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Anguish in *Crime and Punishment*

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Тоска в «Преступлении и наказании»

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Abstract. This article treats Dostoevskian *toska*, or spiritual anguish, as one of the moral emotions that links Raskolnikov and Sonya. Raskolnikov experiences an objectless anguish, whereas Sonya's anguish is linked to her family. In Part Two of the Epilogue, however, Raskolnikov's anguish takes Sonya for its object, a transformation that not only signals the healing of his divided self but also reinforces the novel's message of love and faith.

Key words: *toska* / *тоска*, *тосковать*, anguish, moral emotions, interconnection.

Аннотация. В этой статье идет речь о «тоске» в мире Достоевского, или о душевной муке, как об одной из моральных эмоций, которые объединяют Раскольникова и Соню. Раскольников переживает беспредметную тоску, тогда как страдания Сони связаны с ее семьей. Во второй части эпилога, впрочем, объектом тоски Раскольникова становится Соня, и эта трансформация говорит нам не только об исцелении его разделенной личности, но также усиливает основной посыл романа – идею любви и верности.

Ключевые слова: *тоска*, страдание, моральные эмоции, взаимосвязь.

Here and elsewhere, I treat Dostoevskian *toska* as a moral emotion. Following the philosophers Gabriele Taylor and Jesse Prinz, I hold that moral emotions are characterized by their evaluative and moral dimensions, that is, they help us to recognize whether an action is bad, and they motivate us to be good [Taylor: 520]. On these terms, not all emotions are moral: fear for one's life is not, whereas fear for one's soul is. Contemporary research has also shown that emotion works as a process: it starts with an automatic, non-cognitive evaluation of a person or a situation that triggers a physiological response and is followed by a cognitive evaluation of the initial response [Robinson: 59]. Instant judgment, physical response, mental evaluation. Long before this research, Dostoevsky exploited this process, using the dual action of emotion and evaluation to involve readers in the action of his texts. Since moral emotions entail judgments that identify what we care about and thus value [Nussbaum: 1–88], they awaken our cognitive as well as affective capacities. By portraying characters experiencing emotions, Dostoevsky not only allows readers to understand who they are and what they care about, he also mobilizes our emotions to make us experience and then reflect on emotion. In short, Dostoevsky grabs readers by the gut then pushes us into cognitive overdrive. In an unexpected yet powerful way, Dostoevsky's texts mimic the process of emotion itself.

In Dostoevsky's work, *toska* frequently signifies a great spiritual anguish, which can be accompanied by a sense of spiritual oppression, social alienation, and vague longing. Moreover, like a dream term or a primal word, *toska* can embody its opposite, that is, not only anguished longing but also anhedonia or indifference¹. This double-edged *toska* is what Raskolnikov experiences in "Crime and Punishment". The other character in the novel who experiences great *toska* is Sonya. Yet Sonya's *toska* is linked to her loved ones and their suffering, while Raskolnikov's is largely objectless. In Epilogue, Part 2, however, Raskolnikov's *toska* changes from having no object to having Sonya as its object. Here I will argue that the transformation of Raskolnikov's *toska* not only signals his healing but reinforces the novel's message of love and faith – Raskolnikov the divided self finds wholeness through emotion. On the novel's last page, Raskolnikov "could only feel. Instead of dialectics, there was life" [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 422]. In short, Dostoevsky uses the portrayal of moral emotions to reinforce his novel's ethical and religious messages.

Throughout the novel, Dostoevsky creates sympathy for Raskolnikov by depicting the spontaneous actions that reveal his moral character. He feels mor-

¹ I thank Robin Feuer Miller for pointing out this paradoxical quality of *toska*. Freud discusses this phenomenon in his essay "The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words" (1910), which links the contradictions in dreams to Karl Abel's philological discussion of words with antithetical meanings.

