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In 430 B.C. Pericles appealed to the Athenians with his last speech that is remarkable for its mention of those Athenians who “in the alarm of the moment have become enamored of the honesty of such an unambitious part (ἀπραγμοσύνῃ ἀνδραγαθίζεται)” or “playing the agathos by remaining inactive” - in the alternative translation. I should label them as the andragathizomenoi. 

Cleon’s speech in the Mytilenean debate displays many ideas in common with Pericles’ last speech. He reproaches those who ‘cultivate honesty without danger (ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι)’. One can easily find here a close stylistic similarity with Pericles’ words. Both speakers label Athens’ power over the allies as a tyranny. They both mention andragathizomenoi and made them responsible for giving up the empire. Were these textual similarities accidental or intentional? and who were the andragathizomenoi?

**Keywords:** Thucydides, Peloponnesian War, Pericles, Cleon, apragmones, andragathia.

In 430 B.C. Pericles appealed to the Athenians with his last speech. He came forward in an unfavorable situation. Many Athenians, being discouraged over the beginning of the war, were dissatisfied with their leader. They wanted to make peace with the Peloponnesians, but their initiative was unsuccessful. In his last speech, Pericles persuaded the Athenians to continue the war in spite of the difficulties they were faced with. The war, he argued, was inevitable. The Athenians had no choice: whether to submit to the Spartans or to fight for their independence. That independence relied not only on the Athenians’ will but on them retaining their power over the allies:

Again, your country has a right to your services in sustaining the glories of her position. These are a common source of pride to you all, and you cannot decline the burdens of empire and still expect to share its honors. You should remember also that what you are fighting against is not merely slavery as an exchange for independence, but also loss of empire and danger from the animosities incurred in its exercise. Besides, to recede is no longer possible, if indeed any of you in the alarm of the moment has become enamored of the honesty of such an unambitious part (αὕτης καὶ τόδε ἐν τῷ παρόντι δεδιώκεται ἀπραγμοσύνῃ ἀνδραγαθίζεται).

2 Pericles himself speaks about great and sudden changes of fortune (Thuc. II.61.2-3), the plague was beyond any forecast (Thuc. II.64.1). However, that change (and fickleness of the people when faced with it) was foreseen in Pericles’ first speech (Thuc. I.140.1).
3 “Play the agathos by remaining inactive” (ADKINS 1972, 134) and “the timid or inactive among you feel like playing at being noble” in Hornblower’s translation (HORNBLOWER 1991, 337).
Then follows his famous utterance:

For what you hold is, to speak somewhat plainly, a tyranny; to take it perhaps was wrong, but to let it go is unsafe. And men of these retiring views, making converts of others, would quickly ruin a state; indeed the result would be the same if they could live independent by themselves; for the retiring and unambitious are never secure without vigorous protectors at their side (τὸ γὰρ ἄπραγμον οὐ σώζεται μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δραστηρίου τεταγμένον); in fine, such qualities are useless to an imperial city, though they may help a dependency to an unmolested servitude (Thuc. II.63.1-3, tr. Dutton).4

Further Pericles says that anyone who wishes to do something will emulate the Athenians, while the apragmon would consider them blameworthy: These glories may incur the censure of the slow and unambitious (κατὰ τὸ μὲν ἄπραγμων μέμψαιτ᾽ ἄν); but in the breast of energy they will awake emulation, and in those who must remain without them an envious regret (Thuc. II.64.4).5

Pericles’ speech is remarkable for its repeated mention of the apragmones and apragmosyne. Some scholars regard apragmosyne as an opposition to imperialistic policy: thus, the apragmones were anti-imperialists and Pericles’ adversaries as well. Polypragmosyne, or an active imperialistic policy, was in this case obviously opposed to apragmosyne.6

Thus they (the Athenians) toil on in trouble and danger all the days of their life, with little opportunity for enjoying, being ever engaged in getting: their only idea of a holiday is to do what the occasion demands, and to them laborious occupation is less of a misfortune than the peace of a quiet life (Ἡσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα) rather than principle.7

However, in his last speech Pericles made us understand that apragmosyne was caused by the alarm of the moment (ἐν τῷ παρόντι δεδιὼς) rather than principle.8 So it was because of the current desperate events rather than opposition that the apragmones did not take into account Athens’ imperial interests.

