



Research article

On higher-order anisotropic conservative Caginalp phase-field type models

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Abstract: Our aim in this paper is to study the well-posedness of higher-order (in space) anisotropic conservative phase-field systems. More precisely, we prove the existence and uniqueness of solutions.

Keywords: Conserved phase-field systems; Higher-order systems; Anisotropy Well-posedness

1. Introduction

G. Caginalp proposed in [3] and [4] two phase-field system, namely,

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta u + f(u) = T, \quad (1.1)$$

$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} - \Delta T = -\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad (1.2)$$

called nonconserved system, and

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + \Delta^2 u - \Delta f(u) = -\Delta T, \quad (1.3)$$

$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} - \Delta T = -\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad (1.4)$$

called conserved system (in the sense that, when endowed with Neumann boundary conditions, the spacial average of u is conserved). In this context, u is the order parameter, T is the relative temperature (defined as $T = \tilde{T} - T_E$, where \tilde{T} is the absolute temperature and T_E is the equilibrium melting temperature) and f is the derivative of a double-well potential F (a typical choice is $F(s) = \frac{1}{4}(s^2 - 1)^2$, hence the usual cubic nonlinear term $f(s) = s^3 - s$). Furthermore, we have set all physical parameters equal to one. These systems have been introduced to model phase transition phenomena, such as

melting-solidification phenomena, and have been much studied from a mathematical point of view. We refer the reader to, e.g., [3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25].

Both systems are based on the (total Ginzburg-Landau) free energy

$$\Psi_{GL} = \int_{\Omega} \left(\frac{1}{2} |\nabla u|^2 + F(u) - uT - \frac{1}{2} T^2 \right) dx, \quad (1.5)$$

where Ω is the domain occupied by the system (we assume here that it is a bounded and regular domain of \mathbb{R}^3 , with boundary Γ), and the enthalpy

$$H = u + T. \quad (1.6)$$

As far as the evolution equations for the order parameter are concerned, one postulates the relaxation dynamics (with relaxation parameter set equal to one)

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = -\frac{D\Psi_{GL}}{Du}, \quad (1.7)$$

for the nonconserved model, and

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = \Delta \frac{D\Psi_{GL}}{Du}, \quad (1.8)$$

for the conserved one, where $\frac{D}{Du}$ denotes a variational derivative with respect to u , which yields (1.1) and (1.3), respectively. Then, we have the energy equation

$$\frac{\partial H}{\partial t} = -\operatorname{div} q, \quad (1.9)$$

where q is the heat flux. Assuming finally the usual Fourier law for heat conduction,

$$q = -\nabla T, \quad (1.10)$$

we obtain (1.2).

In (1.5), the term $|\nabla u|^2$ models short-ranged interactions. It is however interesting to note that such a term is obtained by truncation of higher-order ones; it can also be seen as a first-order approximation of a nonlocal term accounting for long-ranged interactions [11].

G. Caginalp and Esenturk recently proposed in [6] (see also [20]) higher-order phase-field models in order to account for anisotropic interfaces (see also [7] for other approaches which, however, do not provide an explicit way to compute the anisotropy). More precisely, these authors proposed the following modified (total) free energy

$$\Psi_{HOGL} = \int_{\Omega} \left(\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_{\beta} |\mathcal{D}^{\beta} u|^2 + F(u) - uT - \frac{1}{2} T^2 \right) dx, \quad k \in \mathbb{N}, \quad (1.11)$$

where, for $\beta = (k_1, k_2, k_3) \in (\mathbb{N} \cup \{0\})^3$,

$$|\beta| = k_1 + k_2 + k_3$$

and, for $\beta \neq (0, 0, 0)$,

$$\mathcal{D}^\beta = \frac{\partial^{|\beta|}}{\partial x_1^{k_1} \partial x_2^{k_2} \partial x_3^{k_3}}$$

(we agree that $\mathcal{D}^{(0,0,0)}v = v$).

