

hermetic in its roots

The allure of the ancient and the hidden often draws us to explore concepts that seem simultaneously familiar and profoundly mysterious. One such concept, often whispered in hushed tones or found in the philosophical underpinnings of esoteric traditions, is the idea of something being hermetic in its roots. This phrase suggests a profound connection to the wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus, a legendary figure whose teachings are said to encapsulate fundamental truths about the universe and our place within it. Understanding what it means for something to be hermetic in its roots opens a gateway to exploring ancient philosophies, occult traditions, and even modern scientific paradigms that echo these primordial insights.

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Unpacking "Hermetic in its Roots": A Foundation of Ancient Wisdom

To grasp what it means for something to be hermetic in its roots is to delve into a lineage of thought that stretches back to the dawn of recorded philosophy. It signifies an inherent connection to the fundamental principles and practices associated with Hermes Trismegistus, a mythical syncretic deity. This phrase implies that the very foundation, the core essence, of a belief system, practice, or even a phenomenon is deeply intertwined with the ancient hermetic tradition. It suggests a shared ancestry of knowledge, a common source of understanding that permeates its deepest layers. The

hermetic worldview, which we will explore extensively, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the interconnectedness of all things, the immutable laws governing existence, and the potential for human transformation.

The All-Encompassing Nature of Hermetic Philosophy

The concept of being hermetic in its roots points to a holistic and all-encompassing philosophical system. It is not merely a collection of isolated beliefs but a coherent and unified approach to reality. This holistic perspective suggests that the fundamental truths it seeks to convey are universally applicable, transcending specific cultures or time periods. When we speak of something being hermetic in its roots, we are acknowledging its foundational alignment with this ancient and enduring wisdom tradition. This alignment influences its structure, its underlying principles, and its ultimate purpose, often pointing towards self-knowledge and spiritual enlightenment.

Establishing the Hermetic Connection

The key to understanding hermetic in its roots lies in identifying the direct or indirect lineage from the Hermetic Corpus and related ancient texts. This connection is not always explicit but can be traced through the recurrence of core hermetic tenets. These tenets act as an invisible thread, binding diverse philosophies and practices to their ancient hermetic origins. Whether it's a symbolic representation, a philosophical argument, or a ritualistic practice, its hermetic roots become evident when these fundamental hermetic principles are clearly discernible within its foundational structure.

The Archetypal Figure: Hermes Trismegistus and the Hermetic Tradition

At the heart of the concept of being hermetic in its roots lies the enigmatic figure of Hermes Trismegistus. This name represents a fusion of the Greek god Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and the Egyptian god Thoth, the deity of wisdom, writing, and magic. Hermes Trismegistus is traditionally credited with authorship of the Hermetic Corpus, a collection of philosophical and religious texts that form the bedrock of hermeticism. His teachings are considered a source of profound, timeless wisdom, offering insights into the nature of the cosmos, the human soul, and the divine.

Who was Hermes Trismegistus?

Hermes Trismegistus is not a historical figure in the conventional sense but rather a symbolic representation of divine wisdom. He is often depicted as a wise sage, a mediator between the divine and the human realms. The moniker "Trismegistus," meaning "thrice greatest," signifies his mastery over three realms: alchemy, astrology, and theology. This triple aspect underscores the comprehensive nature of hermetic wisdom, which seeks to understand the universe through the interconnectedness of its various manifestations.

The Hermetic Corpus: The Foundation of Hermetic Wisdom

The texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, collectively known as the Hermetic Corpus, are the primary source for understanding what it means for something to be hermetic in its roots. These writings, dating from antiquity, explore a wide range of subjects, including cosmology, metaphysics, ethics, and the nature of the divine. Key texts such as the Corpus Hermeticum and the Emerald Tablet contain the core philosophical propositions that have guided hermetic thought for centuries. The emphasis on gnosis, or direct experiential knowledge of the divine, is a recurring theme that profoundly shapes the hermetic outlook.

Core Principles of Hermeticism: The Universal Laws

Understanding what it means for something to be hermetic in its roots requires an exploration of the fundamental principles that define hermetic philosophy. These principles, often referred to as the Seven Hermetic Principles, are considered universal laws governing all existence. They provide a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of the universe and the power of human consciousness to influence reality. These principles are not merely abstract concepts but practical guidelines for living and understanding the world.

