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# Pre-Critical Kant on the Anthropological Basis of the Enlightenment Project

**Purpose.** The authors aim to reveal the peculiarity of comprehension of the human phenomenon in the process of referring to the text of "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime" by the early Immanuel Kant, which is based on the critical rethinking of the Enlightenment position. A prerequisite for its substantial solution is addressing the problem of the place of the "Observations" in the evolution of Kant's anthropological views. Theoretical basis. Our view of Kant's legacy is based upon the conceptual positions of phenomenology, existentialism and hermeneutics. Originality. We have proved that the anthropological interest was inherent in Kant already in the pre-critical stage of his work, as shown by the still underestimated treatise "Observation". The paper give arguments that this text highlights the main topics that will later be the subject of a detailed study of both Kant himself and philosophical anthropology of the 20th century. It is revealed that Kant overcomes the Enlightenment temptation to absolutize the power of human reason and emphasizes its limitations. The specified step is a necessary condition for him to comprehend the important role of the sensual-passionate component of human nature and to recognize the importance of the metaphysical nature of man. Conclusions. For us today, the pre-critical Kant appears as the developer of anthropological teaching, first presented in the treatise "Observations". Already at this stage, Kant demonstrates a holistic vision of human nature. In the process of creative evolution of the thinker, this treatise should be qualified as a kind of sketch of the future concentrated development of human nature, elaborated in the pages of "Anthropology" in 1798. The author gives a key place to the metaphysics of human nature, a vivid illustration of which is, in particular, the last paragraph of "Observations" dedicated to freedom. The conducted analysis provides sufficient grounds for qualifying this text as an outline of the anthropological basis of his doctrine of pure reason, the doctrine of metaphysics as the metaphysics of man, which, in turn, gives us the key to understanding "Anthropology" as his final text.

Keywords: Kant; Enlightenment; anthropology; reason; ethics; passions; metaphysics; religion

Have the courage to use your own reason. Explore the great diversity of human nature.

Kant

### Introduction

It would seem that our current era has no analogues in previous history. At the same time, it is difficult not to notice certain affinities between our present and eras of radical change in the past. Today, as more than once in the past, the phenomenon of man attracts attention above all by the dramatic tension between sensuality and rationality. In other words, today again in the context of war (Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine) we are witnessing the maximum aggravation of the primordial philosophical problem concerning man's ability to master his passions.

Particular attention should be paid to the Age of Enlightenment, which largely determined the spiritual landscape of our time. Today, as several centuries ago, the decisive role of knowledge in social development is clear and undeniable. However, although they are one of the main factors, it is difficult to deny the validity of criticisms of the Enlightenment. The relevance of the task of radical rethinking of the latter is beyond doubt, since the danger of exaggerating the role of reason and the threat of destroying the world as a whole are evident. Nowadays, the thesis about the naivety

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and sketchiness of the Enlightenment anthropology is not in dispute, as it is based on the exaggeration of the role of reason. One of the ways of accentuating the potential threat of postulating the dominant role of reason is a radical assessment of the Enlightenment, voiced in the middle of the 20th century. This refers to the pages of "Dialectics of Enlightenment" by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, where it is associated with totalitarianism. The discursiveness of this emotional assessment, which is nihilistic in relation to reason, prompts us to focus on the question of what should be a constructive version of rethinking the Enlightenment philosophy?

The prerequisite for meaningful clarification of this problem is, firstly, an appeal to Kant's legacy, and secondly, certain methodological remarks on the way of reception of his philosophical heritage. First of all, it is about the dubiousness of the still living tradition of linking the basic intension of his quest (as well as of the philosophy of the New Age in general) with epistemology. One of its consequences is the marginalization of anthropology, which makes it impossible to comprehend the relation of this epoch's enquiry to our present. Going beyond this tradition opens up the prospect of comprehending the hitherto neglected anthropological dimensions of the philosophical heritage of prominent modern thinkers. In particular, it is a substantive response to the epoch's request regarding the development of anthropological concepts. Examples of constructive reflection on anthropological quests in the modern era include attempts to delineate them in the philosophical teachings of Descartes (Malivskyi, 2019) and David Hume (Malivskyi, 2016). We believe that the current stage of historical-philosophical science provides sufficient grounds for studying the hypothesis regarding the expediency of reading Kant's legacy through the prism of his anthropological interest.

