

# Vision

Published by the School of Philosophy Auck. Inc. for enjoyment and communication

Issue 9, July 2003

## Patience

St. Augustine, in his treatise "On Patience" described it as the companion of wisdom and a great gift of God.

It is a virtue which we often feel we lack, but much admire in others. It embodies calmness, equanimity, forbearance, imperturbability, restraint, serenity, and sufferance. There is constancy in it also: qualities such as diligence, endurance, fortitude and perseverance.

The patient man or woman is magnanimous, bearing all things without criticism or complaint. The word patience in fact arises from the Latin *patientia*, (the prefix *pati* meaning "to bear"). In the company of a patient person, we can be ourselves, free from agitation or fear of failure.

When this virtue has been developed, it clearly manifests in word and action; we can be patient more often and with greater ease. It is then possible to behave with awareness and sensitivity in an increasingly impatient world.

It is the obvious remedy for "road rage" and other stressful situations in daily life (including slow-moving bank and supermarket queues!). Practising it, we may even be able to bear pain and suffering without repining, as a hospital "patient" is supposed to do...

The German composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) must have been a very patient man. When faced with a complaint that his violin concerto would need a musician with six fingers, he is said to have replied: "Very well, I can wait".

Over the course of time, many proverbs have been coined describing patience, such as "Rome was not built in a day", "A watched pot never boils", or "They also serve who only stand and wait". These sayings are useful reference points for the mind, arising from the sum of human experience.

***"In your patience  
possess ye your souls"***  
(St. Luke, 21:19)

In this age of instant results and instant gratification of the senses, it often appears to us that, by contrast, philosophical or spiritual work takes a long time to bear fruit. Therefore, we need a great deal of patience – with ourselves – but eventually, with perseverance and following what we know to be true, we can be free of unhelpful habits and limitations.

Some practical advice in this respect is ascribed to St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622): "Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them – every day begin the task anew."

# A Rich Heritage

by Tom Johnson

After visiting the School's property at 268 West Tamaki Road, an Auckland City Council arborist and members of the Tree Council described it as "an extraordinary property" in terms of its trees.

A written report described "many mature trees, some very rare specimens, and one was the only specimen known outside of South Africa". Such is the nature of plantings the School has inherited from previous owners of the property.

Recently, four larger trees were removed in compliance with A.C.C. requirements because of disease and overcrowding.

As you come through the gates off West Tamaki Road, half-way down on the right is a large Cape Chestnut (*Calodendron Capense*), which has had some remedial pruning done to remove opossum damage. This is the tree reputed to be the only one outside of South Africa.

To the left is a specimen of Yellow Wood (*Podocarpus falcatus*), a conifer closely related to the New Zealand Totara, and also a native of South Africa. Further down on the left are plantings of Camphor Laurels and Australian Box.

Over towards the moon gate on the lawn to the left are two examples of Tree Daphne; rather scruffy looking during the winter but producing pink pom-pom flowers during summer. These trees are also from South Africa.

Around to the left of the house on the right-hand side of the driveway is a large Norfolk Island Pine. Immediately opposite, planted below the wall which leads the eye up its towering trunk, is a beautiful Queensland Kauri (*Agathis robusta*), related to New

Zealand Kauri and just as imposing but much quicker growing. It is uncommon here.

Moving down the driveway past another Norfolk Pine is one of the most majestic examples of Australian She Oak in Auckland (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*).

In acknowledging its presence, one is brought to a deep rest. To the right of this is a very large Plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*) which comes from the Western Himalayan region and also has a commanding presence.

A large Moreton Bay Fig, with its huge spread and imposing buttress root structure is also located on the property. Just above this, a seedling of an unknown Kauri species has grown, with its huge leathery foliage and vertical habit of growth typical of Kauris. This has as yet not been positively identified, so remains a mystery.

This is but a brief outline of some of the more valuable or unusual species at 268 West Tamaki Road and there is in place a replanting and maintenance programme to protect the trees on the property.

Thanks should go to the gardeners who had the foresight some seventy years ago to plant such a rich heritage, and it is our responsibility to do what we must to preserve it.