A. Miranville studied in [17] the corresponding nonconserved higher-order phase-field system.

As far as the conserved case is concerned, the above generalized free energy yields, proceeding as above, the following evolution equation for the order parameter u :

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta \sum_{i=1}^k (-1)^i \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_\beta \mathcal{D}^{2\beta} u - \Delta f(u) = -\Delta \left(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \right), \quad (1.12)$$

In particular, for $k = 1$ (anisotropic conserved Caginalp phase-field), we have an equation of the form

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + \Delta \sum_{i=1}^3 a_i \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x_i^2} - \Delta f(u) = -\Delta \left(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \right)$$

and, for $k = 2$ (fourth-order anisotropic conserved Caginalp phase-field system), we have an equation of the form

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta \sum_{i,j=1}^3 a_{ij} \frac{\partial^4 u}{\partial x_i^2 \partial x_j^2} + \Delta \sum_{i=1}^3 b_i \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x_i^2} - \Delta f(u) = -\Delta \left(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \right).$$

L. Cherfils A. Miranville and S. Peng have studied in [8] the corresponding higher-order isotropic equation (without the coupling with the temperature), namely, the equation

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta P(-\Delta)u - \Delta f(u) = 0,$$

where

$$P(s) = \sum_{i=1}^k a_i s^i, \quad a_k > 0, \quad k \geq 1,$$

endowed with the Dirichlet/Navier boundary conditions

$$u = \Delta u = \dots = \Delta^k u = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad \Gamma.$$

Our aim in this paper is to study the model consisting of the higher-order anisotropic equation (1.12) and the temperature equation

$$\frac{\partial^2 \alpha}{\partial t^2} - \Delta \frac{\partial^2 \alpha}{\partial t^2} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \alpha = -\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}. \quad (1.13)$$

In particular, we obtain the existence and uniqueness of solutions.

2. Setting of the problem

We consider the following initial and boundary value problem, for $k \in \mathbb{N}$, $k \geq 2$ (the case $k = 1$ can be treated as in the original conserved system; see, e.g., [23]):

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta \sum_{i=1}^k (-1)^i \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_\beta \mathcal{D}^{2\beta} u - \Delta f(u) = -\Delta \left(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \right), \quad (2.1)$$

$$\frac{\partial^2 \alpha}{\partial t^2} - \Delta \frac{\partial^2 \alpha}{\partial t^2} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \alpha = -\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad (2.2)$$

$$\mathcal{D}^\beta u = \alpha = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad \Gamma, \quad |\beta| \leq k, \quad (2.3)$$

$$u|_{t=0} = u_0, \quad \alpha|_{t=0} = \alpha_0, \quad \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}|_{t=0} = \alpha_1. \quad (2.4)$$

We assume that

$$a_\beta > 0, \quad |\beta| = k, \quad (2.5)$$

and we introduce the elliptic operator A_k defined by

$$\langle A_k v, w \rangle_{H^{-k}(\Omega), H_0^k(\Omega)} = \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta ((\mathcal{D}^\beta v, \mathcal{D}^\beta w)), \quad (2.6)$$

where $H^{-k}(\Omega)$ is the topological dual of $H_0^k(\Omega)$. Furthermore, $((\cdot, \cdot))$ denotes the usual L^2 -scalar product, with associated norm $\|\cdot\|$. More generally, we denote by $\|\cdot\|_X$ the norm on the Banach space X ; we also set $\|\cdot\|_{-1} = \|(-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} \cdot\|$, where $(-\Delta)^{-1}$ denotes the inverse minus Laplace operator associated with Dirichlet boundary conditions. We can note that

$$(v, w) \in H_0^k(\Omega)^2 \mapsto \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta ((\mathcal{D}^\beta v, \mathcal{D}^\beta w))$$

is bilinear, symmetric, continuous and coercive, so that

$$A_k : H_0^k(\Omega) \rightarrow H^{-k}(\Omega)$$

is indeed well defined. It then follows from elliptic regularity results for linear elliptic operators of order $2k$ (see [1] and [2]) that A_k is a strictly positive, selfadjoint and unbounded linear operator with compact inverse, with domain

$$D(A_k) = H^{2k}(\Omega) \cap H_0^k(\Omega),$$

where, for $v \in D(A_k)$,

$$A_k v = (-1)^k \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta \mathcal{D}^{2\beta} v.$$

We further note that $D(A_k^{\frac{1}{2}}) = H_0^k(\Omega)$ and, for $(v, w) \in D(A_k^{\frac{1}{2}})^2$,

$$((A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} v, A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} w)) = \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta ((\mathcal{D}^\beta v, \mathcal{D}^\beta w)).$$

We finally note that (see, e.g., [24]) $\|A_k\|$ (resp., $\|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}}\|$) is equivalent to the usual H^{2k} -norm (resp., H^k -norm) on $D(A_k)$ (resp., $D(A_k^{\frac{1}{2}})$).