When considering the philosophical problems of this period, it is worth keeping in mind that a) its starting point of philosophizing is the sensual-passionate component of human nature and, accordingly, b) the fateful problem of the ability of the human mind to master it is actualized. Critically reconsidering the level of its clarification in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, it is impossible to ignore the teachings of Kant, who was his contemporary and at the same time demonstrated a critical and constructive attitude to the key ideas of the Enlightenment.

Turning today to the philosophical quest of modern thinkers (i.e. of the 17th and 18th centuries), we should bear in mind the predominant place of the problem of improving human nature. Kant, in contrast to the Enlighteners, considered the development of anthropology as a science of human nature as a necessary condition for its solution. How acceptable for us today is the constructive version of Kant's vision of the perfection of human nature through reason?

Before proceeding to the presentation of the modern vision of the creative evolution of Kant's position as a manifestation of his anthropological interest, it is appropriate to draw attention to the limited notion of the natural-philosophical character of his position in the pre-critical period and the importance of the critical period only. This becomes evident in the process of careful attention to the biographical studies and in the unbiased study of his own texts. Accordingly, the tradition of linking his critical attitude to the Enlightenment with the last period of his work seems dubious. Although scholars have not overlooked the thinker's close interest in the phenomenon of man long before the critical period – the "Observations" of 1764 – the matter has not proceeded beyond a general statement. Examining this text almost half a century ago, Arseniy Guliga states that "From now on, the problem of man is at the centre of Kant's philosophical searches" (authors' transl.). Therefore, there is an undeniable urgency to overcome the established nihilism about Kant's anthropology in general, as well as about the position of the thinker in the pages of "Observations".

# **Purpose**

In the process of referring to the text "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime" by Immanuel Kant, to reveal the peculiarity of philosophical comprehension of human phenomenon by pre-critical Kant, which is largely a critical reinterpretation of the Enlightenment position. A prerequisite for its substantial solution is addressing the problem of the place of the "Observations" in the evolution of Kant's anthropology and the change in the way he saw the main aspects of philosophical comprehension of human nature.

## Statement of basic materials

Considering the problem of the status of the doctrine of man in Kant's philosophical explorations and the place of "Observations" in the evolution of anthropology, we encounter an underestimation of the anthropological developments of pre-critical Kant. In our deep conviction, a significant obstacle is the usual assessment of Kant's anthropological project as a supplement to his epistemology or critical philosophy. Let us outline some forms of their manifestation schematically. The tendency to neglect the key importance of philosophical understanding of man for Kant's legacy is represented by a number of prominent thinkers and authoritative researchers of the history of philosophy. Hegel, paying tribute to the traditional ideas about the epistemology of modern philosophizing and demonstrating his own ambitions in the "History of Philosophy", noted that this legacy represents only "a good introduction to philosophy". And since the powerful tradition of reducing the philosophical field to gnoseology still seems unquestionable and immutable for many scholars, accordingly the level of Kant's development of anthropology is judged on an external scale and interpreted as inferior. Another example of today's debatable way of interpreting Kant's anthropology is also related to the idea of the unconditional priority for him of the problems of critical philosophy, in which man looks like an insignificant supplement and only his separate aspects are taken into consideration. It is therefore concluded that in his legacy the living human being is replaced by his fragmented presence. While acknowledging Kant's undeniable merit in formulating the famous four questions, Buber notes in "The Problem of Man" that he never "dared" to proceed to their substantive elucidation.

Studying the motives behind Kant's development of the philosophical doctrine of man, it is right to focus on the context of his creative quest in the 60-70s of the 18th century. Manfred Geier writes about it convincingly in his biographical study of Kant's spiritual evolution. According to him, a substantial interest in the human being and the moral universe can be observed as early as 1755 (Geier, 2007, pp. 126-127). Concretizing the spiritual landscape, while referring to the private correspondence of the famous thinker, we learn about the decline of philosophizing, which is largely due to the lack of a unified method of metaphysics. One of the preconditions for overcoming the unsatisfactory state of philosophy for Kant is the "great revolution in science". Among the main factors of the decline, he names the exaggeration of the role of sensuality in metaphysics and emphasizes the necessity of its purification. We tend to think that the substantive prerequisites for overcoming the crisis state of philosophy Kant relates to the metaphysical nature of man.