4 I should accept the interpretation of II.63.3 by Hornblower, who finds here a military metaphor: the apragmon may survive only when “marshalled with the drassterios” (HORNBLOWER 1991, 338).
5 Pericles has in mind here, I assume, the state (i.e. imperial) policy; cf. I.92.5; where the Corcyran ambassadors describe their state’s policy as apragmosyne. See also GOMME 1945, 166-7; HORNBLOWER 1991, 77-8; KLEVE 1964, 85; ALLISON 1979, 13,14; CARTER 1986, 39-40.
6 It is often equated with quietism (hesychia) and wisdom (sophrosyne). Gomme and Rusten consider ἄπραγμον to be a complimentary term (GOMME 1945, 167 f.; RUSTEN 1989, 159; contra EHRBENGER 1947, 48 n. 9; CREED 1973, 228). See also GOMME 1956, 122; CONNOR 1992, 175 f.; contra HUART 1968, 171; ALLISON 1979, 10; on apragmosyne in comedy see EHRBENGER 1947, 54 f.; BUSS 2019. The withdrawal of the apragmon from politics is regarded as an aristocratic style of life (e.g. DONLAN 1980, 122; CARTER 1986, 27). Adkins stated, on the contrary, that ‘quietism’ and inactivity are sharply opposed to the concept of arête (ADKINS 1972, 134).
7 NELST 1926; cf. DIELN 1953; EHRBENGER 1947, 47; ROMILLY 1963, 78, 123; KLEVE 1964, 83-8; CARTER 1986, 27, 38.
8 EHRBENGER 1947; KLEE 1964. For Harding all Athenians were polypragmosyne (HARDING 1981), but Allison doubts if there is an elaborate concept apragmosyne in Thucydides’ work (ALLISON 1979, 13, 14). According to Gomme, Pericles had in mind not any specific group but those who were in nervous state in that moment (GOMME 1956, 167; see also HUART 1968, 371, n. 4).
9 EHRBENGER 1947, 48, n. 9; cf. GOMME 1945, 167 f.
10 Certainly, Pericles may have deliberately misrepresented his opponents’ attitude. But I am inclined to trust in these words.

The apragmon was mentioned in Pericles’ funeral oration. “...Unlike any other nation, he says, regarding him who takes no part in these (public – V.G.) duties not as unambitious but as useless (οὐκ ἄπραγμονα ἀλλ᾽ ἄρεσκον νομίζομεν)” (Thuc. II. 40.2). An apragmon here is anyone who has opted out of public affairs, or avoids public trouble for whatever reason.11 I should label him as an individualist or egotist who places the state’s interest below his own. This use of the word differs slightly from that of Pericles’ last speech.12 In that context it meant those who intended to give up the Empire, and in this context one who withdrew or abstained from political life.13

Regardless of the meaning of apragmosyne, that problem must be investigated in a different way. In his last speech Pericles speaks not about the apragmon but about anyone who in the current situation by preference ἄνδραγαθία ἀνδραγαθίζεται, or, to put it the other way round, apragmosyne andragathizomenoi. The verb ἀνδραγαθίζεται is translated in LSJ as ‘behave in a manly, upright manner’.14 So andragathizomenoi enjoyed the high quality of andragathia, or ‘bravery, manly virtue...the character of an upright man’.

Andragathia is mentioned in Thucydides’ work several times (II.42.3; III.57.111, 64.4; V.101.1). In III.57.1 it is specifically a virtue of the Spartans.15 In another passage the Thebans denounce the false andragathia of the Plataeans (III.64.4).16 In Book V the Athenians explain to the Melians their “content not being an equal one, with honor as the prize and shame as the penalty (οὐ γὰρ περὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ὁ ἀγὼν ἀπράγμων οὐ σῴζεται μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δραστηρίου τεταγμένον)”; but in the breast of energy they will awake emulation, and in those who must remain without it was because of the current desperate events rather than opposition (V.101.1).17

Andragathia denotes here the quality of a noble (or a hoplite). Anyone may display it in battle for the sake of his country. Therefore, Pericles says in his funeral oration:

For there is justice in the claim that steadfastness in his country’s battles should be as a cloak to cover a man’s other imperfections (δίκαιον τὴν ἐς τοὺς πολέμους ἀπράγμονα ἀλλ᾽ ἀπειθεῖτα σῷζεται μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δραστηρίου τεταγμένον); in fine, such qualities are useless to an aristocratic style of life (e.g. DONLAN 1980, 172 [quoting R.A. Neil]). For commentary on this see GOMME 1945, 167 f.}

11 Rhodes translates apragmosyne as ‘avoidance of trouble’ (RHODES 1988, 112, 114 with commentary: 239, 240).
12 Carter points out that the clue lies in the word achreios (CARTER 1986, 27). He thinks the apragmon of funeral oration was Pericles’ adversary rather than a ‘quietist’ (CARTER 1986, 39).
13 CARTER 1986, 39. The apragmon of funeral oration, he argues, was Pericles’ adversary rather than a ‘quietist’ (ibid).
14 LSJ, 127. Dover supposes that the abstract noun ἀνδραγαθία and the verb ἀνδραγαθίζεται do not refer to physical courage but to the possession of qualities which attract respect and admiration (DOVER 1974, 165).
15 LSJ, 127.
16 “A merit for which Dorians especially valued themselves … the special Dorian claim to an aristocratic strain of feeling and conduct” (MARCHANT 1909, 172 [quoting R.A. Neil]).
17 See e.g. HUART 1968, 464.
18 For commentary on this see GOMME et al. 1970, 170. Adkins referred andragathia to the traditional standard of arête (ADKINS 1976, 113).
Pericles obviously regards *andragathia* as (or reduces it to) the soldiers’ manliness and bravery.\(^{19}\)

In II.63.2 we find Pericles reproaching *andragathizomenoi*, or those who wish to demonstrate their manliness and bravery. What is more, he links it with *apragmosyne*. Here perhaps we may detect irony on Pericles’ part. In LSJ ἀπράγμοσύνην ἀνδραγαθίζεται is translated as “if anyone thinks to sit at home and play the honest man.”\(^{20}\) If “men of these retiring views, Pericles insists, making converts of others, would quickly ruin a state; indeed the result would be the same if they could live independent by themselves” (Thuc. II.63.3). Why should non-involvement by these people, Hornblower wonders, be so ruinous?\(^{21}\) He mentions the comedy of Aristophanes, where the two Athenians are looking for *topos apragmon* (trouble-free place) (Ar. Birds 44, cf. Wasps 1040).\(^{22}\) So, the particular ‘trouble’ which they are escaping is Athenian litigation.\(^{23}\) But this does not explain what Pericles said. A similar idea (and possible explanation) one may find in Alcibiades’ speech, who says “that a city not inactive by nature could not choose a quicker way to ruin itself than by suddenly adopting such a policy (πόλιν μὴ ἀπέτυχον τάσσετ’ ἀν μοι δοκεῖν ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῆ διαφθαρῆναι)” (Thuc. VI.18.7).\(^{24}\)**

***

There is another passage in Thucydides’ work, where *andragathizomenoi* are mentioned. Cleon’s speech in the Mytilenean debate, in which he displays many ideas in common with and direct textual echoes of Pericles’ last speech.\(^{25}\)

After Athenians had put down the revolt of Mytilene, they passed a decree according to which all males were to be executed, and the women and children were to be sold into slavery. Thucydides says that the decree owed much to the demagogue Cleon and the Athenians’ anger against the Mytileneans.\(^{26}\) It was Cleon’s motion that won that day (Thuc. III.36.5). The next day the Athenians convened a new meeting of the assembly, regretting their preceding decision.\(^{27}\) This time they changed their minds against Cleon’s opinion.