Similarly, we can define the linear operator $\bar{A}_k = -\Delta A_k$

$$\bar{A}_k : H_0^{k+1}(\Omega) \rightarrow H^{-k-1}(\Omega)$$

which is a strictly positive, selfadjoint and unbounded linear operator with compact inverse, with domain

$$D(\bar{A}_k) = H^{2k+2}(\Omega) \cap H_0^{k+1}(\Omega),$$

where, for $v \in D(\bar{A}_k)$,

$$\bar{A}_k v = (-1)^{k+1} \Delta \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta \mathcal{D}^{2\beta} v.$$

Furthermore, $D(\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}) = H_0^{k+1}(\Omega)$ and, for $(v, w) \in D(\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}})$,

$$((\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} v, \bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} w)) = \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta ((\nabla \mathcal{D}^\beta v, \nabla \mathcal{D}^\beta w)).$$

Besides $\|\bar{A}_k\|$ (resp., $\|\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}\|$) is equivalent to the usual H^{2k+2} -norm (resp., H^{k+1} -norm) on $D(\bar{A}_k)$ (resp., $D(\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}})$).

We finally consider the operator $\tilde{A}_k = (-\Delta)^{-1} A_k$, where

$$\tilde{A}_k : H_0^{k-1}(\Omega) \rightarrow H^{-k+1}(\Omega);$$

note that, as $-\Delta$ and A_k commute, then the same holds for $(-\Delta)^{-1}$ and A_k , so that $\tilde{A}_k = A_k(-\Delta)^{-1}$.

We have the (see [17])

Lemme 2.1. *The operator \tilde{A}_k is a strictly positive, selfadjoint and unbounded linear operator with compact inverse, with domain*

$$D(\tilde{A}_k) = H^{2k-2}(\Omega) \cap H_0^{k-1}(\Omega),$$

where, for $v \in D(\tilde{A}_k)$

$$\tilde{A}_k v = (-1)^k \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta \mathcal{D}^{2\beta} (-\Delta)^{-1} v.$$

Furthermore, $D(\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}) = H_0^{k-1}(\Omega)$ and, for $(v, w) \in D(\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}})$,

$$((\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} v, \tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} w)) = \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta ((\mathcal{D}^\beta (-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} v, \mathcal{D}^\beta (-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} w)).$$

Besides $\|\tilde{A}_k\|$ (resp., $\|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}\|$) is equivalent to the usual H^{2k-2} -norm (resp., H^{k-1} -norm) on $D(\tilde{A}_k)$ (resp., $D(\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}})$).

Proof. We first note that \tilde{A}_k clearly is linear and unbounded. Then, since $(-\Delta)^{-1}$ and A_k commute, it easily follows that \tilde{A}_k is selfadjoint.

Next, the domain of \tilde{A}_k is defined by

$$D(\tilde{A}_k) = \{v \in H_0^{k-1}(\Omega), \tilde{A}_k v \in L^2(\Omega)\}.$$

Noting that $\tilde{A}_k v = f$, $f \in L^2(\Omega)$, $v \in D(\tilde{A}_k)$, is equivalent to $A_k v = -\Delta f$, where $-\Delta f \in H^2(\Omega)'$, it follows from the elliptic regularity results of [1] and [2] that $v \in H^{2k-2}(\Omega)$, so that $D(\tilde{A}_k) = H^{2k-2}(\Omega) \cap H_0^{k-1}(\Omega)$.

Noting then that \tilde{A}_k^{-1} maps $L^2(\Omega)$ onto $H^{2k-2}(\Omega)$ and recalling that $k \geq 2$, we deduce that \tilde{A}_k has compact inverse.

