

**Including the *body* in  
*psychotherapy***

**=**

**a new way of thinking and  
working with individual  
dynamics**

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# Body Psychotherapies: foundations and techniques

- These last two years I had to review my knowledge on Body Psychotherapy, when I was asked to write a ***Manual of Body Psychotherapy***, in French, for De Boeck University Books. The volume is published in a *collection that groups manuals from the main forms of psychotherapy*.
- This volume is probably the first book which attempts to give a ***general picture of the field of body psychotherapy***.
- It also attempts to show that ***our field contains the necessary ingredients to develop a new scientific paradigm of the mind***. Indeed, I show that most of the people in this room are developing theories and methods that allow us to explore how the ***mind is embedded in*** the regulation system of ***the organism***.

# The lack of historical progress in body/mind techniques

- I very classically began this manual with a ***history of the field***. Most of the time, a historical review of a field describes interesting old folkloric formulations that announce the progress accomplished since. I thus began with a discussion on disciplines such as ***Yoga and Chinese martial arts***.
- But in our case, ***these disciplines are, today, more popular, worldwide, than body psychotherapy***.

# The lack of historical progress in body/mind techniques

- Body psychotherapies focus on new aspects of body / mind dynamics (e.g., emotions, current social behavior, etc.), but, technically, their proposal contains no spectacular innovations.
- This forced me to ponder on ***why body psychotherapies are not more advanced than traditional methods***, and what developments can be considered as real improvements.

# **I. The factors that seem to slow the development of neo-reichians body psychotherapies seem to be the following:**

- A. Platonic ***Idealism***.
- B. ***Direct*** forms of body / mind ***parallelism***.

# A. Plato's Idealistic stance

- Plato's Idealistic formulations assume that ***deep in our souls***, often hidden from consciousness, there are ***reminiscences of absolute truths, which have a deep healing power***.
- In idealistic body psychotherapies, this assumption is associated with formulations such as:
  - a. Your body knows.
  - b. Enter in contact with your spiritual chore.
  - c. You are animated by a cosmic energy, by nature's absolute wisdom.

- ***Cosmic energy*** (e.g., orgone, bio-energy, radix, etc.) is really a revival of ***Plato's notion of the soul: it animates matter.***
- Today, such idealistic formulations are still found in many body psychotherapy schools.

# B. Theories on direct links between body and mind

- Theories on direct links between body and mind are based on these forms of Idealism.
- They ***add*** the notion that ***the shape of bodies reflects the dynamics of the soul and of psychological development.***
- They assume a **direct link between particularities of the body, of the brain and of the mind.**
- This stance has developed into highly popular ***dictionaries of body "language" and dreams.***

# Direct forms of parallelism in Body Psychotherapy

- Similar positions are presented by **Stanley Keleman's** popular ***Emotional Anatomy***. Another example is **Alexander Lowen's** ***Character Analysis***, which assumes that all ***masochists have a tight neck and short muscles between the ribs and the pelvis***; or that all people that have ***wide shoulders and small feet are psychopaths***. I have seen him giving this "diagnostic" in public, to highly human persons, who are far from the horrors of abusive psychopaths.
- Lowen then ***correlates these body traits to particular forms of conflicts experienced during childhood***.

## II. Aspects of body psychotherapy that are truly innovative

- Here are examples of issues which have been particularly well tackled by body psychotherapists. These developments do not require an idealistic frame of reference :
- 1. Being more specific on the analysis of ***implicit spontaneous psychological and behavioral dynamics.***
- 2. Focusing on how ***mind, behavior, body and metabolism resonate*** with each other, and ***influence the global dynamics of the organism.***
- 3. Observing ***how the internal global dynamics of two organisms interact while they communicate with each other.***
- Thus the mind is no more a dimension that is separate from organismic regulation systems. ***The mind is a particular dimension of an Individual organism.***

# Basic assumptions of that vision of the individual system:

- ***1. Dimension of the organism have distinct mechanisms, that adapt to the environment in distinct ways, and impose distinct requirements.***  
For example the mind does not integrate environmental stimulations in the same way as the digestive or the breathing systems.
- ***Being sensitive to how global organismic regulation systems integrate these conflicting requirements is particularly developed in body psychotherapies.***