al revulsion for the pawnbroker, experiences anger at the thought that his sister Dunya is sacrificing herself for him, helps a young woman in distress, treats Sonya with respect, helps the dying Marmeladov, repeatedly gives Katerina Ivanovna all his money, and asks Polechka to pray for him. Witnessing moments of spontaneous action such as these, we, like my students, judge him a good person. When Raskolnikov evaluates his actions, however, our sympathy for him diminishes. His rationality is calculating – a major sin in Dostoevsky's universe. After escorting Marmeladov home the first time, he leaves Katerina Ivanovna all the money he has left from pawning his father's watch, then wishes he had kept some for himself [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 25]. He enlists a police officer to help the young woman on the street, then walks off, justifying his indifference by calling her a statistic [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 43]. He gets angry at the thought of Dunya's sacrifice, then shrugs it off [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 179]. Although Dostoevsky provides endless evidence of Raskolnikov's divided self, he leaves the diagnosis to the perspicacious Razumikhin: «угрюм, мрачен, надменен и горд; в последнее время (а может, гораздо прежде) мнителен и ипохондрик. Великодушен и добр. Чувств своих не любит высказывать и скорей жестокость сделает, чем словами выскажет сердце. Иногда, впрочем, вовсе не ипохондрик, а просто холоден и бесчувствен до бесчеловечия, право, точно в нем два противоположные характера поочередно сменяются / “he's sullen, gloomy, arrogant, and proud; lately (and perhaps even earlier) touchy and hypochondriacal. Magnanimous and kind. He doesn't like to voice his feelings and would sooner be cruel than to express his heart with words. At times, however, he's not hypochondriacal at all, just inhumanly cold and unfeeling, as if there were two opposite characters taking turns in him” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 165].

Raskolnikov's self-division contributes to his *toska*, which I translate as “anguish.” In order to protect himself from the shame of being a clichéd young man from the countryside who comes to the big city and lives off his family's money, he indulges himself by developing a theory that could prove him to be an extraordinary man, even though deep down he knows that he is not. He commits murder to prove his theory and thus his greatness, but his moral emotions betray him. Since his theory postulates that emotions are a sign of weakness, he denies and flees them, until the very end of the Epilogue, when he is resurrected by love [Martinsen: 51–71]. As the novel progresses, Dostoevsky not only exposes Raskolnikov's moral self through dreams and spontaneous actions, he lays bare the dismantling of his emotional defenses, a move that the philosopher David Velleman argues is essential to the opening of our hearts. Whereas Raskolnikov prides himself on his rationality and control, his spontaneous pity and spiritual

anguish, that is, his *toska*, reveal his deep conscience. His feelings of *toska* also link him to Sonya.

Nabokov writes that “No single word in English renders all the shades of *toska*. At its deepest and most painful, it is a sensation of great spiritual anguish, often without any specific cause. At less morbid levels it is a dull ache of the soul, a longing with nothing to long for, a sick pining, a vague restlessness, mental throes, yearning. In particular cases it may be the desire for somebody or something specific, nostalgia, lovesickness. At the lowest level it grades into ennui, boredom, *skuka*” [Nabokov: 141]. In Dostoevsky’s work, *toska* is most often «a sensation of great spiritual anguish». In treating *toska* as a moral emotion, I am extending the work of our colleague Arpads Kovacs, who has shown that *toska* has ontological, aesthetic, and poetic functions in Dostoevsky’s work [Kovacs: 100–125]. Kovacs shows that in Dostoevsky’s early work *toska* expresses an anguished longing for an absent or non-existent object, a desire for it, for beauty, for living life [Kovacs: 13]². I claim that *toska*, like shame, works by paradox: the underlying sense of alienation in both these emotions underscores the sense of lost or desired connection³.

In *Crime and Punishment*, *toska* is largely the domain of Raskolnikov and Sonya, although Marmeladov experiences it, and Marmeladov and Dunya speak of it. Thus the major characters associated with *toska* in the novel are members of the two families at the novel’s center, a concentration that stresses the ties between them⁴.