We now note that, considering the spectral properties of $-\Delta$ and A_k (see, e.g., [24]) and recalling that these two operators commute, $-\Delta$ and A_k have a spectral basis formed of common eigenvectors. This yields that, $\forall s_1, s_2 \in \mathbb{R}$, $(-\Delta)^{s_1}$ and $A_k^{s_2}$ commute.

Having this, we see that $\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} = (-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} A_k^{\frac{1}{2}}$, so that $D(\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}) = H_0^{k-1}(\Omega)$, and for $(v, w) \in D(\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}})^2$,

$$((\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} v, \tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} w)) = \sum_{|\beta|=k} a_\beta ((\mathcal{D}^\beta (-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} v, \mathcal{D}^\beta (-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} w)).$$

Finally, as far as the equivalences of norms are concerned, we can note that, for instance, the norm $\|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} \cdot\|$ is equivalent to the norm $\|(-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} \cdot\|_{H^k(\Omega)}$ and, thus, to the norm $\|(-\Delta)^{\frac{k-1}{2}} \cdot\|$.

□

Having this, we rewrite (2.1) as

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta A_k u - \Delta B_k u - \Delta f(u) = -\Delta \left(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \right), \quad (2.7)$$

where

$$B_k v = \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} (-1)^i \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_\beta \mathcal{D}^{2\beta} v.$$

As far as the nonlinear term f is concerned, we assume that

$$f \in C^2(\mathbb{R}), \quad f(0) = 0, \quad (2.8)$$

$$f' \geq -c_0, \quad c_0 \geq 0, \quad (2.9)$$

$$f(s)s \geq c_1 F(s) - c_2 \geq -c_3, \quad c_1 > 0, \quad c_2, \quad c_3 \geq 0, \quad s \in \mathbb{R}, \quad (2.10)$$

$$F(s) \geq c_4 s^4 - c_5, \quad c_4 > 0, \quad c_5 \geq 0, \quad s \in \mathbb{R}, \quad (2.11)$$

where $F(s) = \int_0^s f(\tau) d\tau$. In particular, the usual cubic nonlinear term $f(s) = s^3 - s$ satisfies these assumptions.

Throughout the paper, the same letters c , c' and c'' denote (generally positive) constants which may vary from line to line. Similarly, the same letter Q denotes (positive) monotone increasing (with respect to each argument) and continuous functions which may vary from line to line.

3. A priori estimates

We multiply (2.7) by $(-\Delta)^{-1} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}$ and (2.2) by $\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}$, sum the two resulting equalities and integrate over Ω and by parts. This gives

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{d}{dt} (\|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u] + 2 \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx + \|\nabla \alpha\|^2 + \|\Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) \\ & + 2 \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + 2 \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + 2 \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 = 0 \end{aligned} \quad (3.1)$$

(note indeed that $\|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + 2 \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 = \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2$), where

$$B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u] = \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_{\beta} \|\mathcal{D}^{\beta} u\|^2 \quad (3.2)$$

(note that $B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u]$ is not necessarily nonnegative). We can note that, owing to the interpolation inequality

$$\|(-\Delta)^{\frac{i}{2}} v\| \leq c(i) \|(-\Delta)^{\frac{m}{2}} v\|^{\frac{i}{m}} \|v\|^{1-\frac{i}{m}}, \quad (3.3)$$

$$v \in H^m(\Omega), \quad i \in \{1, \dots, m-1\}, \quad m \in \mathbb{N}, \quad m \geq 2,$$

there holds

$$|B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u]| \leq \frac{1}{2} \|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + c \|u\|^2. \quad (3.4)$$

This yields, employing (2.11),

$$\|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u] + 2 \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx \geq \frac{1}{2} \|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx + c \|u\|_{L^4(\Omega)}^4 - c' \|u\|^2 - c'',$$

whence

$$\|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u] + 2 \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx \geq c (\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx) - c', \quad c > 0, \quad (3.5)$$

nothing that, owing to Young's inequality,

$$\|u\|^2 \leq \epsilon \|u\|_{L^4(\Omega)}^4 + c(\epsilon), \quad \forall \epsilon > 0. \quad (3.6)$$

We then multiply (2.7) by $(-\Delta)^{-1} u$ and have, owing to (2.10) and the interpolation inequality (3.3),