There were several speakers in that meeting, as Thucydides says, but he informs his readers about two only (e.g. Thuc. III.36.6, 49.1).\(^{28}\) One of them was Cleon who begins his speech this way: “I have often before now been convinced that a democracy is incapable of empire...” (Thuc. III.37.1).\(^{29}\) Then he says (just as Pericles had said before him) that Athens’ power over the allies is nothing other than a tyranny (Thuc. III.37.2).\(^{30}\) That is why Athens’ allies hate the Athenians and are constantly plotting against them. At the end of the speech he says the following:

“To sum up shortly, I say that if you follow my advice you will do what is just towards the Mityleneans, and at the same time expedient; while by a different decision you will not oblige them so much as pass sentence upon yourselves. For if they were right in rebelling, you must be wrong in ruling. However, if, right or wrong, you determine to rule, you must carry out your principle and punish the Mityleneans as your interest requires; or else you must give up your empire and cultivate honesty without danger (ἡ παύεσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι)” (Thuc. III. 40. 4).

Then there came forward Diodotus son of Eucrates, who represented, as Cleon makes us understand, the attitude of the *andragathizomenoi*. He argued against the brutal punishment of the Mytileneans because it would not be useful for the Athenians. The *demos* and the democratic parties of the allied cities, he argued, were potential Athenians’ supporters, they might prevent revolt in the future or make it less dangerous (Thuc. III.46.6-47.7). His motion won after all.\(^{31}\)

One can easily find in Cleon a close stylistic similarity with Pericles’ speech.\(^{32}\) Both speakers label Athens’ power over the allies as a tyranny. They both mention *andragathizomenoi* and made them responsible for giving up the empire. Unlike Pericles, Cleon does not assign them the concept of *apragmosyne*. But his allegation ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι may well be equated with Pericles’ phrase on anyone who ἀπραγμοσύνην ἀνδραγαθίζεται. Pericles’ imperialism means hard work, Cleon’s means danger.

***

The words of Cleon obviously echoed those used by Pericles (Thuc. II.63.2 and III.40.4). These textual similarities, I am sure, were not accidental.\(^{33}\) Pericles and Cleon presented similar ideas. Even though Thucydides has a very different perspective on Pericles and Cleon, their attitudes towards the empire were the same.\(^{34}\) The only part of Cleon’ policy that was certainly un-Periclean, as Gomme maintains (but even so by implication rather than explicitly), was its cruelty and brutality.\(^{35}\) Pericles in his last speech admits that the

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19 The Athenians were credited with *andragathia* in spite of their personal qualities. Carter finds Pericles departing here from tradition (CARTER 1986, 26 f.).


22 See also EIHENBERG 1947, 55.

23 HORNBLOWER 1991, 338, see also DOVER 1974, 188 f.

24 See also EIHENBERG 1947, 50.

25 For lists of the echoes of Pericles in Cleon’s speech see GOMME 1956, 311; CONNOR 1984, 79, n. 1.

26 In his speech Cleon states that the Mytileneans were autonomous and received honour from the Athenians (Thuc. III.39.2). On the *autonomia* of Mytilene see OSTWALD 1982, 31-43.

27 Woodhead found a discrepancy between the motives of the new discussion and what was said by the orators (WOODHEAD 1970, 160, 210, n. 17).

28 For commentary see RHODES 1994, 204; HORNBLOWER 1991, 420 f.

29 That criticism, as Rhodes argues, was more commonly made by oligarchs (RHODES 1994, 205). Lang goes too far in attributing to Cleon the authorship of Ps.-Xenophon’s *Athelenion Politia* (LANG 1972). Connor sees here only Cleon’s exasperation (CONNOR 1984, 84). Winnington-Ingram suspects that Cleon’s criticism and his subsequent reasoning about invalid laws may be addressed to a conservative audience (WINNINGTON-INGRAM 1965, 72).

30 For Hornblower that is the most striking echo of Pericles’ last speech (HORNBLOWER 1991, 422). See also note 27, below.