Dostoevsky introduces *toska* in the novel’s opening chapter. After Raskolnikov’s visit to the pawnbroker, he feels overwhelmed by a «Чувство бесконечного

² My copy of the article has a pagination does not track with the published version. I cite page numbers from my printout, which I will gladly share with anyone interested. Kovacs argues that the untranslatable *toska* derives from the concept of *angustia* as used variously in the works of St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Berdyaev, Heidegger, and Tillich. Kovacs asserts that *toska* cannot be straightforwardly identified with German *Angst*, but comes closer to the German and French sense of existential angst [Kovacs: 1].

³ Unlike shame, however, *toska* does not primarily stem from feelings of personal inadequacy, although it can express similar feelings of social and metaphysical loss. Moreover, unlike shame, which often paralyzes a person emotionally, *toska* often impels a person not only to express that sense of longing, as Kovacs demonstrates, but also to seek something outside the self.

⁴ Both families endure public shame, have daughters who sacrifice themselves for their families, and mothers who allow the sacrifice. At critical junctures, both families are rescued from complete poverty by an unexpected gift of three thousand rubles – the Raskolnikovs receive theirs as a gift from Marfa Petrovna Svidrigailova to Dunya, the Marmeladovs as a gift from Arkady Svidrigailov to Sonya. *Toska* is mentioned in relation to two other characters: an unnamed man who is inadvertently responsible for a murder, whose story is told by Porfiry Petrovich [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 266], and Amalia Ivanovna, the Marmeladovs’ landlady, who “with concealed anguish” attempted to join the conversation at the funeral dinner [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 299]. The former has the full force of Dostoevskian anguish; the latter is more of a social alienation. Some *toska* also shows on Luzhin’s face when Raskolnikov ignores him during their initial encounter.

отвращения» / “feeling of endless revulsion” and burdened by *toska* [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 10]. Exhausted «от целого месяца этой сосредоточенной тоски» / “from a whole month of this concentrated anguish” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 11], he seeks the company of others in a tavern. After realizing that he hasn’t eaten for a day and deciding that his anguish derives from physiological causes, he feels «как будто внезапно освободясь от какого-то ужасного бремени» / “as though unexpectedly liberated from some terrible burden” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 11]. After reading his mother’s letter, he feels that «вся эта теперешняя тоска, нарастала, накаплилась и в последнее время созрела и концентрировалась» / “all his present anguish, which had been engendered in him long ago, had grown, accumulated, and recently ripened and concentrated” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 39]. After Luzhin leaves his room, «Раскольников, оставшись один, с нетерпением и тоской поглядел Настасью» / “Raskolnikov, left alone, with impatience and anguish looked at Nastasya”, willing her to leave [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 120]. After he sees Afronyshka try to drown herself [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 132], Raskolnikov’s anguish turns to apathy, which Nabokov identifies as a lower form of *toska* [Nabokov]. After Dunya visits him at the end of Part 5, Raskolnikov feels the return of his anguish: «Какая-то особенная тоска начала сказываться ему в последнее время. В ней не было чего-нибудь особенно едкого, жгучего; но от нее веяло чем-то постоянным, вечным, предчувствовались безысходные годы этой холодной, мертвящей тоски, предчувствовалась какая-то вечность на “аршине пространства”. В вечерний час это ощущение обыкновенно еще сильнее начинало его мучить» / “Some particular anguish had begun to tell on him lately. There was nothing particularly sharp or burning; yet from it wafted something permanent, eternal, a presentiment of endless years of this cold, deadening anguish, a presentiment of some eternity on ‘a square foot of space’⁵. This sensation usually began to