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_{-1}^2 + c (\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx) \leq c' (\|u\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) + c'',$$

hence, proceeding as above and employing, in particular, (2.11)

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_{-1}^2 + c (\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx) \leq c' (\|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) + c'', \quad c > 0. \quad (3.7)$$

Summing (3.1) and δ_1 times (3.7), where $\delta_1 > 0$ is small enough, we obtain a differential inequality of the form

$$\frac{d}{dt}E_1 + c(\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u)dx + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2) \leq c', \quad c > 0, \quad (3.8)$$

where

$$E_1 = \|A_k^{\frac{1}{2}}u\|^2 + B_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u] + 2 \int_{\Omega} F(u)dx + \|\nabla \alpha\|^2 + \|\Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \delta_1 \|u\|_{-1}^2$$

satisfies, owing to (3.5)

$$E_1 \geq c(\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u)dx + \|\alpha\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2) - c', \quad c > 0. \quad (3.9)$$

Multiplying (2.2) by $-\Delta \alpha$, we then obtain

$$\frac{d}{dt}(\|\Delta \alpha\|^2 - 2((\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \Delta \alpha)) + 2((\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \Delta \alpha))) + \|\Delta \alpha\|^2 \leq \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2,$$

which yields, employing the interpolation inequality

$$\|v\|^2 \leq c\|v\|_{-1}\|v\|_{H^1(\Omega)}, \quad v \in H_0^1(\Omega), \quad (3.10)$$

the differential inequality, with $0 < \epsilon \ll 1$ is small enough

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{d}{dt}(\|\Delta \alpha\|^2 - 2((\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \Delta \alpha)) + 2((\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \Delta \alpha))) + c\|\alpha\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 \\ & \leq c'(\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + \epsilon \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2), \quad c > 0. \end{aligned} \quad (3.11)$$

We now differentiate (2.7) with respect to time to find, owing to (2.2),

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta A_k \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta B_k \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta(f'(u) \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}) = -\Delta(\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} + \Delta \alpha - \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}), \quad (3.12)$$

together with the boundary condition

$$\mathcal{D}^\beta \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = 0 \quad \text{on } \Gamma, \quad |\beta| \leq k. \quad (3.13)$$

We multiply (3.11) by $(-\Delta)^{-1} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}$ and obtain, owing to (2.9) and the interpolation inequality (3.3),

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + c \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 \leq c'(\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2), \quad c > 0,$$

hence, owing to (3.10), the differential inequality

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + c \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 \leq c'(\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + \|\alpha\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2), \quad c > 0. \quad (3.14)$$

Summing finally (3.8), δ_2 times (3.11) and δ_3 times (3.14), where $\delta_2, \delta_3 > 0$ are small enough, we find a differential inequality of the form

$$\frac{dE_2}{dt} + c(E_2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2) \leq c', \quad c > 0, \quad (3.15)$$

where

$$E_2 = E_1 + \delta_2(\|\Delta \alpha\|^2 - 2((\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \Delta \alpha)) + 2((\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \Delta \alpha))) + \delta_3 \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2.$$

Owing to the continuous embedding $H^{2k+1}(\Omega) \subset C(\bar{\Omega})$, we deduce that

$$|\int_{\Omega} F(u_0) dx| \leq Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)})$$

and since

$$(-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}(0) = -(-\Delta)^{\frac{1}{2}} A_k u_0 - (-\Delta)^{\frac{1}{2}} B_k u_0 - (-\Delta)^{\frac{1}{2}} f(u_0) + (-\Delta)^{\frac{1}{2}} (\alpha_1 - \Delta \alpha_1),$$

we see that $(-\Delta)^{-\frac{1}{2}} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}(0) \in L^2(\Omega)$ and

$$\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}(0)\|_{-1} \leq Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}). \quad (3.16)$$

Furthermore E_2 satisfies

$$E_2 \geq c(\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2) + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx + \|\alpha\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 - c', \quad c > 0. \quad (3.17)$$

It thus follows from (3.15), (3.16), (3.17) and Growall's lemma that

$$\begin{aligned} & \|u(t)\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}(t)\|_{-1}^2 + \|\alpha(t)\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}(t)\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 \\ & \leq e^{-ct} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c', \quad c > 0, \quad t \geq 0, \end{aligned} \quad (3.18)$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_t^{t+r} \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 ds \\ & \leq e^{-ct} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'(r), \quad c > 0, \quad t \geq 0, \end{aligned} \quad (3.19)$$

$r > 0$ given.