The Principle of Mentalism: The All is Mind

One of the most foundational principles of hermeticism is the Principle of Mentalism, which states that "The All is Mind; The Universe is Mental." This principle suggests that reality itself is a manifestation of thought, and that the physical universe is the result of a universal consciousness. For something to be hermetic in its roots often means that it acknowledges or

operates under this fundamental axiom. It implies that our thoughts have creative power and that by understanding and directing our mental processes, we can influence our reality. This principle is crucial in understanding many hermetic practices, as it highlights the role of intention and consciousness.

The Principle of Correspondence: As Above, So Below

The Principle of Correspondence, famously articulated as "As Above, So Below; As Below, So Above," is another cornerstone of hermetic thought. This principle posits a deep resonance between different levels of existence, from the cosmic (macrocosm) to the individual (microcosm). When we identify something as hermetic in its roots, it often means that it operates with this understanding of interconnectedness. This principle is evident in fields like astrology, where celestial movements are seen as corresponding to earthly events, and in alchemy, where the transformation of base metals is seen as mirroring the spiritual purification of the alchemist.

The Principle of Vibration: Nothing Rests

The Principle of Vibration asserts that "Everything vibrates; Nothing rests; Everything is in motion; Everything flies and returns." This principle highlights the dynamic and energetic nature of the universe. All things, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy, are in constant motion, vibrating at different frequencies. A practice or belief system that is hermetic in its roots will often reflect an awareness of these energetic vibrations and the potential to influence them. This principle underpins many practices related to sound, music, and energy work within esoteric traditions.

The Principle of Polarity: Everything is Dual

The Principle of Polarity states that "Everything is dual; Everything has poles; Everything has its pair of opposites; Like and unlike are the same; Opposites are identical in nature, but different in degree; Extremes meet; All truths, all paradoxes, contain their own contradictions." This principle teaches that opposites are merely different degrees of the same underlying reality. For something to be hermetic in its roots often means it acknowledges this duality and seeks to find balance and synthesis between opposing forces. It suggests that understanding these polarities allows for a more nuanced and complete perception of reality.

The Principle of Rhythm: The Pendulum Swings

The Principle of Rhythm, which states that "Everything flows, out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the pendulum swing is manifest in everything; the measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates," emphasizes the cyclical nature of all things. This principle is deeply ingrained in the understanding of natural cycles, from the seasons to the ebb and flow of life. When we speak of something being hermetic in its roots, it implies an understanding and acceptance of these inherent rhythms and the inevitability of change.

The Principle of Cause and Effect: Every Cause Has Its Effect

The Principle of Cause and Effect, often summarized as "Every cause has its effect; every effect has its cause; chance is but a name for a law not recognized; there are planes of causation, but nothing escapes the law," is a fundamental concept in hermeticism. It underscores the interconnectedness of actions and consequences. A system that is hermetic in its roots inherently operates with an understanding of this law, recognizing that every action, thought, and intention sets in motion a chain of events. This principle is closely related to karma in Eastern traditions.

The Principle of Gender: Gender is in Everything

The Principle of Gender asserts that "Gender is in everything and in all things; masculine and feminine genders are the active and passive aspects of the same thing." This principle extends beyond biological sex to encompass the dynamic interplay of active (masculine) and passive (feminine) energies present in all creation. When something is described as hermetic in its roots, it often implies an understanding of these generative forces and their balance within the universal creative process. This principle is vital in understanding concepts of creation and duality within hermetic thought.

Hermeticism in Ancient Wisdom Traditions

The enduring influence of hermetic thought means that many ancient wisdom traditions exhibit characteristics of being hermetic in its roots. This is not to say they are purely hermetic, but rather that they incorporate or resonate with its core principles and worldview. The syncretic nature of ancient cultures often allowed for the blending and absorption of philosophical ideas, leading to a rich tapestry of interwoven wisdom.