⁵ This refers back to Raskolnikov’s thoughts as he heads to the Crystal Palace: «Где это, – подумал Раскольников, идя далее – где это я читал, как один проговоренный к смерти, за час до смерти, говорит или думает, что если бы пришлось ему жить где-нибудь на высоте, на скале, и на такой узенькой площадке, чтобы только две ноги можно было поставить, – а кругом будут пропасти, океан, вечный мрак, вечное уединение и вечная буря, – и оставаться так, стоя на аршине пространства, всю жизнь, тысячу лет, вечность, – то лучше так жить, чем сейчас умирать! Только бы жить, жить и жить!.. Подлец человек! И подлец тот, кто его за это подлецом называет» / “Where was it,” Raskolnikov thought as he walked on, “that I read about how a man condemned to death, an hour beforehand, says or thinks that if he had to life somewhere high, on a cliff, even on a platform so narrow that only his two feet could fit, – and all around would be precipices, ocean, eternal gloom, eternal isolation, and an eternal storm, – and he had to remain there, standing on a foot of space, his entire life, a thousand years, an eternity, – that it would be better to live that way than to die right now! Just to live, live, and live! ...Man is a scoundrel! And the man who calls him a scoundrel for that is also a scoundrel” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 123]. The novel is Hugo’s “Notre Dame de Paris”. The memory identifies Raskolnikov as a man who feels condemned to death.

torment him even more strongly in the evening hours” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 327]. In Part 6, while visiting his mother, Raskolnikov sees his article, experiences authorial pride, and then «страшная тоска сжала его сердце» / “a terrifying anguish gripped his heart” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 396]; remembering the last month’s spiritual battle, he throws down the article with revulsion. As he goes to confess, he is weighed down by an endless anguish and anxiety [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 405] until he realizes that confession offers him a new possibility of wholeness. In short, from beginning to end, Raskolnikov is weighed down by a feeling of spiritual anguish that dissipates only on the novel’s final pages when he finds love.

Dostoevsky allows attentive readers to track that change by following the verb *toskovat’* – which I translate as “feel anguish” and which frequently has an object. The narrator links Raskolnikov and Marmeladov by linking their emotional states: Marmeladov «ерошил волосы и подпираал иногда, в тоске, обеими руками голову» / “occasionally, in his anguish, propped up his head with both arms” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: 12]⁶. Once Marmeladov begins speaking, readers learn that Marmeladov’s anguish has an object – his family. Marmeladov confesses that his drink was bought with the last 30 kopecks of his daughter Sonya, who had become a prostitute to support the family he had failed, and he exclaims, «Ничего не сказала, только молча на меня посмотрела... Так не на земле, а там... о людях тоскуют, плачут, а не укоряют, не укоряют!» / “She did not say anything, just looked at me silently... Not as on earth, but up there... where they feel anguish and weep for people, and don’t reproach, don’t reproach!” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 20]. Marmeladov uses the verb “*toskovat’*” to associate Sonya with heavenly beings. Moreover, he claims that the heavenly beings have an object for their anguish – human beings. Dostoevsky thus creates an association between anguish for others, weeping, and angels. For the rest of the novel, this verb will belong almost exclusively to Sonya and Raskolnikov⁷.

In one case, Raskolnikov wakes from his delirium and remembers that Nastasya and «еще одного человека, очень будто бы ему знакомого, но кого именно – никак не мог догадаться и тосковал об этом, даже и плакал» / “one other person, someone who seemed very familiar, but precisely who it was – he couldn’t figure out at all, and he experienced anguish about it, and even wept” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 92]. In this passage, Dostoevsky again conjoins the two verbs *toskovat’* and *plakat’*, thereby associating Raskolnikov’s anguish with the anguish of angels and Sonya. His anguished longing expresses a sense of loss

⁶ This is the only reference to Marmeladov’s *toska* in the book.

⁷ The uses of the verb in reference to Raskolnikov and Sonya can be found in [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 39, 92, 245, 250, 397, 416].

or incompleteness: he longs to remember, to know the object of his yearning. Raskolnikov is delirious, which means that his unconscious, moral self gives evidence in his favor: while he floats in and out of consciousness, he longs to know the identity of his other helper – who, readers learn shortly, was Razumikhin, Dostoevsky's control figure. Like Raskolnikov, Razumikhin is a young, impoverished former student, but unlike Raskolnikov, who has given up tutoring and withdrawn into himself, Razumikhin concocts schemes to make money by publishing translations. He thus demonstrates to readers that Raskolnikov's is not the only way out of poverty. Raskolnikov's longing and weeping to know Razumikhin show readers that Raskolnikov's unconscious, moral emotions are pointing the way to his recovery.