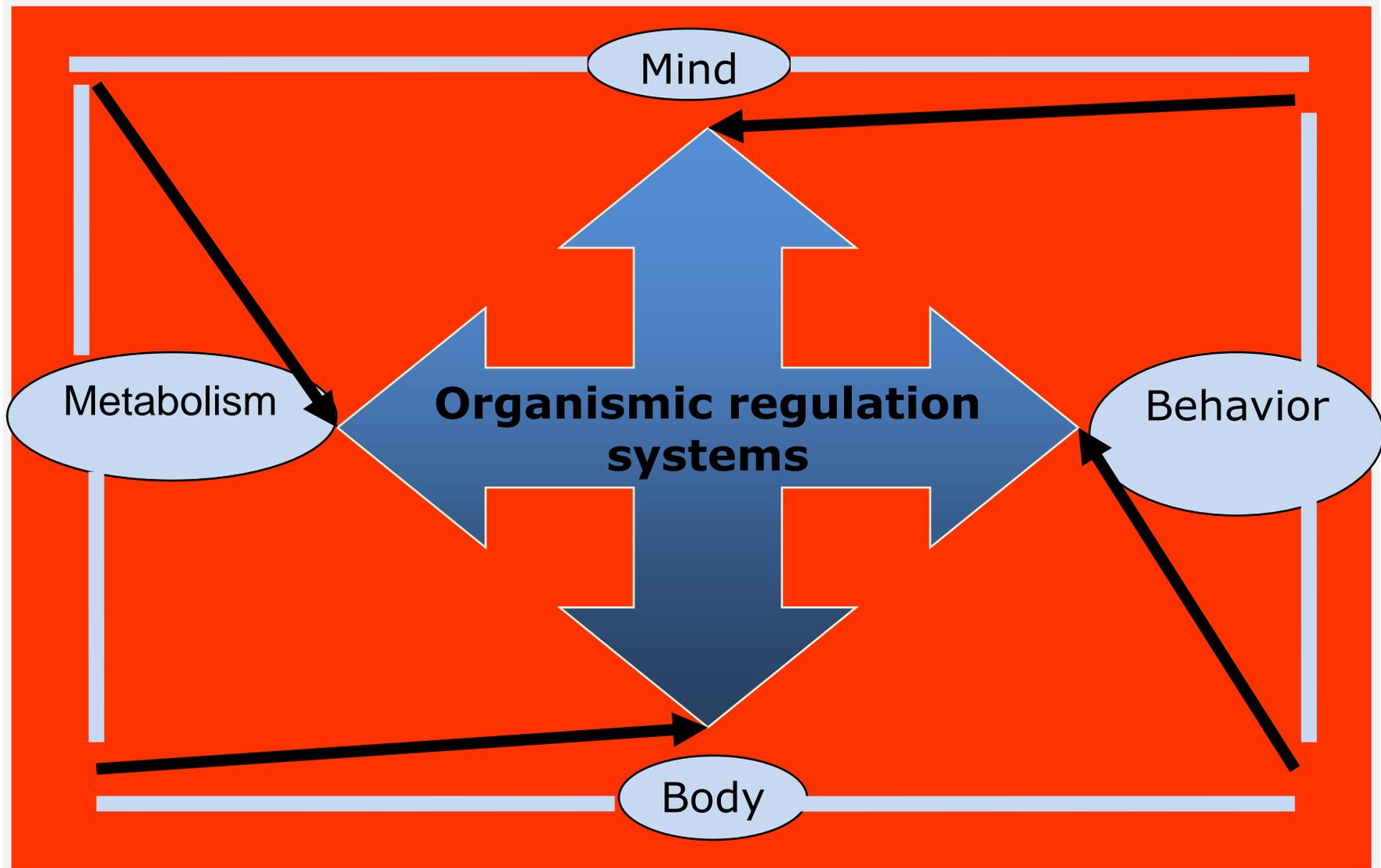
- 2. The **dynamics** of the **body** (e.g., postural coordination), of **behavior** (e.g., my capacity to interact with others), and of the **mind** (e.g., what sort of arguments can I understand and use?) are already different. These dimensions function differently A) because they are composed of **different mechanisms**, and B) because these mechanisms have distinct requirements. The environment (professional, cultural, etc.) imposes yet another series of requirements.
- 3. In body psychotherapy, ***an individual's behavior and mind is now analyzed as ways of coordinating these internal and external requirements within an organism.*** The treatment often helps an individual to find ways of thinking and behaving that make such a coordination more comfortable.

We thus have two type of preoccupations:

- A, ***Organismic regulation repair systems*** (e.g., as in Wilhelm Reich & Gerda Boyesen's theories).
- B, ***Relational regulation repair system*** (e.g., as in Beatrice Beebe and Ed Tronick's theories).

The imperative need ***to understand the coordination of global organismic physiological systems and social regulation systems***, was beautifully illustrated by Luciano Rispoli and Michel Odent, on Sunday morning.