Analysing the legacy of the great thinker in this way, it is appropriate to turn to the pages of his preparatory materials, where Kant emphasizes the central role of the study of man: "philosophy is really nothing but practical human science" (authors' transl.) (Kant, 2004b, p. 17). Similar and related are his formulations on the pages of "Critique of Judgment" and "Anthropology from

a Pragmatic Point of View", where man is interpreted as "the most important object in the world" because he is "his own final goal". From the text of the last Critique, we learn that for its author, man is the "ultimate goal" (Kant, 2022, pp. 399-400). In our opinion, one of the most representative and promising statements of Kant himself on the question of anthropology as a starting and final point in our understanding of the universe is the fragment from his letter to Herz in late 1773. On its pages, he writes that anthropology should "discover the sources of all sciences... – of the entire practical sphere". The evidence of its outstanding importance is the fact that today, considering the role of philosophical anthropology in the system of philosophical sciences, we unwittingly remember a meaningfully related saying from a classic text by Max Scheler from the early 20th century. In it, he talks about the vision of philosophical anthropology as the basis that underlies all other, derivative specific capacities and faculties of man. "The task of philosophical anthropology," he writes in the text of his widely acclaimed work "The Human Place in the Cosmos", "is to show exactly how *all* the specific monopolies, accomplishments and deeds of man follow from the basic structure of human existence: language, conscience, tools, weapons ... myth, religion, science ..."

Studying the question how valuable the text of the "Observations" can be for us today, it is worth noting that the main points of both Kant's "Anthropology" and philosophical anthropology of the 20th century have already been schematically indicated here. In the pages of the treatise, Kant appears as a dispassionate researcher of human behaviour and inner life, an attentive observer and systematiser of human traits. It is difficult to disagree with the qualified assessment of the significance of the "Observations" text in the history of human studies by the German scholar of Kant's intellectual biography, Geier. For him, there is no doubt that the founder of the German classic includes "feelings" among the main manifestations of human nature and presents himself as "an extremely sensitive analyst of human behaviour and inner life" (Geier, 2007, p. 222). Above all, the author draws attention to the fact of a radical change in the established image of man. The usual ideas about the obviousness and unproblematic nature of a person are replaced by the recognition of his ignorance as a being unknown to himself. Already on the first page of the text of the "Observations", the author notes: "The sphere of observation ... of the peculiarities of human nature extends very far and hides many discoveries..." (authors' transl.) (Kant, 1964, p. 127).

Contrary to our naive expectations associated with a high assessment of the potential of the human mind, here Kant speaks of the constitutive role of the sensual-passionate component in shaping those principles that underlie the behaviour of a noble man. And that is why he interprets the "true virtues" as "awareness of the feeling that lives in every human soul...". Moreover, outlining his position on the ideal of human life, he is influenced by British sentimentalism and emphasizes the key role of the sensual-passionate component of human nature. For him, the "greatest perfection" is the human soul "full of feelings" (Kant, 1964, p. 138, p. 189).

Bearing in mind the significance of metaphysics for the "critical" Kant, it is worth noting that already here (in the "Observations") the thinker did not neglected the limitations of empiricism methodology and the urgent need of man for metaphysics. It is important for us that philosophy is important to him as metaphysics. It is, he writes, not a matter of necessity, but a form of pleasurable use of leisure. The prerequisite for the transition to the latter is the urgent need of man to go beyond the deceptive play of sense images as illusory ones and to move towards a more invariant image of reality. Evidence of this is the rhetorical questioning of where we can "find points of reference" and "milestones" in nature, understand "which shore to stick to" (Kant,

1964, p. 206). It is about the importance of finding the basic coordinate system that we need to build our own lives. It seems appropriate to turn to the pages of "Reflections", where Kant emphasizes the importance for him of the anthropological dimension of metaphysics. It "holds a person to his purpose" (Kant, 2004b, p. 35).