Multiplying next (2.7) by $\tilde{A}_k u$, we find, owing to the interpolation inequality (3.3),

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + c\|u\|_{H^{2k}(\Omega)}^2 \leq c'(\|u\|^2 + \|f(u)\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2), \quad c > 0,$$

hence, since f and F are continuous and owing to (3.18),

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + c\|u\|_{H^{2k}(\Omega)}^2$$

$$\leq e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'', \quad c, c' > 0, \quad t \geq 0. \quad (3.20)$$

Summing (3.15) and (3.22), we have a differential inequality of the form

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dE_3}{dt} + c(E_3 + \|u\|_{H^{2k}(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2) \\ \leq e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'', \quad c, c' > 0, \quad t \geq 0, \end{aligned} \quad (3.21)$$

where

$$E_3 = E_2 + \|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2$$

satisfies

$$E_3 \geq c(\|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2) + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx + \|\alpha\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^2(\Omega)}^2 - c', \quad c > 0. \quad (3.22)$$

In particular, it follows from (3.21) – (3.22) that

$$\int_t^{t+r} \|u\|_{H^{2k}(\Omega)}^2 ds \leq e^{-ct} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'(r), \quad c > 0, \quad t \geq 0, \quad (3.23)$$

$r > 0$ given.

We now multiply (2.7) by u and obtain, employing (2.9) and the interpolation inequality (3.3)

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|^2 + c\|u\|_{H^{k+1}(\Omega)}^2 \leq c'(\|u\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2), \quad c > 0,$$

whence, proceeding as above,

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|^2 + c\|u\|_{H^{k+1}(\Omega)}^2 \leq e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'', \quad c, c' > 0. \quad (3.24)$$

We also multiply (2.7) by $\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}$ and find

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + \tilde{B}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u]) + c\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2 \leq c'\|\Delta f(u)\|^2 - 2((\Delta \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t})),$$

where

$$\tilde{B}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u] = \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_{\beta} \|\nabla \mathcal{D}^{\beta} u\|^2.$$

Since f is of class C^2 , it follows from the continuous embedding $H^2(\Omega) \subset C(\bar{\Omega})$ that

$$\|\Delta f(u)\|^2 \leq Q(\|u\|_{H^2(\Omega)}),$$

hence, owing to (3.18),

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\|\tilde{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + \tilde{B}_k^{\frac{1}{2}}[u]) + c\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2$$

$$\leq e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) - 2((\Delta \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t})) + c'', \quad c, c' > 0. \quad (3.25)$$

Multiply next (2.2) by $-\Delta(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t})$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{d}{dt} (\|\Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) + c(\|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) \\ & \leq 2((\Delta \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t})), \quad c > 0 \end{aligned} \quad (3.26)$$

(note indeed that $\|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + 2\|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 = \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2$).

Summing (3.25) and (3.26), we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{d}{dt} (\|\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + \bar{B}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} [u] + \|\Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) + c(\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) \\ & \leq e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'', \quad c, c' > 0. \end{aligned} \quad (3.27)$$

Summing finally (3.21), (3.24) and (3.27), we find a differential inequality of the form

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{dE_4}{dt} + c(E_3 + \|u\|_{H^{k+1}(\Omega)}^2 + \|u\|_{H^{2k}(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^3(\Omega)}^2) \\ & \leq e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^2(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'', \quad c, c' > 0, \quad t \geq 0 \end{aligned} \quad (3.28)$$

where

$$E_4 = E_3 + \|u\|^2 + \|\bar{A}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} u\|^2 + \bar{B}_k^{\frac{1}{2}} [u] + \|\Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \Delta \alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \nabla \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2$$

satisfies, owing to (2.11) and the interpolation inequality (3.3)

$$E_4 \geq c(\|u\|_{H^{k+1}(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + \int_{\Omega} F(u) dx + \|\alpha\|_{H^3(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^3(\Omega)}^2) - c', \quad c > 0. \quad (3.29)$$

