result of this insight, the projected figure of Maya allows Jung to penetrate the parina of mythologized sex in the numbing succession, on the cusp of this century, of Femme Fatale types; he thus unveils the sexualized mythology at the heart of creation myths the world over.

Maya originates from the Sanskrit roots *ma*, *matr'* meaning "to measure," and hence is etymologically related to the words *mother*, *matter*, *matrix* and *meter* (Maitri Upanishad 6.6). She is no-thing which, once divided and measured, creates the appearance of the world's multiple forms and the delusion that there is anything but the imperishable One. As Jung put it – paraphrasing the Svetasvatara Upanishad – the wedding of *Atman* (Soul) with *Purusha* (form of self) in *Maya* "gives reality the glint of illusion" (10: 463; 12: 9). It is the gap between ultimate knowledge and our finitude that *Maya* measures, and the breadth of mythic expression inspired by the antinomy of the One and the many far exceeds a translation of *Maya* as mere "illusion". In fact, for Jung *Maya* embodies the dilemma of speaking of archetypes, which by definition exist only as potentialities. Since *Maya* is the sense of difference in the created world, all discourse on transcendental entities is a "measuring out" of our distance from the absolute. The procedure of measuring is the discourse itself, and any process occurring within the frame of *Maya* language becomes discourse about the structure of *Maya* and about the "appearance" of the transcendent. The difference between speech and silence, then, is the analogical measure of the difference between *Brahman* troubled by human distinctions and *Brahman* without limitations.

The Judeo-Christian equivalent to the hierogamy of Brahma and *Maya* is of course the first verse of Genesis, and thus the *Enuma Elish* in which the god-hero Marduk divides with his double-edged sword the "footless" (= unmeasured, fathomless) water serpent Chaos-Tiamat, creating the Primal Mother by dismembering chaos into separate, measured things (cf. pp. 397, 447, 462). She is the abyssal void by which the art and power of the Logos,

God's "rude breathing" moving over and against the oceanic deep, causes multiplicity to appear (p. 388); from the initiating imagery of the two fishes through the various reflections on the oceanic abyss of *prima materia*, this etiological imagery guides Jung's ruminations through *Job*. Until her creation through apparent division, she is the uncreated female aspect of Godhead; this is the reference point in Jung's otherwise puzzling pronouncement in "The Psychology of Eastern Meditation" that "the Indian likes to turn back into the maternal depths of Nature" (11: 579). As the progenitor and dissolver of opposites, *Maya* is the mysterious energy behind the image of the world tree and *axis mundi* of existence, whose hidden and immortal root is *Brahma*.

As an Indophile, it was entirely natural that Jung be attracted to the dramatic manifestations of *Maya* as they bear on and lead to therapeutic healing, as in the reconciled opposites and Fire Serpentine of Kundalini Yoga (16: 336). But through decades of intellectual and spiritual cohabitation with this "measure of the immeasurable", the notion of *Maya* broadened in his comparative studies so as to (a) imbue his reflections from Alchemy to Zen and (b) become a shorthand system of metonymic reference which, once again, makes his intellectual style maddeningly abstruse when allusions go unrecognized or brilliantly auroral when they are caught. In "Eastern and Western Thinking" Jung himself anticipated the charge of enigmatic logic and challenged the hegemony of narrow empiricism and philosophizing by Cartesian coordinates. There he drew on the mythic paradigm of the hierogamy of Idea incarnate in Matter: "Matter is an hypothesis. When you say 'matter', you are really creating a symbol for something unknown, which may just as well be 'spirit' or anything else; it may even be God." And he goes on to complete the traditional Eastern trichotomy by defining "mind" as "the matrix of all those patterns that give apperception its peculiar character", most dramatically through mythological motifs such as the reconciliation of pairs of opposites and especially the veil of *Maya*.