Egyptian Roots and the Legacy of Thoth

The Egyptian deity Thoth is considered a primary precursor to Hermes Trismegistus. Thoth was revered as the god of wisdom, magic, writing, and the moon. The ancient Egyptians developed sophisticated cosmological and philosophical systems that emphasized divine order, the afterlife, and the power of sacred knowledge. Many of the ideas found in the Hermetic Corpus, such as the emphasis on divine mediation and the interconnectedness of the spiritual and material realms, can be traced back to ancient Egyptian beliefs. Therefore, any tradition with strong ties to Egyptian mysticism can be considered hermetic in its roots.

Hellenistic Philosophy and the Syncretic Era

During the Hellenistic period, there was a significant cultural exchange between Egypt and the Greek world. This era saw the fusion of Greek philosophical concepts with Egyptian religious and magical traditions, leading to the development of syncretic deities and philosophies, including the figure of Hermes Trismegistus. Neoplatonism, a prominent philosophical school of this era, drew heavily from hermetic ideas, emphasizing the ascent of the soul through various spiritual levels and the pursuit of gnosis. Philosophies that emerged or flourished during this period often exhibit clear hermetic influences, thus being hermetic in its roots.

Gnosticism and the Pursuit of Inner Knowledge

Gnosticism, a diverse religious and philosophical movement that emerged in the early centuries CE, shares many thematic similarities with hermeticism. Both traditions emphasize the importance of gnosis—a direct, intuitive knowledge of the divine—as the path to spiritual liberation. Gnostic cosmology often involves complex hierarchies of spiritual beings and a dualistic worldview, mirroring some hermetic concepts. Movements with a strong emphasis on esoteric knowledge and the awakening of inner consciousness can be considered hermetic in its roots due to this shared focus.

The Hermetic Influence on Alchemy

Alchemy, the ancient proto-scientific and philosophical tradition, is arguably one of the most direct and profound expressions of being hermetic in its roots. The alchemical quest for the transmutation of base metals into gold was not merely a material pursuit but a symbolic representation of spiritual transformation and the attainment of perfection. The core

principles and symbolism of alchemy are deeply imbued with hermetic philosophy.

The Great Work and Spiritual Transformation

The alchemical "Great Work" (Magnum Opus) involved a series of stages, both material and spiritual, aimed at achieving the Philosopher's Stone, a legendary substance believed to grant immortality and transmute metals. This process was seen as a parallel to the alchemist's own spiritual purification and enlightenment. The intricate symbolism and allegorical language used in alchemical texts are steeped in hermetic principles, particularly the concept of "As Above, So Below." Any practice or teaching that mirrors this alchemical journey of inner transformation can be considered hermetic in its roots.

Symbolism and Correspondences in Alchemy

Alchemical treatises are replete with symbolic imagery, astrological signs, and planetary correspondences. These elements are used to represent various stages of the alchemical process and the complex interplay of forces involved. The use of such symbolic systems, directly derived from hermetic cosmology and the principle of correspondence, is a strong indicator of something being hermetic in its roots. For example, the stages of calcination, dissolution, separation, conjunction, fermentation, distillation, and coagulation all carry profound spiritual and symbolic meanings rooted in hermetic understanding.

Hermeticism and the Art of Astrology

Astrology, the study of celestial bodies and their perceived influence on human affairs and earthly events, is another field that is deeply hermetic in its roots. The hermetic principle of correspondence, "As Above, So Below," provides the foundational justification for astrological practice. The belief that the movements of the planets and stars reflect or influence life on Earth is a direct manifestation of this hermetic axiom.

Celestial Influences and Earthly Matters

Hermeticism posits that the cosmos is a living, interconnected organism, and that events in the macrocosm have corresponding effects in the microcosm. Astrology, in this context, is a tool for understanding these correspondences, interpreting the patterns in the heavens to gain insights

into human nature, destiny, and the cycles of life. Any system that uses celestial alignments to understand earthly phenomena is demonstrably hermetic in its roots.

Astrology as a Hermetic Science

Within the hermetic framework, astrology is considered a sacred science, a means of unlocking the divine plan and understanding the underlying order of the universe. It is not merely about prediction but about understanding the archetypal forces and energies that shape existence. The intricate calculations, the symbolic meanings assigned to planets, signs, and houses, all reflect a profound engagement with hermetic principles of order, correspondence, and celestial influence.