32 Gomme regarded III.40.4 as the most striking and famous echo of Pericles’ (GOMME 1956, 311).

33 E.g. GOMME 1945, 311; contra ROMILLY 1963, 164-7.

34 E.g. ADKINS 1972, 134 f.; see also CREED 1973.

35 GOMME 1951, 78. Thucydides intends perhaps to point out the
acquisition of the empire seemed *adikon* and its possession is a tyranny, but insists that it would be dangerous to abandon it (Thuc. II.63.2; cf. III.37.2). The opposing view Pericles expressed through ἄκραμος ἀνάργυρητά is one of most outrageous oxymora possible in Greek, as Adkins maintains. He correctly admits that Pericles is pouring scorn on the possibility of just policies which involve *apragmosyne* because they do not conform to *andragathia*. Dikaiosyne is a quiet, co-operative virtue that Pericles terms as *apragmosyne*, i.e. inactivity. Those who were refusing to accept Pericles’ (and Cleon’s) policy were attempting to redefine *andragathia* and to apply it to what Adkins would call the ‘quiet, co-operative values’ rather than (as usual) to the traditional *arête*, i.e. manliness and courage.

But who were the *andragathizomenoi*? Are Pericles and Cleon referring here to some group known to his audience, or are they talking in general, rebuking those who might be inclined to refuse their policy.

In both cases we may think of the speakers’ opponents and ‘peace party’. As for Pericles they may be, as some scholars think, the followers of Thucydides son of Melesias: the latter must have returned from exile about 433 B.C. and must have made his presence felt at the beginning of the war. But others consider Cleon as Pericles’ main adversary Klein writes of a wide political spectrum including both the Athenian landed aristocracy and radical elements of the *demos*.

I am not inclined to look for the *andragathizomenoi* among certain persons. They may be those Athenians whose frame of mind (and attitude toward Pericles as well) depended heavily on current events. On the eve of Archidamus’ first invasion the Athenians adopted Pericles’ war strategy (though not immediately). The evidence of this was the resettling in the city of the dwellers from the countryside (Thuc. II.14.1-2, 16-18). It is Pericles who persuaded them to take their families into the city. By this means he envisaged achieving superiority over Athens' more numerous enemies. His plan implied withdrawal behind the walls of Athens and replacing the loss of agricultural products by imports (Thuc. I.143.4-5). Pericles envisaged difference between them, the perseverance in one case (Pericles) and sheer obstinacy in the other (ROMILLY 1963, 165).


44 This gives us the possibility. I believe, of assuming that his strategy was finally adopted. However, it is unclear, as Hornblower states, whether the resettling into the city was of the whole mass or not (HORNBLOWER 1985, 128; idem 1991, 238; RHODES 1988, 199).

45 The Peloponnesians had an obvious superiority in number. Attica, as Thucydides writes, was invaded by two-thirds of the total forces of the Peloponnesian League (Thuc. II.10.2, 47.2). See also CAWKELL 1975, 55, n. 6; SPENCE 1990, 102.

46 SPENCE 1990, 91; on the negative aspect of this see CAWKELL 1975, 54, n. 4. The arrangement made in the Piraeus before the Peloponnesian War, as Garland states, accepts (or rather acknowledges?) the possibility that Athens under siege might become wholly dependent on her importers (GARLAND 1987, 25-27).
any kind of meeting. He was afraid that Athenians might take a wrong decision:

“He, meanwhile, seeing anger and infatuation just now in the ascendant, and confident of his wisdom in refusing a sally, would not call either assembly or meeting of the people (ἐκκλησίας τε ὁσὶ ἐποίησι αὐτῶν ὁδὴν, ἀπολογισθείσης) fearing the fatal results of a debate inspired by passion and not by prudence’ (Thuc. II.22.1).57

As an answer to his critics he organized seaborne raids against the Peloponnesians.58 These raids seem to have proved quite effective and to have led to the dislodging of the Peloponnesians from Attica. Soon afterwards Pericles succeeded in quietening the Athenians’ irritation against him. However, not for long.

Archidamus’ second invasion changed the Athenians’ attitude towards Pericles again. Now the devastation of Attica took place on larger scale (on the devastation of the Plain see Thuc. II.47.3, of the Paralia and Laurium, II.55.1). The plague was added to the military disasters. It is then that dissatisfaction with Pericles reached its climax.59 Discouraged by current events the Athenians sought to make peace with the Peloponnesians. They began to rebuke Pericles for unleashing this war. The apragmones, Westlake argued, were the main supporters of the bid for peace.60 But Athenian envoys were sent only by the decision of the assembly. (Why did Pericles not prevent this meeting of the assembly?) It seems that the majority of the citizens who voted for that decision must have been apragmones or a ‘peace party’.61 However, in 430 B.C., I suspect, many ordinary Athenians wished to make peace with the Peloponnesians (e.g. the men like Aristophanes’ Diceaeopolis who painfully endured the loss of their houses and land). It was Pericles, they were sure, who was responsible for the beginning of this war and for their desperate current situation. However, the peace initiative was unsuccessful. That resulted in an increase in their anxiety and fear.