In particular, it follows from (3.28) – (3.29) that

$$\begin{aligned} & \|u(t)\|_{H^{k+1}(\Omega)} + \|\alpha(t)\|_{H^3(\Omega)} + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}(t)\|_{H^3(\Omega)} \\ & \leq e^{-ct} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^3(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c', \quad c > 0, \quad t \geq 0, \end{aligned} \quad (3.30)$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_t^{t+r} (\|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^3(\Omega)}^2) ds \\ & \leq e^{-ct} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^3(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'(r), \quad c > 0, \quad t \geq 0, \end{aligned} \quad (3.31)$$

r given.

We finally rewrite (2.7) as an elliptic equation, for $t > 0$ fixed,

$$A_k u = -(-\Delta)^{-1} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - B_k u - f(u) + \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \quad \mathcal{D}^\beta u = 0 \quad \text{on } \Gamma, \quad |\beta| \leq k-1. \quad (3.32)$$

Multiplying (3.32) by $A_k u$, we obtain, owing to the interpolation inequality (3.3),

$$\|A_k u\|^2 \leq c(\|u\|^2 + \|f(u)\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2),$$

hence, since f is continuous and owing to (3.18)

$$\|u(t)\|_{H^{2k}(\Omega)}^2 \leq c e^{-c't} Q(\|u_0\|_{H^{2k+1}(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_0\|_{H^3(\Omega)}, \|\alpha_1\|_{H^3(\Omega)}) + c'', \quad c' > 0 \quad t \geq 0. \quad (3.33)$$

4. Existence and uniqueness of solutions

We first have the following theorem.

Theorem 4.1. (i) We assume that $(u_0, \alpha_0, \alpha_1) \in H_0^k(\Omega) \times (H^2(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega)) \times (H^2(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega))$, with $\int_{\Omega} F(u_0) dx < +\infty$. Then, (2.1) – (2.4) possesses at least one solution $(u, \alpha, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t})$ such that, $\forall T > 0$, $u(0) = u_0$, $\alpha(0) = \alpha_0$, $\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}(0) = \alpha_1$,

$$u \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^+; H_0^k(\Omega)) \cap L^2(0, T; H^{2k}(\Omega) \cap H_0^k(\Omega)),$$

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^+; H^{-1}(\Omega)) \cap L^2(0, T; H_0^k(\Omega)),$$

$$\alpha, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^+; H^2(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega))$$

and

$$\frac{d}{dt}((-\Delta)^{-1}u, v) + \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{|\beta|=i} a_i((\mathcal{D}^\beta u, \mathcal{D}^\beta v)) + ((f(u), v)) = \frac{d}{dt}(((u, v)) + ((\nabla u, \nabla v))), \quad \forall v \in C_c^\infty(\Omega),$$

$$\frac{d}{dt}(((\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, w)) + ((\nabla \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}, \nabla w)) + ((\nabla \alpha, \nabla w))) + ((\nabla \alpha, \nabla w)) = -\frac{d}{dt}((u, w)), \quad \forall w \in C_c^\infty(\Omega),$$

in the sense of distributions.

(ii) If we further assume that $(u_0, \alpha_0, \alpha_1) \in (H^{k+1}(\Omega) \cap H_0^k(\Omega)) \times (H^3(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega)) \times (H^3(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega))$, then, $\forall T > 0$,

$$u \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^+; H^{k+1}(\Omega) \cap H_0^k(\Omega)) \cap L^2(\mathbb{R}^+; H^{k+1}(\Omega) \cap H_0^k(\Omega))$$

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^+; L^2(\Omega)),$$

$$\alpha \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^+; H^3(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega))$$

and

$$\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^+; H^3(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega)) \cap L^2(0, T; H^3(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega))$$

The proofs of existence and regularity in (i) and (ii) follow from the a priori estimates derived in the previous section and, e.g., a standard Galerkin scheme.

We then have the following theorem.