The Hermetic View of the Microcosm and Macrocosm

A central tenet of hermetic philosophy, and a key indicator of something being hermetic in its roots, is the profound relationship between the microcosm (the individual) and the macrocosm (the universe). This concept of sympathetic resonance and interconnectedness is fundamental to the hermetic worldview.

The Human Being as a Universe

Hermeticism teaches that the human being is a universe in miniature, reflecting the greater cosmos. Just as the universe has its celestial bodies and forces, the human being has its physical, mental, and spiritual components that operate in analogous ways. This understanding emphasizes the potential within each individual to understand and interact with the greater universal laws. Traditions that view humanity as a divine reflection or a universe unto itself are often hermetic in its roots.

The Law of Attraction and Manifestation

The hermetic principle of Mentalism, coupled with the principle of Correspondence, forms the basis for many modern concepts of the Law of Attraction. The belief that thoughts and intentions can manifest reality implies a direct connection between the microcosm (the individual's mind) and the macrocosm (the universal creative forces). Practices focused on harnessing mental power and aligning one's inner state with desired outer

conditions are demonstrably hermetic in its roots.

Hermeticism in Esoteric Philosophy and Mysticism

The enduring legacy of hermeticism is most evident in its pervasive influence on various esoteric philosophies and mystical traditions throughout history. These traditions often preserve and reinterpret hermetic teachings, adapting them to new cultural contexts while retaining their fundamental essence.

The Rosicrucian Tradition

The Rosicrucians, a mystical fraternity that emerged in Europe in the 17th century, are deeply rooted in hermeticism. Their teachings, often expressed through symbolic allegories and alchemical metaphors, emphasize the pursuit of spiritual wisdom, the transformation of the self, and the interconnectedness of all creation. The Rosicrucian quest for hidden knowledge and inner illumination clearly indicates a lineage that is hermetic in its roots.

Theosophy and Modern Esotericism

Modern esoteric movements, such as Theosophy, founded by Helena Blavatsky, have also drawn heavily from hermetic principles. Theosophy sought to synthesize various world religions and philosophies, integrating hermetic concepts of universal oneness, reincarnation, and the evolution of consciousness. The revival and reinterpretation of ancient wisdom, including hermeticism, in these movements further solidifies their status as being hermetic in its roots.

Kabbalah and Hermetic Qabalah

While Kabbalah is a distinctly Jewish mystical tradition, its development in the Western esoteric tradition, particularly through Hermetic Qabalah, demonstrates a clear hermetic influence. Hermetic Qabalah integrates Kabbalistic concepts with hermetic philosophy, astrology, and alchemy, creating a rich system of spiritual understanding. The synthesis of these traditions highlights how hermetic ideas have been adapted and integrated into other spiritual frameworks, often resulting in a system that is hermetic in its roots.

Modern Interpretations of "Hermetic in its Roots"

The concept of being hermetic in its roots is not confined to historical or strictly defined esoteric traditions. In contemporary thought, it can refer to any system or practice that embodies the core philosophical underpinnings of hermeticism, even if it doesn't explicitly claim a direct lineage.

Psychology and the Archetypes

Carl Jung's analytical psychology, with its emphasis on archetypes, the collective unconscious, and individuation, resonates deeply with hermetic principles. The concept of the "shadow," the integration of opposites, and the journey of self-discovery all echo hermetic ideas about the microcosm reflecting the macrocosm and the process of spiritual transformation. Psychological approaches that focus on the symbolic and archetypal aspects of the human psyche can be seen as hermetic in its roots.

Quantum Physics and Interconnectedness

While a scientific discipline, quantum physics has revealed phenomena that seem to mirror hermetic principles, particularly the interconnectedness of all things and the role of consciousness. Concepts like quantum entanglement, where particles remain connected regardless of distance, and the observer effect, where observation influences outcomes, have led some to draw parallels with the hermetic understanding of a unified, mind-driven universe. Scientific theories that suggest a fundamental interconnectedness and a non-local reality can be interpreted as demonstrating ideas that are hermetic in its roots.