Tree in foreground:  
Cape Chestnut

# *The Garden – A Patient Instructor* by John Ferens

Every Sunday morning a gardening team takes care of the general upkeep of the School's large property at 268 West Tamaki Road.

The major tasks such as tree felling and hedge trimming are done by groups in residence at weekends, but the constant care is the part played by this small team of not particularly professional garden tenders. However there is something sympathetic about the garden. It never complains, never answers back, and doesn't even ask any favours, but it does have ways of letting you know what to do next, as long as you're "there" at the time.

Sunday mornings at West Tamaki are a great opportunity to learn, and the teacher is the garden itself. What a teacher it is too. It is very patient, and yet in the end most demanding in a measured sort of way. There is always just enough to do, never too much, but if you disregard the instructions of the

garden, it will present them again, with a little more emphasis, and it becomes more and more obvious what needs attending to.

So why is this Sunday morning garden so valuable as a teacher? Every other morning has its teachers and the instructions are always there for us. It's just that on those other mornings the teachers seem a little more harsh. There is the wife or husband teacher, the "children getting ready for school" teacher, the traffic teacher, the office teacher, the boardroom teacher, the factory floor teacher. The list is endless. But none of these have quite the understanding, the sympathy, the patience of the Sunday morning garden.

If you would like to avail yourself of this amazing opportunity, do mention it to your tutor! The garden will always supply the learning tools to suit the pupils' needs, even the need to rid of a hangover. It is most accommodating.

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## *Service*

Have you ever wondered when attending groups at the villa in Esplanade Road by what mysterious means the building and grounds are so well maintained?

Since the School of Philosophy and Ficino School moved to No. 27 in early 1997, aside from larger projects, regular maintenance has been carried out by students on Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings, plus more recently on Monday nights for Ficino School's needs. The grounds at Esplanade Road are under the care of a student with a great love of gardening.

A small maintenance team looks after the School's property at 268 West Tamaki Road

on Sunday mornings, supplemented by groups during residential weekends.

The clean and attractive atmosphere of the houses is also due in no small measure to regular housekeeping by individuals and groups.

Such devoted service has always been a hallmark of the School, and provides the best possible surroundings for lectures.

Without such service, and the willingness of many members to undertake it during the School's 43 years in Auckland, the organisation and the properties which house it would be much the poorer.

# The Nature of Tao

by Robert Sutherland

The Chinese word Tao (pronounced 'Dow') literally means 'way' – Tao is the way it is: the ultimate reality.

Taoist sages teach that all separate things form a great whole and this whole is Tao. It could not be said that Tao is any one thing.

Tao is all that exists and also the nothingness from whence all things come.

The 6th century BC Philosopher Lao Tzu ('old sage') is said to be the Father of Taoism. Some scholars believe he was a slightly older contemporary of Confucius (Kung – Fu Tzu). Some scholars feel that the Tao Te Ching ('The Way and Its Power') is really a compilation of paradoxical poems written by several Taoists using the pen name, Lao Tzu.

Others claim the Taoist classics are attributed to the famous sages Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu written in the 5th and 4th centuries BC . There is much debate about whether these works are really composed by these authors, or indeed, if these individuals ever actually existed.

There is also a close association between Lao Tzu and the legendary Yellow Emperor Huang – Ti.

According to legend, Lao Tzu was keeper of the archives at the imperial court. When he was eighty years old, he set out for the western border of China, toward what is now Tibet, saddened and disillusioned that men were unwilling to follow the path to natural goodness. At the border a guard, Yin Xi, asked Lao Tzu to record his teachings before he left. He then composed in 5,000 characters the Tao Te Ching.

Taoism and Confucianism have to be seen side-by-side as two distinct responses to the social, political and philosophical conditions of life two and a half millennia ago in China. Whereas Confucianism is greatly concerned



with social relations, conduct and human society, Taoism has a much more individualistic and mystical character, greatly influenced by nature.

In Lao Tzu's view, things were said to create "unnatural" action (wei) by shaping desires (yu). The process of learning the names (ming) used in the doctrines helped one to make distinctions between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, high and low, and "being" (yu) and "non- being" (wu), thereby shaping desires. To abandon knowledge was to abandon names, distinctions, tastes and desires. Thus spontaneous behaviour (wu-wei) resulted.