At this point, what matters to the author above all is the conceptual form of fixing the metaphysical nature of man, namely the concept of "freedom". It is one of the cornerstones of Kant's teaching, to which he dedicated the final paragraph of the "Observations". Let us briefly dwell on the most representative points. The thinker's observation about the fundamental difference from natural science of those principles that determine the way of human existence is deep and fair. The point is that the basic factors of human mood, unlike the movement of matter, do not depend on any predetermined rules. And since each individual person emerges from the depths of his own self, which are unknown neither to himself nor to others, the will of each person has its own unique pattern. It is "the product of its own desires and inclinations, and is consistent only with his own ... well-being" (authors' transl.) (Kant, 1964, p. 219). Emphasizing the basic role of freedom in human nature, he unequivocally associates with it the opposite psychological states – boredom and pleasure. Those who do not work and are tired of entertainment as idleness are doomed to experience boredom. Accordingly, feelings of contentment and vivacity are inherent in those who are devoted to the labour they love and experience a state of exaltation from the free use of their own discretion and the refutation of others' thoughts in philosophy.

Implementing his guidance to comprehend man as a metaphysical being, Kant states the centrality of the problem of man's place in the universe, i.e. his predestination. Exploring heuristic potential of religion, he first of all emphasizes its main benefit as morality, which is able "to direct our habits in such a way, that we are able to fulfil our predestination in this world" (authors' transl.) (Kant, 1964, p. 221).

Considering the prerequisites for man to realise his own vocation, Kant turns to the eternal problem of philosophy – the question of man's propensity to manifest his eternal goodness. One of the intermediate results of the study of this problem is the identification of the antinomian nature of man. Based on the key importance of the thesis regarding the purity of moral motives from references to circumstances in earthly or extraterrestrial life, he proceeds from the conviction that goodness is inherent in human nature: "there is a direct inclination to good deeds". However, as a dispassionate observer of man's own hidden motivations he is forced to admit that under the influence of his own ambitions and environmental pressure this inclination is considerably distorted. Therefore, a few pages later he observes – man has a religion, by means of which he encourages himself with retribution in the afterlife. One of the consequences of this statement is the antithesis of the idea of the natural goodness of man: "human nature is incapable of direct moral purity" (authors' transl.) (Kant, 1964, p. 194, p. 197). A convincing illustration of this position is that it is much easier for people to sympathize with the grief of others than to share the joy of successes and achievements with them. Concluding his excursus into the problem of human goodness and reasonableness, in the last paragraph of the "Observations" Kant expresses an optimistic hope for man's ability through morality to overcome the inherent selfishness of man as a focus on satisfying personal needs.

Reflecting on the specificity of his own era, which becomes more obvious in the process of comparing it with antiquity, Kant notes the danger of naivety in the form of reference to the laws of nature. It is about the importance of recognizing the peculiarities of human nature as a paradoxical combination of naturalness and metaphysicality. In other words, a person is a physical-

metaphysical being. In the context of a radical change in a person's outlook, rooted in the scientific revolution, the problem of the ultimate foundations of human existence is becoming increasingly acute. As already noted above, for Kant, a person is a being unknown to himself, for whom the realization of the task of self-knowledge is a prerequisite for his own self-realization. Demonstrating a clear awareness of the importance of the last moment, he notes – "it is extremely important for a person to know how to properly *take his place in the world*, and to correctly understand *what it takes to be a human being*" (emphasis added). A convincing illustration of the extraordinary importance of these points for Kant is the fact that he returns to them a few pages later, almost literally reproducing them. It is a formulation well-known to the general public: "If there is a science that people really need, it is the one I teach – namely, to properly *occupy the place assigned to man in the world* – and from which one can learn *what it takes to be a human being*" (emphasis added) (Kant, 1964, p. 204, p. 206).