Personal Development and Manifestation Practices

Many modern personal development and self-help movements, particularly those focused on manifestation, goal setting, and positive thinking, often employ principles that are hermetic in its roots. The emphasis on the power of thought, intention, and visualization to shape one's reality directly aligns with the hermetic Principle of Mentalism. These practices, whether consciously recognized or not, tap into the ancient wisdom of hermeticism regarding the creative power of the mind.

Conclusion: Embracing the Hermetic Legacy

In essence, when we speak of something being hermetic in its roots, we are acknowledging a profound connection to the ancient and timeless wisdom tradition attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. This connection signifies an adherence to fundamental principles of universal interconnectedness, the power of consciousness, and the cyclical nature of existence. From the esoteric teachings of alchemy and astrology to the archetypal explorations in psychology and the emergent understandings in quantum physics, the hermetic worldview continues to offer a potent framework for comprehending the mysteries of life. By understanding these core principles and their historical manifestations, we can better appreciate the enduring relevance of being hermetic in its roots and its potential to guide us towards deeper knowledge and personal transformation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the core principles of Hermeticism, and how do they relate to its ancient roots?

The core principles of Hermeticism, often summarized by the Emerald Tablet, include the Principle of Mentalism (the All is Mind), Correspondence (as above, so below), Vibration (nothing rests, everything moves), Polarity (everything has poles), Rhythm (everything flows out and in), Cause and Effect (every cause has its effect), and Gender (everything has its masculine and feminine principles). These principles are deeply rooted in ancient Egyptian philosophical and religious traditions, particularly the figure of Thoth (identified with the Greek Hermes Trismegistus), and Hellenistic mystery cults.

What historical texts are considered foundational to Hermeticism, and what do they reveal about its origins?

The foundational texts are primarily the 'Corpus Hermeticum' and the 'Asclepius,' attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. These texts, likely compiled in the early centuries CE, blend Platonic philosophy, Gnosticism, and earlier Egyptian and Hellenistic religious ideas. They reveal a syncretic spiritual tradition aiming at gnosis (knowledge) and salvation through understanding the divine cosmos and one's place within it.

How did Hermeticism influence early Western esotericism and philosophy?

Hermeticism was incredibly influential, particularly during the Renaissance.

It provided a significant alternative to dominant Aristotelian and Christian thought, offering a mystical cosmology, a system of spiritual alchemy, and a belief in humanity's potential for divine communion. Its concepts permeated Neo-Platonism, Kabbalah, and early occult traditions, shaping views on magic, astrology, and the nature of reality.

What is the connection between Hermeticism and ancient Egyptian religion, particularly the god Thoth?

Hermeticism is directly linked to the Egyptian god Thoth, revered as the god of wisdom, writing, magic, and the moon. The figure of Hermes Trismegistus ('Thrice-Greatest Hermes') is a Hellenistic personification of Thoth, incorporating Greek philosophical concepts. The texts attributed to him are seen as transmissions of ancient Egyptian esoteric knowledge, particularly concerning cosmology, creation, and the afterlife.

How does the concept of 'as above, so below' originate within Hermeticism's roots?

The principle of 'as above, so below' is a central tenet, famously stated in the first sentence of the Emerald Tablet: 'What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below.' This reflects an ancient worldview, present in many early cultures, that the macrocosm (the universe) and the microcosm (humanity or the earthly realm) are interconnected and reflect each other, suggesting a unified divine order.

What role did alchemy play in early Hermetic practices and beliefs?

Alchemy, both physical and spiritual, was a significant Hermetic practice. Rooted in ancient metallurgical and philosophical traditions, Hermetic alchemy sought not just to transmute base metals into gold, but also to achieve spiritual purification, the perfection of the soul, and the union with the divine. The processes and symbols of alchemy were understood as allegories for inner transformation.

How did the revival of Hermetic texts during the Renaissance impact scientific and philosophical thought?

The rediscovery and translation of the 'Corpus Hermeticum' in the 15th century had a profound impact. Scholars like Marsilio Ficino saw Hermeticism as a precursor to Christianity, integrating its ideas into Renaissance humanism. It challenged the monopoly of Aristotelianism and offered a more mystical, magical, and vitalistic view of the universe, influencing figures like Giordano Bruno and contributing to the intellectual climate that

eventually led to the Scientific Revolution, albeit indirectly.