The Taoist philosophy can perhaps best be summed up in a quote from Chuang Tzu:

"To regard the fundamental as the essence, to regard things as coarse, to regard accumulation

as deficiency, and to dwell quietly alone with the spiritual and the intelligent – herein lie the techniques of Tao of the ancients.”

When reading about Tao we are constantly reminded of the Vedanta principle of Advaita (not two). “Tao is the Whole, the essential reality” (Chuang Tzu).

It is thoughts and opinions that obscure Tao; anything that is said about Tao is confusing for it is beyond language and it is seen in the immediacy of experience. It is in the present that Tao becomes obvious.

Sage Lao Tzu tells us:

“If you think you can speak about Tao, it is clear you don’t know what you are talking about”;

Or

“Someone seeking learning knows more and more, but someone seeking Tao knows less and less – until things just are what they are”.

In the following poem we see the close resemblance Tao has to the beautiful words in the Eesha Upanishad:

“The Self is one.

Unmoving , it moves faster than the mind.  
The senses lag, but Self runs ahead.  
Unmoving it outruns pursuit...”

And –Tao:

“Look, it cannot be seen - it is beyond form.  
Listen, it cannot be heard - it is beyond sound.

Grasp, it cannot be held - it is intangible.  
These three are indefinable, they are one.  
From above it is not bright;  
From below it is not dark:

Unbroken thread beyond description.  
It returns to nothingness.

Form of the formless,  
Image of the imageless,  
It is called indefinable and beyond imagination.

Stand before it - there is no beginning.

Follow it and there is no end.

Stay with the Tao, Move with the present.

Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.”

Lao Tzu

Today it is very hard to find true Teachers and followers of Tao. Taoism has become controlled, formalised into religious ritual and superstition. In 1997 my wife and I visited a mountain top temple in Xian, said to be one of many resting places on Lao Tzu’s travels throughout China. It was sad to see it had become a place to have your fortune told by paying for I Ching throw down sticks, or sounding a gong, and making a wish. The temple is frequented by many tourists and vendors.

I close with a Tao quote said to be by Lao Tzu, and a village story by an unknown author:

“Tao is not far away from where you are. Those who go looking for it elsewhere always return to here and now”.

“A horse was tied up outside a shop in a narrow street and every time someone tried to walk down the lane it kicked out at the person. No one could work out what to do.

Eventually someone called out “Look here comes Lao Tzu; he’ll know what to do.” Lao Tzu looked at the horse, considered the situation for a brief moment, turned around, and walked down another street.”

“All things in Nature work silently.  
They come into being and possess nothing.  
They fulfil their functions and make no claim.

When merit has been achieved,  
do not take it to yourself;  
for if you do not take it to yourself,  
it shall never be taken from you.”

The Sayings of Lao Tzu  
(Transl. Lionel Giles)

# The Magic Flute

Performed by pupils of the Ficino School on 13-14 June 2003, at the Centennial Theatre, Auckland Grammar School.

Producer: Margaret Brickland  
Musical Director: Derek Saunders  
Reviewed by Simon Laurent

**Priest:** What have you come looking for here?  
**Tamino:** Love and virtue.

deluded into embarking on a violent quest for Pamina and the destruction of the "sorcerer" Sarastro by the Queen of the Night. He soon recognises Sarastro's goodness and the deception of the Queen, and realises that reality may be the reverse of what he first thought – a common experience to any student of philosophy!

He undertakes trials of silence, fire and water in order to join the temple of Truth and be united with Pamina – his soul or true nature. The Queen, who represents the worldly Nature, and the evil servant Monostatos ("single state" – a being unable to change) are destroyed by the light of Truth. Tamino's companion Papageno has no stomach for enlightenment and goes away ignorant yet happy with his Papagena – a pathetic yet cheerful character with whom we may all empathise.