In exploring possible solutions to this problem, one should first of all pay attention to the importance, as Kant himself writes, of realizing one's vocation to the maximum extent: "to be human as much as possible" (Kant, 1964, p. 206). To what extent does his vision coincide with the position of Enlightenment representatives? Aware of his belonging to the Enlightenment, he simultaneously distances himself from the naive reception of his era and the temptation to absolutise the role of rationality. If we perceive man as a bearer of his own discretion and connect man's need to improve himself only with this discretion, he writes, then we follow the simplest path and satisfy only our own vanity (Kant, 1964, p. 203). Unfortunately, Kant sadly states, up to now there has been a tendency to exaggerate the role of reason in human life, which is to a great extent connected with the naive understanding of man's inherent "thirst for knowledge". In fact, the tendency to absolutize and universalize knowledge is dangerous for several reasons. One is related to the neglect of the Christian teaching about the man's self-worth as the image of God. The seductive idea that man is greater because of knowledge and the disdain for all who are devoid of knowledge is rejected. Among the immediate reasons for abandoning such a course of thought, Kant attributes the significant influence of Rousseau's teachings. The latter "corrected me", having broadened my worldview and caused a certain change in priority: "I learn to respect people" – the philosopher notes a significant transformation of his own Self (Kant, 1964, p. 205). Adequately assessing the motives of human behaviour, he states that there are very few people who are able to determine their behaviour with the help of principles. Influenced by British empiricism, Kant rejects the thesis of the possibility of direct influence on a person's way of thinking outside his own experience. A man can only be persuaded by means of his own thoughts and feelings – this is his philosophical credo.

When studying its implications, it is worth focusing attention on the almost complete identity with the formulation of the main principles of the Enlightenment by the critical Kant, which includes a distancing from the naive postulation of ideas about the self-worth of reason and science. Analysing the factors of the thinker's optimism about the prospects for a significant improvement of human nature, it is worth paying attention to the key role of one's own experience. For him, the latter makes possible the prospect of developing a universal moral law (categorical imperative) in the future, since, he writes, we have reason to love people (Kant, 1964, p. 205).

In the process of considering the forms of Kant's distancing from the Enlightenment notion of the self-sufficiency of reason, it is worth focusing on the forms of manifestation of the presence of an integrated personality in his texts. Here we are talking about the sensual and passionate

component of human nature. The thinker's reference to the context of Newton's discovery of the law of universal gravitation is appropriate. It is important for us that in commenting on his vision of this discovery, Kant prompts us to recall the ancient Greeks. Newton, he writes, first saw order and simplicity where they had hitherto seen diversity and chaos. Here it is easy to see an analogy with the basic question of ancient Greek philosophy, why is there cosmos (order) and not chaos in the world? Keeping in mind the substantial relationship of the concepts of cosmos and law, Kant interprets his vision of Rousseau's merit in the same way. The latter is connected with the discovery of the hitherto hidden law in the external variety of forms of manifestation of human nature (Kant, 1964, p. 213).

Studying the question of how the discovery of laws hidden from the outside view became possible in certain spheres of reality, it is worth paying attention to the state of mind — the mood of the indicated figures. In this context, we consider it appropriate to focus attention on the features of Kant's philosophical style, which attests to his belonging to a powerful philosophical tradition. It is about understanding philosophizing as a form of verbalization of questioning, which was first represented by the ancient Greeks. It is easy to be convinced of Kant's belonging to this tradition by recalling the key questions of the "Critique of Pure Reason" about how possible is mathematics as a science, how possible is physics as a science, how possible is metaphysics as a science? Similarly, the famous four questions from "Logic" can be interpreted as a verbalization of admiration. With an impartial appeal to the historical-philosophical tradition, it is easy to see that the eras of radical changes in human nature were accompanied by an increased interest in the phenomenon of man as an object of admiration.

It is impossible to avoid that well-known form of emphasis on the importance of admiration for his philosophical worldview, which is known as the lines of the Conclusion to the "Critique of Practical Reason": "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" (Kant, 2004a, p. 176). Carefully studying the creative evolution of Kant, the German researcher Geier (2007) rightly emphasizes that, at the end of his life, to the two well-known objects of worship, the third one is added – "the revolution of the rational nation" (p. 282).

In one of the texts of the final stage of creativity – the article "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature", Kant with the help of admiration singles out and emphasizes the importance of moral dispositions for our nature. "Yet there is one thing in our soul which we cannot cease from regarding with the highest wonder, when we view it properly, and for which admiration is not only legitimate but even exalting".