# A. Intra-organismic regulation I describe with the system of organismic dimensions (SOD) (Heller 2008)

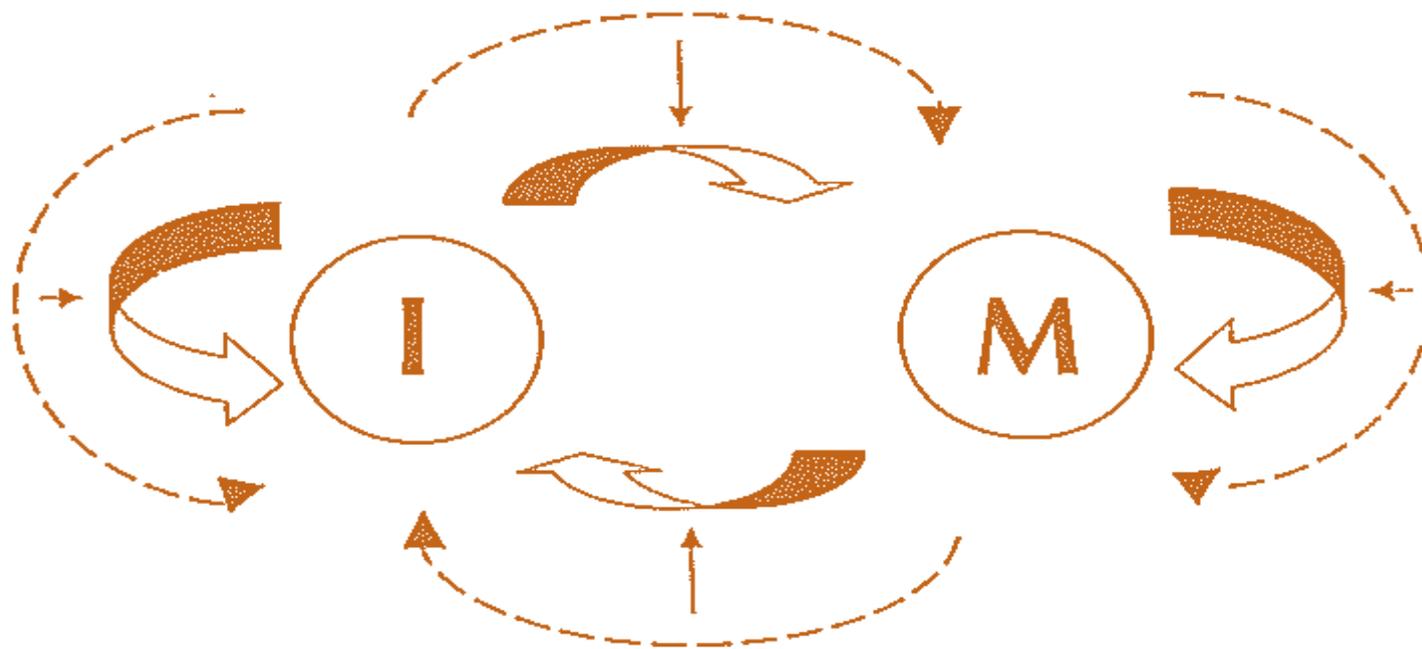


# B. Inter-organism regulation in a dyad I use dyadic Beebe's model (Beebe & Lachmann 2002)

Infant  
Self-Regulation

Interactive  
Regulation

Mother  
Self-Regulation



$$\left. \begin{array}{l} M \rightarrow I \\ I \rightarrow M \end{array} \right\} \text{Predictability/Probability}$$