The production began in darkness, shadowy cliffs looming over the isolated Tamino. His quest for the beautiful Pamina ended in light and unity in the palace of Sarastro, with performers, set and lighting (under William Brook) combining in a visual feast. Mozart's brilliant and economical music came to us through the tireless Derek Saunders and Vivien



Kayur Ramson as Sarastro (Saturday performance)

Burgess on keyboard, as well as a string ensemble of Ficino students and the flute of Rachel Koks.

The heart of The Magic Flute's message is in the music – especially that of Sarastro and his priests, so majestic and full of reason, which reminds us of the true qualities of the Self. More of this sound is needed in the world.

## The Three Spirits

(Finale)

Soon, heralding the morning,  
the sun will shine forth on its golden path.

Soon superstition shall vanish,  
soon the wise man will triumph.

Oh, sweet repose, descend,  
return to the hearts of men;  
then earth will be a realm of heaven,  
and mortals will be like gods.



In these times of blurred pseudo-morality which passes for “sophistication”, Mozart’s allegorical search of Tamino for Pamina, and his admission into Sarastro’s wise brotherhood, was a fitting enterprise for the senior children of Ficino School. As Headmaster Mark Broadwith put it, the words of truth contained in the story needed to be heard and restated for all.

At the Saturday performance which the writer enjoyed, the children received a standing ovation for presenting this opera, one of the most technically demanding of art forms. Some of the more difficult passages of music

had been rendered into speech, and solo arias were sung by the chorus, who remained on stage for much of the opera as if they had sprung from some ancient Greek drama. Yet the story was told in its fullness, and the work put into singing such a long work, under the direction of Derek Saunders, was evident.

Mozart and the librettist Schikaneder’s membership of the order of Freemasons influenced the strong Egyptian theme of the opera, rendered in the richly decorated stage set designed by Elise Broadwith, and the many costumes for the children, from slaves to spirits. Even the Three Spirits who raced about

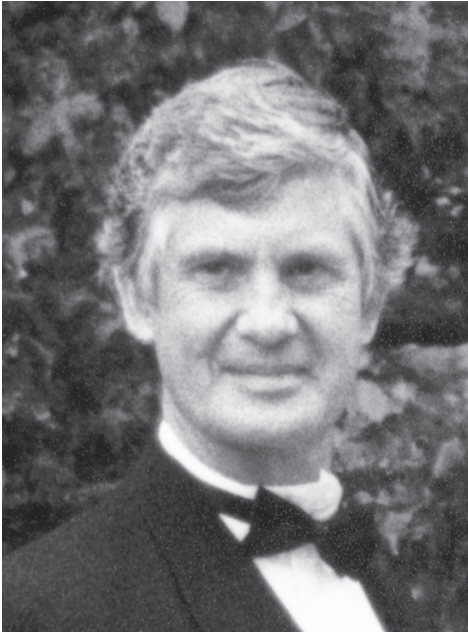
the stage on scooters carried pictures of Egyptian “airborne boats”.

The pre-eminence of the number three (three Ladies, three Spirits, three doors to Sarastro’s temple of Nature, Reason and Wisdom, and the motif of three trumpet calls) has a strong Masonic importance. The Masonic philosophic tradition is also reflected in the allegorical story, where Tamino represents the spiritual aspirant, who is at first



# Peter John Tibbits

14 March 1948 – 10 April 2003



"His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him, that nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

These words from Shakespeare, which appeared on the Service sheet for Peter's funeral on 14 April in St Barnabas Church, Mt Eden, most fittingly describe the qualities by which many of us knew him.

Peter was a member of the School in Auckland who tutored both Philosophy groups and the Art Group for many years until shortly before he passed away. In his eulogy, the Principal of the School, Digby Crompton, spoke of Peter as being a brave man, who bore pain quietly and with personal courage and dignity. He was also a serious man, who kept his counsel; a fine friend and remarkable in that he never entertained criticism.

Peter loved art, and his vast knowledge and understanding, nurtured by considerable travel in Europe and India, was brought out in his teaching of the subject. It also showed in his calling as an architect. Here he was able to blend knowledge of music, sound, the octave and the relationships between notes to create harmony in design.