To be sure, Jung's occasional lyrical abandon (India is "a multicolored veil of *Maya*", 10: 516) opens him to being viewed as neo-Romantic – a judgment that he eagerly abetted in rambling expatiations on "the weaving and rending of the veil as the ageless melody of India – this contradiction fascinates me" (11: 579). Despite his *élan*, the *pars pro toto* of *veil* for the entire complex of Hindu thought and iconology allows the image a wide field of reference and at the same time is compatible with both Judeo-Christian and Hindu myth. Moses, for instance, was forced to *veil* his eyes and thus *re-veal* the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* at the resplendent source of all forms (Exodus 34: 29–35). Comparably, the cosmic mystery of *Maya* has three powers. The first is that of obscuring brahman; the second, that of projecting the world-illusion; and the third, that of revealing brahman through the illusion. As both image and idea, then –

image of idea – the veil of Maya serves Jung in an important capacity for the discussion and exemplification of the symbolic operation of the psyche. It bespeaks the separation and link – the Sun Door *par excellence* – between progression and regression, the contingent and transcendent, between the emergence to consciousness in the human macrocosm and the projection of this psychic rebirth into cosmogonic myths of worldwide distribution: “once again the solidity and tangibility of matter, so fervently believed in and so convincing to the senses, dissolves into Maya, into an emanation of primordial thought and will” (18: 464; cf. 8: 38). Correspondingly, in substantiating such abstractions, Maya’s veil is the reflex, shorthand term at the core of Jung’s explications of such common mythologems as the grail-like Sophia/Wisdom of his treatises on alchemy or (via Leo Frobenius) the slain and reborn water dragon (8: 180).

With its subsections of “Christ, a Symbol of the Self” and “The Ambivalence of the Fish Symbol,” the Aion volume offers the fullest demonstration of the “mana” in or around the anima archetype, and of the connection between narrative detail and the power of projected mythic attributes, as they pertain to *Answer to Job*. The overture to Part III (“The Syzygy: Anima and Animus”) – “What, then, is this projection-making factor? The East calls it the ‘Spinning Woman’ – Maya, who creates illusion by her dancing” – would approximate nonsense if we fail to recognize it as an abbreviated coding of concepts that are surgically elaborated elsewhere for their therapeutic component: “Interposed between the ego and the world, she (the anima archetype) acts like an ever-changing Shakti, who weaves the veil of Maya and dances the illusion of existence. But functioning between the ego and the unconscious, the anima becomes the matrix of all divine and semi-divine figures, from the pagan goddess to the Virgin” (16: 295).

The duality at play here between anima and figuration, threat and boon, ancient and modern, reflects Jung’s deep interest in the endemic spread of the Femme Fatale in art and literature throughout *fin de siècle* Europe. She was often modeled on the All-Mother Cybele – as in Marcel Lenoir’s painting “Le Monstre” or Flaubert’s tale of the veiled dancer named Salomé – who nourishes her offsprings before eating them back into the womb of the earth. “She” is both the Holy Virgin holding the strand of cosmic unity with passes through the *mandorla* of her womb, and “She” is the chain-weaver who, since the early Romantics, binds her emasculated prey with a single strand of her hair. While adequate exposition of this heritage would require volumes of discourse, one brief observation suffices to indicate Jung’s important innovations.

In attempting to locate the common mythic denominator in the countless renditions of the Ewig Weibliche, Jung postulated a fundamental psychic geometry over the course of his writings that unified, for instance, the Byzantine and Gothic *mandorla* matrix housing Christ of the Apocalypse,

and the almond from which Attys was born to his earthly mother through the graces of Cybele, his divine mother and consort. In turn, this amygdaline shape was homologized with the spindle in both folklore (e.g., Grimms's "Rose-Bud") and myth – the steadfast Penelope superimposed on the spellbinding Circe. Projected to cosmic dimension, the polymorphous mythic form transposes into the diamond-shaped spindle running through the center of Mother Earth that, in pre-Socratic and Platonic texts (e.g., *Timaeus* 36b–39b; *Republic* 616c–17b) and elsewhere, spins the fates of us all: – the eternal dynamic implicit in daily and annual birth, conflict, death, and resurrection.