What is the Hermetic concept of gnosis, and how is it related to the divine and human potential?

Gnosis, in Hermeticism, refers to intuitive knowledge or direct spiritual insight into the divine nature and the workings of the cosmos. It's not mere intellectual understanding but a transformative experience. Hermetic texts emphasize that through this gnosis, humans can understand their divine origin, overcome ignorance and material limitations, and ultimately achieve spiritual liberation or apotheosis, reuniting with the divine All.

Are there any precursor traditions or philosophies that clearly informed the early development of Hermeticism?

Yes, Hermeticism is a syncretic tradition. Its roots are clearly informed by: 1) Ancient Egyptian religion and philosophy, especially the concept of divine wisdom embodied by Thoth. 2) Hellenistic Greek philosophy, particularly Platonism and Neo-Platonism, contributing concepts like the Demiurge, the divine intellect, and the soul's journey. 3) Gnosticism, with its emphasis on secret knowledge for salvation and the critique of the material world. 4) Mystical and magical traditions of the ancient Near East.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to hermeticism in its roots, with descriptions:

1. The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy

This foundational text presents the core principles of Hermeticism, encapsulating its wisdom through seven universal laws. It explores concepts like mentalism, correspondence, vibration, polarity, rhythm, cause and effect, and gender. The book acts as an accessible introduction to a complex philosophical and spiritual tradition that has influenced many esoteric systems.

2. The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus

Attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the legendary founder of Hermeticism, this ancient and enigmatic text is remarkably concise yet profoundly influential. It contains the famous aphorism, "As above, so below, as within, so without," which encapsulates the principle of correspondence. The tablet is considered a cornerstone of alchemy, magic, and Western esotericism, outlining a universal truth.

3. Corpus Hermeticum

This collection of ancient Greek philosophical and religious writings is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. It delves into theological, cosmological,

and ethical themes, exploring the nature of God, the universe, and the human soul. The texts discuss divine revelation, the ascent of the soul, and the quest for knowledge and spiritual liberation.

4. The Way of Hermes (Poimandres)

Often considered the most important text within the Corpus Hermeticum, Poimandres describes a mystical vision and dialogue experienced by Hermes with the divine Mind. It outlines the creation of the cosmos, the fall of humanity, and the path to salvation through gnosis (knowledge). This work highlights the Hermetic emphasis on divine illumination and the return to God.

5. The Arabic Texts of the Hermetica

These translations and commentaries on Hermetic philosophy emerged in the Islamic world, demonstrating the enduring influence of Hermetic thought across cultures. They often include alchemical treatises and discussions on the virtues of stones and metals. These texts reveal how Hermetic ideas were preserved, adapted, and integrated into Islamic esoteric traditions.

6. Asclepius

Another significant work attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the Asclepius is a dialogue that explores the relationship between humanity, the cosmos, and the divine. It addresses topics such as the creation of humankind, the role of astrology, and the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of all things. The dialogue emphasizes the power of human intellect and the potential for spiritual ascent.

7. The Book of Thoth

While often shrouded in legend and associated with ancient Egyptian mythology, the Book of Thoth is deeply entwined with the Hermetic tradition. It is believed to contain profound magical and alchemical knowledge, secrets of the universe, and wisdom concerning the afterlife. The book represents a quest for ultimate knowledge and spiritual power.

8. The Golden Tractate of Hermes Trismegistus

This alchemical text, attributed to Hermes, is focused on the principles of the Great Work – the transformation of base metals into gold. It explains the philosophical underpinnings of alchemy, emphasizing spiritual purification and the attainment of perfection. The Golden Tractate serves as a guide to understanding the alchemical process as both a material and spiritual endeavor.

9. The Hermetic and Arabic Sources of the Renaissance

This scholarly work examines the rediscovery and translation of ancient Hermetic texts during the Renaissance. It highlights how these rediscovered writings significantly influenced European philosophy, art, science, and magic. The book illustrates the profound impact of Hermeticism on the intellectual and cultural landscape of the Western world.

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