His understanding of space through proportion left a fine quality in many buildings, from temple to country house. This produced real satisfaction in the occupiers of buildings, houses and living areas constructed to his design.

Mr Crompton also noted Peter's love of nature and the sea and that he was obviously happy and relaxed with paint brush and colours to hand. His art had a special quality which reflected the description from Shakespeare already quoted.

His was a mind rich with culture, and his presence likewise enriched the lives of family, friends and fellow members of the School. This is borne out by an Art Group student who was of great assistance to Peter and his wife Mary before his passing. Subsequently, she wrote down her experience of the event, and her contribution, "Beyond Doubt", appears on the facing page.

"That which is not, shall never be;  
that which is, shall never cease to be.  
To the wise, these truths are self-evident.

"The Spirit, which pervades all  
that we see, is imperishable.  
Nothing can destroy the Spirit."

(The Geeta)



# Beyond Doubt

by June Wells

**I**t seems that human beings have a great fear of dying. There is so much fear of death that we usually shun anything to do with it in a very demeaning way.

Recently, it was observed that the very thought of being involved in the dying process was definitely not something one would choose. However, having been placed in this situation it was in fact revealed that it was a blessing and a privilege indeed.

It was so obvious how the mind would limit all experiences with its preconceived ideas about how difficult and emotional any contact with death would be, and that "I would not be able to cope with it", whereas the reverse was the truth. There was nothing to cope with; the mind or emotions were not involved at all. It was a very beautiful, natural and simple experience.

Although the process naturally involves the physical body, this is only a minor part of it. The physical is only one third of the whole, and it was very clear that that one-third is in fact a very small part of the picture, the most important being the state of the mind and spirit. To actually experience the usually

unknown sphere of the spiritual world, if only briefly, was so reassuring. Here was confirmation that all we have been told by the Wise is true.

The basic exercise of "holding a person in mind" does have a profound effect – the knowledge that this was happening in many places around the world, with the thousand of miles between being of no consequence or substance. The real substance was the spiritual connection.

In 1973 His Holiness, Shri Shankaracharya, in part of an answer to a question on this sort of communication, said "The physical road is narrow and full of busy bodies, but the sky-routes are extensive and so are the connections between the individuals on the subtle level, but very few can fly on this level."

It was an honour and privilege to witness the beautiful process of how a soul moves from the physical realm to the spiritual in death, and to actually see that in fact it is only in the death of the body that there is any loss. The spirit gains strength and this realm is so much more real than the physical.

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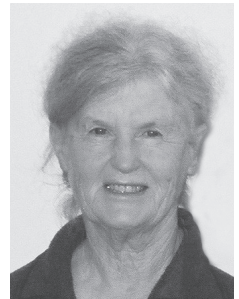
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## Adele Everson

1 December 1937 – 24 June 2003

**A**nother long standing member of the School passed away suddenly after Vision planning had been completed. Mrs Everson generously contributed to the School of Philosophy in a number of ways, including meticulous care of the 400 book library at 27 Esplanade Road and the First Aid kits in the School houses (her early career was in nursing before becoming a kindergarten

teacher). Adele also assisted with food supplies at Ficino School. She was an enthusiastic member of the Art Group, Abhinaya Dance Group, the Convivium Choir and the senior Sanskrit Group, and will be greatly missed by us all.



# Views and Reviews

Several new books, plus a long awaited reprint of an old favourite, have arrived in the School's Book Shop this term as follows:

## **"The Advancement of Civilisation in The Western World"**

by Brian Hodgkinson.

Price: \$85.00

The author, a member of the London School, who has taught Philosophy at Sussex University, Economics at Dulwich College and History at St. James Independent Schools in London, has written a trilogy on history in the West. This is the first volume, published in a limited edition. It spans the period from the ancient Egyptians to the fall of the Roman Empire.

It is a unique view on history, commencing as follows:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was made flesh, but this beginning was not in time. Whatever is in time has a before and after and is no more a beginning. So, too, the end of all things is not in time, and may therefore be one with the beginning. 'Before Abraham was, I am.' "

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## **"Inspiring Stories for Children"**

Price: \$25.00

This is a collection of stories of great men and good women. It provides a very useful reader for children of all abilities, is illustrated with paintings and photographs, and has a specially commissioned cover.