This rich brew of composite mythologies is consonant with Jung's theoretical abstractions in "Synchronicity" about a geometrical principle underlying the physical world – "the strongest tie that links the lower world to the heavens". From the "measuring" solar deity of the Rig Veda to the Rosicrucians, cabalists, Freemasons and Theosophists of the late nineteenth century, this is the world form adumbrated in the mythic emblem of the conical rays of the All-Father which meet on the water surface and project in shadow to the diamond point below (as in the one illustration of *anna-maya-kosha* in *Finnegans Wake*, emended from Bruno and Euclid's first proposition). In the latter half of *Job* this universalized symbolism comes together in the complex image of "the sharp two-edged sword" of "Christ blended with the Ancient of Days" from the Apocalypse who created the world "by weight, shape and measure" (pp. 421, 437). This symbolism had a particular attraction to medieval artists who pictured God distanced from the world, portrayed as Christ illuminated, and holding a compass by its pivot point while he measures his creation between the points of his dividers, which represent such pairs of opposites as life and death, spirit and flesh, good and evil, being and non-being. It was the image selected by Blake for the frontispiece of his engraved volume *Europe*. The beginning and conclusion of the measured circle are focused only at the pivot point (cf. "Dominus possedit me" from Proverbs). Hence, in the Rites of Resurrection prior to Easter the priest with the line of his hand divides the waters of the *uterus ecclesiae*, singing praises of the "arcane admixture of God's power" for those who have been "conceived in sanctity in the immaculate womb" (cf. *Transformation Symbols in the Mass* 2: 11). Since we resort to temporal and figurative language, we delude ourselves into thinking that the geometric configuration of right and left legs of the triangle allows us to speak knowingly of an ultimate duality of pivot and circumference or of archetype and its manifestation; but our illusive and illusory language always leaves us playing around the circumference of an omnipresent, nonexistent center. This single notion of the world engendered and calibrated by twin compass points which join at a single source of illumination creates multiplicity from unity. The true end of mankind lies nowhere on the space of the circle, nowhere in the wheel of

time, but only at the pivot point of the calipers – beyond the pairs of opposites and above such lumbering monstrosities of Jungian terminology as *enantiodromia* and *syzygy*.

Answer to Job, with its pre-textual “problem” of Christ and the sacramental mystery of the two symbolic fishes, is likely to remain a puzzling work for its essential postulation of Christ as the unique and perfect synthesis of the conscious and unconscious, as of all paired opposites – the issue of the *hieros gamos* of God and his blue-veiled earthly consort. Jung’s command of the language of mythic discourse drawn from East and West – from the two complementary fishes discernible in the Yin/Yang emblem to the emergence of the Eisher from the virginal *mandorla* above the “Sunset” portal of Notre Dame de Chartres – neither wins nor subverts his stupendous claim, so much as it sustains and queries the living mystery of symbolic form. At the same time, the deep paradox of a Creator beyond good and evil at the center of Jung’s thought surpasses narrow and superannuated notions of what passes for scientific inquiry. It is said that the function of theology has always been to spiritualize the sacraments, i.e., to discover and formulate their symbolic function and to reduce popular belief in their causal efficacy to its proper status. The function of philosophical criticism is to intellectualize scientific method, i.e., to discover and formulate its symbolic significance and to reduce popular belief in its causal efficacy to proper status. With regard to the symbolic function of science and its conclusions, at present it can only be said that they are wavering shadows of those clear and distinct ideas without which experience is neither good nor true. Their present mathematical and mythic embodiments are intimations of some such immortality.

NOTES

¹ All citations in the text are to the *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967. Page citations alone are to *Answer to Job* in volume 11 of that edition.

² Her argument has been condensed in the lead article of *Books and Religion* 14 (October, 1986). New York: Crossroad 1986, 1, 4, 14–15.

³ *The Supreme Identity: An Essay on Oriental Metaphysic and the Christian Religion*. New York: Random House 1972, pp. 35, 88–89.

⁴ Two years before the publication of *Job* René Guénon commented on a *mandoral*-shaped symbol brought from Smyrna by the Order of Carmelites, which combines the spelling of AVE and AUM. *Le Roi du monde*. Paris: Editions Traditionnelles 1950, 19, 33–35. Cf. Jung, 436.

⁵ Cf. the liberating fantasy of the patient who described a diamond ensconced in a vulva, yet who knew nothing of the “Jewel in the Lotus” motif (representing the union of opposites) of the Buddha in meditation.



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