The harsh criticism of Pericles’ strategy did not weaken after the withdrawal of the enemy and return of the Athenian regular naval expedition from Peloponnes. The Athenians were ready to change their leader. Many of them were frightened by the unsuccessful war and were depressed by their losses: some of these now regarded the empire as a heavy burden for the Athenian state. Others were Pericles’ political opponents (e.g. Cleon and his followers), who found in this situation a new pretext for disposing him from office.62

It is then that Pericles convened a meeting of the assembly and advocated his policy and war strategy. Making peace with the Peloponnesians, he argued, would relax Athens’ power over the allies. He declared that maintaining this power was their common concern. A sound (i.e. imperial) state would recover the citizens’ loss. Pericles labeled those who blamed him for a lack of andragathia as apragmosyne andragathizomenoi (not without satisfaction, I believe). They were those who were going, in the translation of LSJ, as sit at home and play the honest man.63 Now Pericles reproached the Athenians for a lack of andragathia.64

If what we have said is true, Adkins’ interpretation mentioned above is more questionable in his assumption that Pericles’ opponents were attempting to redefine andragathia and to apply it to the ‘quiet, co-operative values’.65 One of the possible explanations would be that the very men who (in other circumstances) boasted their andragathia were now refusing to accept Pericles’ policy. Indeed, they were frightened by the course of the war, and may have been irritated with Pericles (whether or not he was right). That is why they may in fact have deposed Pericles from generalship, though Thucydides does not state that.66 Nevertheless some time later they elected him as a general again, but not until they had inflicted a fine on him (Thuc. II.65.3-4). In this way andragathizomenoi punished Pericles for his war strategy.67

Let us turn now to Cleon. He labels as andragathizomenoi those who vote against the brutal punishment of the Mytileneans. Some of them decided to vote this way because of their humanity. I am not inclined to reject Thucydides’ interpretation, as Woodhead did.68 The others were Cleon’s political adversaries.69

One may think of Cleon as Pericles’ trickster (e.g. as Thersites was that of Achilles).70 Both speakers, I suspect, used this word in the same context. Pericles reproaches those who demonstrated a lack of andragathia because of the current situation. Cleon criticized those who were allegedly afraid of the danger of holding sway, who allegedly could demonstrate their andragathia έκ τοῦ ὑκίνητου only. Continuing to hold sway by means of brutality was for Cleon true audacity, or true andragathia. Those who were reluctant to display that sort of andragathia were for him cowards.

Pericles, if summarize the above, reproached the Athenians for their lack of courage (andragathia) towards the enemy, Cleon reproached them for the absence of courage for of the strategoi (διατηρήσει δ’ αὐθις οἱ πολλοὶ...στρατηγὴν ἐλεύθερον) (Thuc. II.65.4).

56 Hornblower translates it: ‘did not summon an assembly or military meeting’ (HORNBLOWER 1991, 275).
57 He addressed himself, Thucydides continues, in the defense of the city (τῆν τε πόλιν ἐφύλασσε) (Thuc. II.65.2). This tactic seems to Cawkwell too expensive to be continued for a decade without extraordinary taxes (CAWKWELL 1975, 54). See also SICKING 1995, 406.
58 A hundred ships were sent to the Peloponnes (Thuc. II.23.2). This tactic was Pericles’ opponents (e.g. Cleon and his followers), who found in this situation a new pretext for disposing him from office.
59 The others were Cleon’s political adversaries.
brutal punishment of their allies. Notwithstanding with it Cleon differed not so much from Pericles in the nature of his policy. The only part of Cleon’s policy which was un-Periclean, as Gomme maintains, was its cruelty and brutality⁷¹. If so, the similarities in the speeches of both speakers hardly were accidental.

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⁷¹ GOMME 1951, 78.
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