## **"Knights of the Grail"**

by Linda Proud

Price: \$55.00

The original edition of this mystical story drawn from the Arthurian legends is now out of print. This new, special edition is illustrated by Roderick Freemantle of Cape Town, and is a combination of text and 40 two-tone pictures. It is suitable for readers of all ages. The stories are designed to be read out loud, and for children to have the experience of hearing, touching and seeing a fine quality book. Available from St. James Publishing.

## **"The Geeta",**

Trans. Shree Purohit Swami

## **"The Ten Principal Upanishads",**

Trans. Shree Purohit Swami & W.B. Yeats

Price: \$15.00 each

These beautiful prose translations of Geeta and Upanishads, which have been favourites with students for many years, have been republished in India. They are available in Book Shop and are thoroughly recommended reading. Students find that it is easy to connect with the simplicity and poetry of the language used, and that phrases and verses live in the heart long after they are first encountered.

# Teachers Day 2003

On Sunday, 8 June the annual Teacher's Day ("Gurupurnima") celebration was again held at 268 West Tamaki Road.

The programme was varied and profound in its spirit of praise for the Tradition of Teachers. The celebration of Teacher's Day is an annual event in India, when both spiritual and secular teachers are honoured by disciples and pupils, and the School has taken up this tradition.

In his address, the Principal of the School (Digby Crompton) quoted from a letter by Marsilio Ficino, a leading Renaissance Philosopher, on the subject of duties:

"The duty of ... the teacher, by his instruction and his own goodness [is] to beget a learned and good disciple as if he were bringing to birth a child of his own mind. The duty of the pupil is to honour his teacher as if he were the father of understanding..."

Mr Crompton also spoke of the Sanskrit roots for the words "guru" and "acharya" –meaning teacher, preceptor, spiritual guide. The root

forms "gu" (darkness) and "ru" (removal) were of particular interest. The prefix long "a" and the root "car" mean "to go toward". Both words describe the actions of a Teacher.

As part of the celebration, Mary Tibbits and Robert Sutherland gave a recital of the Invocation to the Katha Upanishad in Sanskrit and English, which was most fitting in the context of teacher and pupil:

"May He protect us both.  
May He take pleasure in us both.  
May we show courage together.  
May spiritual knowledge shine before us.  
May we never hate one another.  
May peace and peace and peace be everywhere."

(Purohit Swami/W.B. Yeats translation)

Finally, the School's Convivium Choir sang the opening section of "In The Beginning", comprising the words of St. John's Gospel set to music by the Founder of all the Schools, the late Mr Leon MacLaren. It was magnificently sung and a very appropriate conclusion to the event.

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## Convivium Choir

The School of Philosophy choir now has a name – Convivium ("living together as one").

The "launch" of the new entity was celebrated at an evening for family and friends of choir members where works recently learned were sung, while in between items fine food and wine were served.

Since Derek Saunders, here from London for a year on a teaching exchange, has been conducting the choir, enthusiasm has surged and new members have doubled its size. The choir, which practises in the Ficino Hall on Sunday evenings, is at present working towards

a public performance at St. Mary's Church, Parnell, on Sunday 10 August at 4 p.m. It will be the first venture of this kind that the choir has undertaken, and members are working hard to attain the necessary high standard.

The programme will include Vivaldi's "Gloria" and some of Leon MacLaren's composition "In the Beginning", based on the words of St. John's Gospel.

As part of the preparation for the concert, choir members attended a weekend at the School's property at 268 West Tamaki Road. A varied programme included study of the proportions of the octave as well as invaluable singing practice.

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Many thanks to all who provided articles for this newsletter. Please keep them coming. Is there a particular subject of interest to you, or that you have studied and would like to write about, relating it to the teaching? Or a great philosopher/spiritual teacher such as Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, Julian of Norwich & other Christian mystics, Emerson, Confucius, etc. about whom you could write, giving a synopsis of their life and teaching? While there can be no guarantee of publication, contributions from students are welcome. For enquiries

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