Concluding our retrospective excursus on Kant's way of interpreting the role of the sensual-passionate component of human nature, we should note that it is constantly at the centre of his anthropological reflections. He himself is aware of the contradictory nature of his own vision of the role of the sensual-passionate component of human nature, in which passions are, on the one hand, an important and ineradicable component of human nature, on the other hand, a source of threat to the possibility of human self-realization as a rational being. Considering the above statement as an antinomy, he stresses its transitive character. It is correct to pay attention to one of the variants of Kant's interpretation of the complex problem of correlation in man of animal and spiritual life: "... pure spiritual life is original and independent life, while the animal life is derivative and limited" (authors' transl.) (Kant, 2004b, p. 251).

# **Originality**

We have proved that the anthropological interest was inherent in Kant already in the precritical stage of his work, as shown by the still underestimated treatise "Observation". The paper give arguments that this text highlights the main topics that will later be the subject of a detailed study of both Kant himself and philosophical anthropology of the 20th century. It is revealed that Kant overcomes the Enlightenment temptation to absolutize the power of human reason and emphasizes its limitations. The specified step is a necessary condition for him to comprehend the important role of the sensual-passionate component of human nature and to recognize the importance of the metaphysical nature of man.

#### **Conclusions**

For us today, the pre-critical Kant is important as the developer of anthropological teaching, first presented in the treatise "Observations". It was revealed that already at this stage Kant overcomes the temptation to universalize the human mind and demonstrates a holistic vision of human nature. Considering this treatise in the process of creative evolution of the thinker, it is appropriate to qualify it as a kind of sketch of the future concentrated development of human nature, elaborated in the pages of "Anthropology" in 1798. The author gives a key place to the metaphysics of human nature, a vivid illustration of which is, in particular, the last paragraph of "Observations" dedicated to freedom. The conducted analysis provides sufficient grounds for qualifying this text as an outline of the anthropological basis of his doctrine of pure reason, the doctrine of metaphysics as the metaphysics of man, which, in turn, gives us the key to understanding "Anthropology" as his final text.

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# Докритичний Кант про антропологічний базис проєкту Просвітництва

Мета. Автори ставлять за мету виявити своєрідність осмислення феномену людини в процесі звертання до тексту "Спостережень за почуттям прекрасного та піднесеного" раннього Іммануїла Канта, в основі якого лежить критичне переосмисленням позиції просвітників. Умовою її змістовного розв'язання є звернення до проблеми місця "Спостережень" в еволюції антропологічних поглядів Канта. Теоретичний базис. Наш погляд на спадщину Канта базується на концептуальних положеннях феноменології, екзистенціалізму та герменевтики. Наукова новизна. Обгрунтовано, що антропологічний інтерес був притаманний Канту вже на докритичному етапі його творчості, проявом чого є досі недооцінений трактат "Спостереження". Аргументовано, що в цьому тексті виокремлені ті основні теми, які пізніше будуть предметом детального вивчення як самого Канта, так і філософської антропології ХХ ст. Виявлено, що Кант долає спокусу епохи Просвітництва щодо абсолютизації сили людського розуму та наголошує на його обмеженості. Означений крок  $\epsilon$ для нього необхідною передумовою осмислення важливої ролі чуттєво-пристрасної складової природи людини та визнання важливості метафізичності природи людини. Висновки. Для нас сьогодні докритичний Кант постає як розробник антропологічного вчення, яке вперше репрезентоване в трактаті "Спостереження". Уже на цьому етапі Кант демонструє цілісне бачення природи людини. У процесі творчої еволюції мислителя цей трактат слушно кваліфікувати як свого роду ескіз майбутньої концентрованої розробки природи людини, викладеної на сторінках "Антропології" 1798 року. Ключове місце автор відводить метафізичності природи людини, яскравою ілюстрацією чого є, зокрема, останній параграф "Спостережень", присвячений свободі. Проведений аналіз дає достатні підстави для кваліфікації цього тексту як окреслення антропологічного підгрунтя його вчення про чистий розум, вчення про метафізику як метафізичність людини, що, своєю чергою, дає нам ключ до розуміння "Антропології" як його підсумкового тексту.

Ключові слова: Кант; Просвітництво; антропологія; розум; етика; пристрасті; метафізика; релігія

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