Theorem 4.2. *The system (1.1) – (1.4) possesses a unique solution with the above regularity.*

Proof. Let $(u^{(1)}, \alpha^{(1)}, \frac{\partial \alpha^{(1)}}{\partial t})$ and $(u^{(2)}, \alpha^{(2)}, \frac{\partial \alpha^{(2)}}{\partial t})$ be two solutions to (2.1) – (2.3) with initial data $(u_0^{(1)}, \alpha_0^{(1)}, \alpha_1^{(1)})$ and $(u_0^{(2)}, \alpha_0^{(2)}, \alpha_1^{(2)})$, respectively. We set

$$(u, \alpha, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}) = (u^{(1)}, \alpha^{(1)}, \frac{\partial \alpha^{(1)}}{\partial t}) - (u^{(2)}, \alpha^{(2)}, \frac{\partial \alpha^{(2)}}{\partial t})$$

and

$$(u_0, \alpha_0, \alpha_1) = (u_0^{(1)}, \alpha_0^{(1)}, \alpha_1^{(1)}) - (u_0^{(2)}, \alpha_0^{(2)}, \alpha_1^{(2)}).$$

Then, (u, α) satisfies

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta A_k u - \Delta B_k u - \Delta(f(u^{(1)}) - f(u^{(2)})) = -\Delta(\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}), \quad (4.1)$$

$$\frac{\partial^2 \alpha}{\partial t^2} - \Delta \frac{\partial^2 \alpha}{\partial t^2} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \alpha = -\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad (4.2)$$

$$\mathcal{D}^\beta u = \alpha = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad \Gamma, \quad |\beta| \leq k, \quad (4.3)$$

$$u|_{t=0} = u_0, \alpha|_{t=0} = \alpha_0, \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}|_{t=0} = \alpha_1. \quad (4.4)$$

Multiplying (4.1) by $(-\Delta)^{-1}u$ and integrating over Ω , we obtain

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_{-1}^2 + c \|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 \leq c' (\|u\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2) - 2((f(u^{(1)}) - f(u^{(2)}), u)).$$

We note that

$$f(u^{(1)}) - f(u^{(2)}) = l(t)u,$$

with l defined as

$$l(t) = \int_0^1 f'(su^{(1)}(t) + (1-s)u^{(2)}(t)) ds.$$

Owing to (2.9), we have

$$\begin{aligned} -2((f(u^{(1)}) - f(u^{(2)}), u)) &\leq 2c_0 \|u\|^2, \\ &\leq c \|u\|^2 \end{aligned}$$

and we obtain owing to the interpolation inequalities (3.3) and (3.10),

$$\frac{d}{dt} \|u\|_{-1}^2 + c \|u\|_{H^k(\Omega)}^2 \leq c' (\|u\|_{-1}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2), \quad c > 0. \quad (4.5)$$

Next, multiplying (4.2) by $(-\Delta)^{-1}(u + \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t})$, we find

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d}{dt} (\|\alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \alpha\|^2 + \|u + \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2) + c (\|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2) \\ \leq c' (\|u\|^2 + \|\alpha\|^2). \end{aligned} \quad (4.6)$$

Summing then δ_4 times (4.5) and (4.6), where $\delta_4 > 0$ is small enough, we have, employing once more the interpolation inequality (3.10), a differential inequality of the form

$$\frac{dE_5}{dt} \leq cE_5, \quad (4.7)$$

where

$$E_5 = \delta_4 \|u\|_{-1}^2 + \|\alpha\|^2 + \|\nabla \alpha\|^2 + \|u + \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|_{-1}^2$$

satisfies

$$E_5 \geq c(\|u\|_{-1}^2 + \|\alpha\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t} - \Delta \frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}\|^2), c > 0. \quad (4.8)$$

It follows from (4.7) – (4.8) and Gronwall's lemma that

$$\|u(t)\|_{-1}^2 + \|\alpha(t)\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2 + \|\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial t}(t)\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2 \leq ce^{c't}(\|u_0\|_{-1}^2 + \|\alpha_0\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2 + \|\alpha_1\|_{H^1(\Omega)}^2), t \geq 0, \quad (4.9)$$

hence the uniqueness, as well as the continuous dependence with respect to the initial data in $H^{-1} \times H^1 \times H^1$ -norm. \square

Conflict of Interest

All authors declare no conflicts of interest in this paper.

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