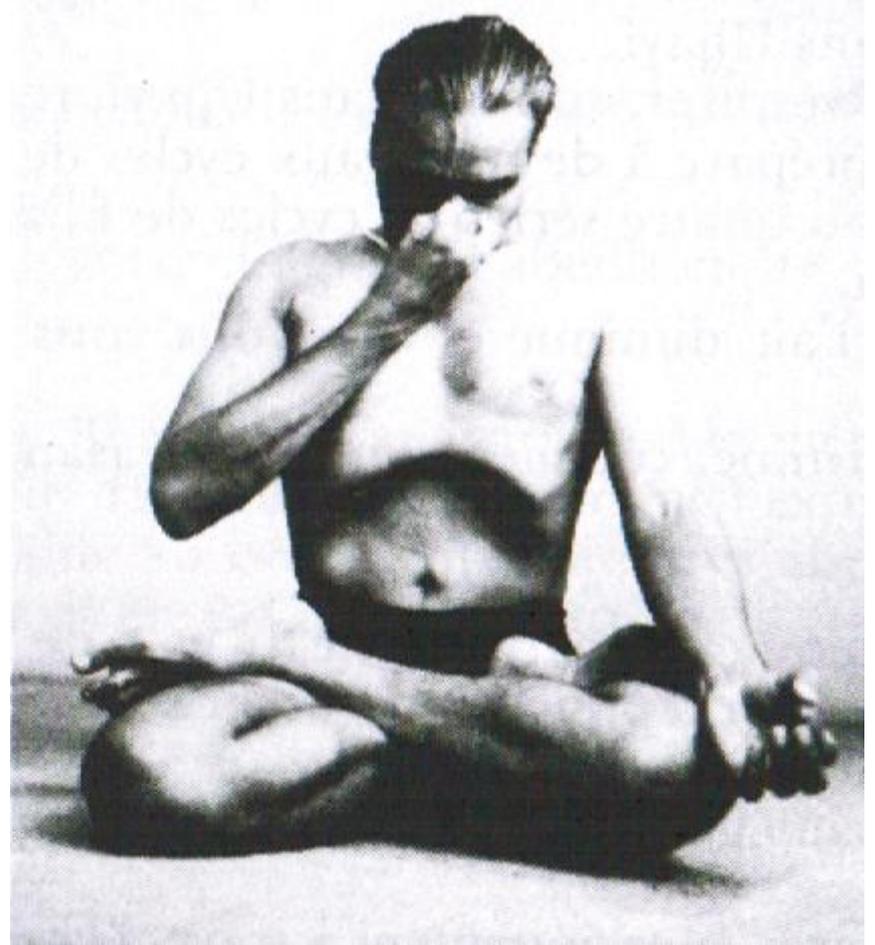
Figure 1. Systems Model of Interaction. Arrows indicate predictability ("coordination" or "influence") between partners. Dotted arrows represent the history of the pattern of predictability.

# Boadella's resonance

- One of the most interesting capacities of body psychotherapists is their capacity to work on how dimensions resonate with each other:
  - A) within each organism and
  - B) across organisms in an interaction

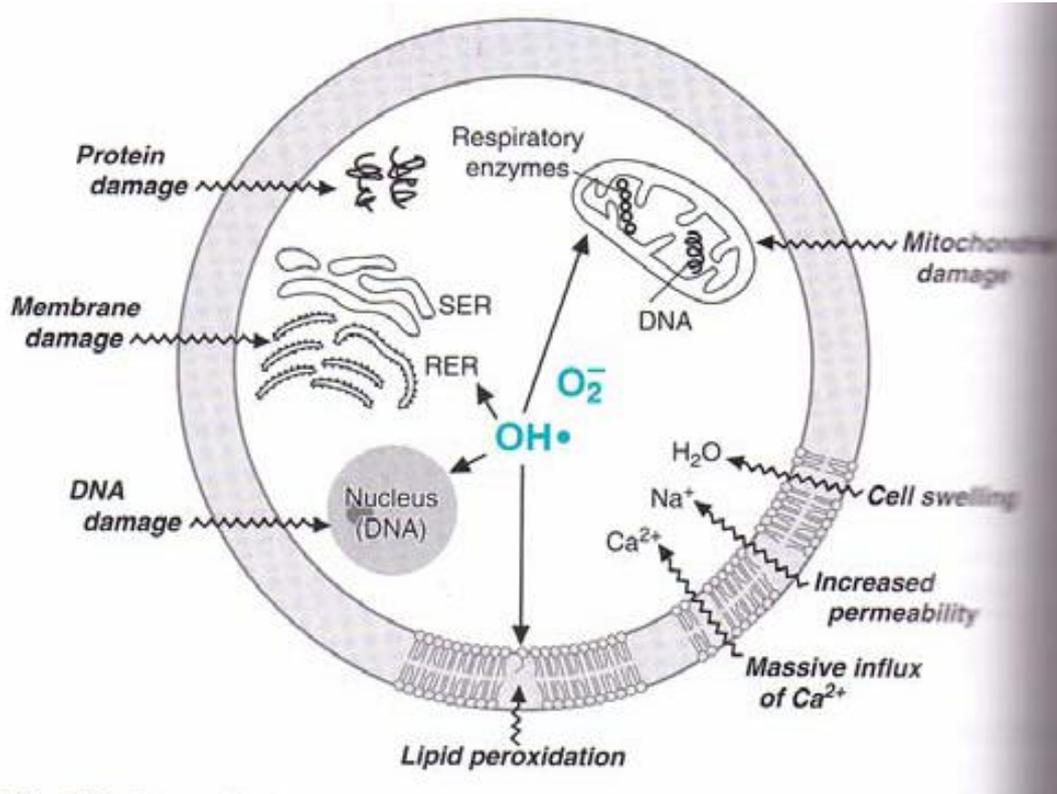
# III. Metabolism in psychotherapeutic and psychosomatic approaches