Elsewhere, Dostoevsky links Raskolnikov and Sonya by using the verb *toskovat'* in the same paragraph as the noun *toska* – in Raskolnikov's case, after he reads his mother's letter [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 39], in Sonya's case, after she starts reading the Gospel of Lazarus to Raskolnikov [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 250]. In the first case, Dostoevsky uses indirect discourse to link Raskolnikov's anguish to his theory: «Давным-давно, как зародилась в нем вся эта теперешняя тоска, нарастала, накаплилась и в последнее время созрела и концентрировалась, приняв форму ужасного, дикого и фантастического вопроса, который замучил его сердце и ум, неотразимо требуя разрешения. Теперь же письмо матери вдруг как громом в него ударило. Ясно, что теперь надо было не тосковать, не страдать пассивно, одними рассуждениями о том, что вопросы неразрешимы, а непременно что-нибудь сделать, и сейчас же, и поскорее» / “Long ago all this present anguish had been engendered in him, grown, accumulated, and, recently ripened and concentrated, taking the form of a terrible, wild, and fantastic question, which tormented his heart and mind, implacably demanding resolution. Now his mother's letter had suddenly struck him like a thunderbolt. Clearly now was not the time to experience anguish, to suffer passively with mere reasoning about unresolvable questions, but to do something without fail, at once, quickly” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 39]. In this passage, we see that Raskolnikov associates anguish with passivity, burden, and irresolution. The philosopher Jenefer Robinson notes that “The reason we experience emotion as passive phenomena is that we can never fully control our emotions: once an affective appraisal occurs, the response occurs too. We can influence our emotions only indirectly through subsequent cognitive monitoring” [Robinson: 97]. Raskolnikov is obsessed with control. He cannot control his anguish, so he rejects it in favor of action. Here Dostoevsky engages his ongoing battle with Enlightenment thinking, the valuing of reason over emotion. By showing

us the outcome of Raskolnikov's desire to control his environment, Dostoevsky provides his readers with a negative moral education.

In the second passage, the narrator presents Sonya through Raskolnikov's eyes. Raskolnikov believes that her reluctance to read the Gospel passage about Lazarus to him comes from sharing the secret that has sustained her: «Но в то же время он узнал теперь, и узнал наверно, что хоть и тосковала она и боялась чего-то ужасно, принимаясь теперь читать, но что вместе с тем ей мучительно самой хотелось прочесть, несмотря на всю тоску и на все опасения, и именно ему, чтоб он слышал, и непременно теперь – “что бы там не вышло потом!”... Он прочел это в ее глазах» / “But at the same time, he now knew, and knew for certain, that although she felt anguish and feared something terribly as she started to read, she also had a tormenting desire to read, despite all her anguish and apprehension, and it was precisely *for him*, so that he would hear, and precisely *now* – ‘no matter what happened afterwards!’... He read it in her eyes” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 250]. Raskolnikov attributes Sonya's anguish to her fear that he, an unbeliever, will scoff at or reject her cherished, sustaining secret, but he also believes that her fear is tempered by hope that the Gospel will do its work. After all, he is the one who asked her to read. By forcing Sonya to read, Raskolnikov retains his sense of control. By watching her closely, he explores powerful emotions in a structured way. He also opens himself up to highly charged content without having to respond directly to it – he gets Sonya to do all the emotional work.

In these two passages, the contrast between Raskolnikov and Sonya could not be greater. From the novel's outset, Dostoevsky's narrator characterizes Raskolnikov as a young man oppressed by an anguish that is linked to his first visit to the pawnbroker a month earlier: «Чувство бесконечного отвращения, начинавшее давить и мучить его сердце еще в то время, как он только шел к старухе, достигло теперь такого размера и так ярко выяснилось, что он не знал, куда деться от тоски своей» / “The feeling of endless revulsion, which had begun to oppress and torment his heart from the time he had first visited the old woman, had now attained such a dimension and was so clearly felt, that he did not know how to rid himself of his anguish” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 10]. His spiritual anguish thus has a starting point, but no object. Readers only know that it oppresses him. On the next page, when Raskolnikov decides that his anguish derives from hunger and thirst, he felt «как будто внезапно освобождаясь от какого-то ужасного бремени» / “as though unexpectedly liberated from some terrible burden” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 11]. Although Dostoevsky will associate Raskolnikov's anguish with his shame, his theory of extraordinary men, and his decision to test his theory, he suggests that Raskol-

nikov's anguish begins when his mind starts entertaining thoughts that his conscience rejects. As a defense against his feelings of shame and guilt for his dependence on his mother and sister, he arrogantly elevates himself over others and repudiates moral principles on utilitarian and egotistic grounds, denying the equal value of all persons. In this passage, Raskolnikov decides to seek relief from the anguish tormenting him by committing murder, a decision that only intensifies his anguish and isolation. Theory is not the way out.

Sonya's anguish, on the other hand, is intimately linked to her family, to her faith, and, in this passage, to Raskolnikov. On a micro-level, Dostoevsky shows how love for individuals is a sacred, even salvific, affair. Like Raskolnikov, Sonya is a divided self: her moral self cannot endure her profession as prostitute. Like Raskolnikov, she is separated from her family, but whereas the thought of his family's love oppresses him, Sonya's love for her family sustains her, even keeps her from committing suicide. She experiences anguish for them, weeps for them, and weeps for her separation from them. Just as she has sacrificed herself for her family, literally sharing her body in order to feed them, so, here, she shares her soul and the strength of her faith with Raskolnikov⁸. Sonya opens herself up to Raskolnikov as she has opened herself up to the Gospels. In this scene, she literally and figuratively shows him the way out of his self-enclosure.

Both Raskolnikov and Sonya experience the anguish of separation – a feeling that is both spiritual and physical. The difference lies in the sources: Raskolnikov's pride and arrogance lead him to deny human interdependence. His fascination with failure and his proclivity toward self-annihilation demonstrate his egoistic emphasis on self. Sonya, by contrast, is guided by humility and self-sacrifice. Without thinking, she acts as an agent guided by moral principles, including belief in the equality of all human beings. In short, her thinking is other-directed. By creating contrasting portraits of anguish, Dostoevsky points to his larger thematic picture – the struggle between Romantic self-aggrandizement and Christian humility. Raskolnikov's ultimate conversion signals a rejection of abstract thought in favor of embodied love for other individuals [Workman: 87–97]. His decision to redeem Sonya's suffering with his «бесконечной любовью» / “infinite love” represents a repudiation of isolation and an embrace of human community.

In teaching us to track his characters' moral emotions and self-divisions, Dostoevsky encourages us to see the costs of egoism, the benefits of altruism, and, most of all, the human need for interconnection. During the course of this great novel, Dostoevsky shows us what happens to a person who wants to believe that reason can repress and control the emotions. He fails. Denying, even

⁸ My colleague Valentina Izmirlieva calls this Sonya's “radical hospitality” [Izmirlieva: 277–288].

trying to kill his emotions, only causes more anguish – the moral emotions will out. Only when Raskolnikov gives up control, literally flung, he knows not how, at Sonya's feet, can he find love, community, and salvation: «Их воскресила любовь, сердце одного заключало бесконечные источники жизни для сердце другого» / “Love resurrected them; the heart of each held infinite sources of life for the heart of the other” [Dostoevsky 1972–1990: VI, 421]. In short, love, a positive moral emotion, wipes away their *toska*.

Crime and Punishment dramatizes the paradoxical pain and joy of the moral emotions. Our moral emotions connect us to one another as part of a community that recognizes the equal value of all human beings. When Raskolnikov protects himself from the pain of being dependent on others by declaring himself a superior being with the right to transgress moral law, he willfully separates himself from others. He then suffers four hundred pages of anguish before experiencing the luminous joy of reconnection. Dostoevsky thus dramatizes the painful consequences of closing one's heart to others as well as the joy of reopening it. By focusing on characters' psychology and their moral emotions, Dostoevsky not only teaches us to understand them but also to understand who we are and what we care about.

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