- Contemporary body psychotherapy integrates the models of Yoga and the Martial Arts, when it assumes that ***the links between these dimensions are necessarily indirect and multiple***. This hypothesis is particularly well illustrated today by ***Patrik Vuillemier***'s research, in the neurological department of Geneva (<http://labnic.unige.ch/nic/html/publication.html>).
- These indirect links are formed by ***nervous, breathing, cardio-vascular and hormonal dynamics***.
- The main change between traditional and scientific approaches, is that what was then called ***Prana and Chi*** is now mostly studied as ***metabolic mechanisms***.



Breathing exercises have a well known impact on physiology, and affects such as excitement or relaxation.

But, it also has a strong impact on ***metabolic dynamics***.



After having left the lungs and arterial blood, oxygen helps cells to survive and communicate. It is mostly in this way that it participates in the bio-energetic\* dynamics of the organism.

Bryant Miles 2003.  
<http://www.tamu.edu/classes/bmiles/lectures/Oxygen%20Metabolism%20and%20Oxygen%20Toxicity.pdf>

\*This term is used in the biochemical literature since a century.

- **Metabolism** activates **homeostatic** regulation systems.
- Homeostasis has a dramatic impact on how the organism interacts with the environment in functions of ***basic metabolic needs***. For example the internal fluids of the organism require ***small variations*** of temperature, acidity, equilibrium of chemicals (oxygen, negative and positively charged atoms, etc.) and metabolic wastes (or toxins).
- These requirements can be associated with major social skills such as building houses, heating machinery and various forms of agriculture.

# Metabolism in psychotherapy

- Metabolism is a key element when one works with ***breathing constriction*** or ***eating disorders*** such as anorexia and bulimia.
- In the case of ***anorexia***, the metabolism ***accommodates*** to a new way of eating. Just changing the behavior is not enough. Anorexic behavior associates itself not only with mental and affective dynamics, but also with ***new stabilized pathological metabolic requirements***. A change of behavior only becomes stable in such cases, ***if therapy has lasted long enough to have initiated and activated new metabolic, emotional and mental ways of functioning***.

# Conclusion: Psychotherapy & Research

- **Such a vision of body psychotherapy allows a practitioner to integrate:**
- **1. *Methods which are robust since thousands of years in many cultures*** (e.g., Yoga and martial arts).
- **2. *New scientific developments.***
- **3. *Clinical research*** which groups observations made by psychotherapists.

- This triple source of knowledge remains necessary as long as scientific enquiry has not entered in a ***systematic*** research program on the dynamics that a body psychotherapist works with.
- Clinical research in psychotherapy has also inspired research in the experimental sciences.
- Even formulations made by Reich in his last years, have been revised by more recent scientific research, as in considerations on ***how to give birth*** (e.g., Leboyer & Odent), or on ***the relation between emotions and cancer***, etc.

- It can be seen that the more robust formulations of body psychotherapists are often ***confirmed and transformed*** by current experimental research (physiology, neurology, psychology, communication theory, anthropology, etc.).
- For example, it is only recently that scientists seem to have “discovered” that ***breathing and anxiety are strongly connected***. Yet this association has been robustly described since thousand of years by practitioners in most disciplines that include body work.
- Consider the following examples:
- - Kunik, M.E; Roundy, K; Veazey, C; Souchek, J; Richardson, P; Wray, N.P. & Stanley, M.A. (2005). ***Surprisingly High Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression in Chronic Breathing Disorders.*** *Chest*, 127 :1205 - 1211.

- - Chen, J. C; Brown, B. & Schmid, K.L. (2004). ***Effect of unilateral forced nostril breathing<sup>1</sup> on tonic accommodation and intraocular pressure.*** *Clinical Autonomic Research*, 14, 6: 396-400.
- - Han, J; Zhu, Y; Li, S; Chen, X; Put, C; Van de Woestijne, K.P. & Van den Bergh, O. (2005). ***Respiratory Complaints in Chinese: Cultural and Diagnostic Specificities.*** *Chest*, 127:1942 - 1951.
- It is possible that these studies, specially the one carried out in China, were influenced by acupuncturists and masters of the martial arts. Many scientists also practice these disciplines outside of their working hours.
  
- 1. This is mostly a Yoga technique

- The considerations summarized in this presentation, have been developed in the **Manual of Body Psychotherapies**, written in French, that the DeBoeck University Editions are publishing at the end of this month.
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