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## KNOWLEDGE OF SELF AND THE WORLD

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### Introduction

Don Hagner (1981) writes, "And if the evangelical does not reach out and affirm the truth that is there (in modern scholarship), thus showing that the truth of scholarship is not necessarily inimical to the faith of orthodox Christianity, who will? This is the challenge that faces evangelicalism" (p. 37).

This call for an open relationship between evangelicals and modern (secular) scholarship was reinforced when Alan Johnson (1982) encouraged us to research widely, use the tools of research open to us, but be sure to keep all speculation and all conclusions under the magisterial authority of the Bible.

Most of the reasons Hagner and Johnson give for their assertions are pragmatic, i.e. staying alive in the intellectual marketplace, staying relevant, not letting a whole area of research slip away, etc.

I would like to add another more conceptual reason. The idea behind the phrase "all truth is God's truth," properly understood and applied, opens us to receiving truth from any source without fear of any necessary contamination. If we accept this, we may approach the tools and the findings of modern scholarship in any area (Bible, science, philosophy, psychology) as other potential sources of truth. If we have God's truth in the Bible, and I believe we do, then we have nothing to fear from truth found from other sources or through research on these sources.

In light of this wide view of credible intellectual pursuit, most intellectuals begin philosophically with experience or reason as a test of truth claims. However, there are a number of ontological and epistemological questions which should precede the discussion of our knowledge of God or truth. A good illustration of the need for prior reflection is found in John Hick's comments (1966):

We become conscious of the existence of other objects in the universe, whether things or persons, either by experiencing them for ourselves or by inferring their existence within our experience. The awareness of God reported by the ordinary religious believer is of the former kind. (p. 95)

While asserting that our knowledge of God is not based on evidences from within our experience, but rather is by direct experience, he is implicitly creating a bifurcation of knowledge and forcing knowledge of God into one category at the expense of the other category.

Before answering his assertion (which I will not do) it is important to choose a better epistemological framework from which to reflect. This investigation in turn leads to the deeper level question of the epistemological status of claims to knowledge of any kind and of the ontological status concerning that which a person is claiming to know, i.e. the object of our knowledge claims.

This philosophical intensification is not new of course. Descartes doubted his own existence. Berkeley questioned the status of the external world and denied its independent existence. Hume took the argument further and doubted the independent existence of all things, including the self. Kant responded by asserting that if there is any experience of anything, then there is some meaning to the "self"; in his terms the self is a transcendental unity of apperception. But Kant only clarified the phenomenal experience of the self, and that insufficiently. Philosophers have continued, since Kant, to deepen the investigation of the status of knowledge claims and of the claims to ontological existence of a self, other beings, the world, absolutes, and God.

Hamlyn

In his book The Theory of Knowledge (1970), D. W. Hamlyn investigates the status of knowledge of self and of the external world. I will review some of his arguments and then examine some related theories of Gottlob Frege and Bernard Lonergan. Then I will suggest a way to combine some of these men's research which will enable us to advance the question of the knowledge of the self in a method more compatible with biblical truth.

In his discussion of perception Hamlyn states what in fact turns out to be his conclusion forty-two pages later, "We cannot be said to perceive something unless what we perceive is in some sense there." (p. 45) The scope of his discussion includes: the nature and status of the possibility of "being given" something in perception, the relation of sensation and sense data, an introduction of traditional theories of perception, our perception of the world, and the relation of perception to knowledge and belief. Hamlyn admits that "...it is impossible not to conclude that . . . what one is directly aware of (in perception) is not a world independent of ourselves but sense experiences that are in some sense private." (p. 158) This view is the basic view of traditional empiricism and often gives rise to some traditional difficulties involved in justifying knowledge claims about self and the world.

Hamlyn's conclusion depends on what counts as justifying grounds or reasons. He had already concluded his discussion of the justifying basis for knowledge claims in general. He rejected the standard definition of knowledge (Johnson, 1975) in favor of a definition in keeping with his own justifying criteria, namely public agreement under "normal circumstances." Thus Hamlyn needs to develop the possibility of public criteria for identity--it is not sufficient for one person to be convinced of the identity of an object.

He further asserts that the "public criteria for a sensation make it possible for a genuine sense to be given to the idea of a sensation being recognized as the same one that occurred before."(p. 162) Although Hamlyn does not treat it here, it seems that this assertion raises the question whether Hamlyn places the cart before the horse. How can we give any substantial content to any idea of public agreement on criteria for identity when we cannot justify that any person or anything else exists? Since Hamlyn simply moves on with the discussion of sensation, I will reserve my criticisms of his account of public criteria until later.

Hamlyn's conclusion regarding sensation is that there is no way of "building up to a public world from immediately given sensations." (p. 162) His discussion on this point seems hurried. There have been a number of serious attempts to explain sensation which Hamlyn does not take into account. I do not agree with his conclusion because he has not presented clear or conclusive evidence. Also, if sensation is the foundation of perception, then even if we could not build all the way to a public world, we still need to carefully relate sensation to perception. By not doing this, Hamlyn has already indicated his outcome regarding empiricism.

However, when Hamlyn discusses perception he makes a crucial point: "One of the crucial facts about perception is that it is concept dependent, in the sense that we cannot be said to perceive anything unless we have a concept of the object of perception as an object independent of ourselves." (p.163) By surfacing this issue of the relation between concepts and perception, Hamlyn has touched on an important point. Perception is not a simple unitary grasp of reality. It is a complex set of interrelated mechanisms which result in what we call perception. Hamlyn has pointed out the need for concepts (he strengthens this point later). What he does not touch are the relations of consciousness and intentionality to concepts and sensations in the act of perception. Also, his discussion of concepts fails to deal with the ontological status of concepts. he primarily indicates that knowledge is concept dependent--we must have some conceptual scheme in order to put rational categories and the label "information" on our perceptions.

Hamlyn then discusses possible grounds for a relation between perception and a real world. After rejecting causal grounds, he turns to phenomenalism. Phenomenalism argues that what we call material objects are constructs from our own sense data (p.170). Hamlyn presents three arguments against phenomenalism. First, he argues that "no finite list of sense data statements is ever equivalent to a statement about a physical object." (p. 174) While he is correct in this criticism, I don't know of any phenomenologist who would say that a sense data statement is equivalent to a statement about physical objects.

Second, and much more important, is his summary of Ayer's position against phenomenalism. Ayer says that material object statements entail some statements about sense data, but not vice versa. Thus Ayer feels we need to begin our argument from the perspective of a claim to know material objects and then subsume items of sensory verification as confirming, but never establishing, our material object claim. The problem is to verify all levels of perception discourse. If Hamlyn and Ayer are correct, then neither sensation nor sense data discussions are capable of gaining sufficient grounding for our knowledge claims.

Third, Hamlyn makes the point that "the nonexistence of an object is logically, if not empirically, compatible with any number of experiences that apparently witness to its existence."(p. 174) This returns us to the issue of necessity. Even though Hamlyn officially rejects necessity as a ground for justifying knowledge claims, he returns to it at some points in the discussion. Hamlyn again fails to raise the deeper issues of analysis of the phenomenal act of perception, even though he is neither a physicalist nor a functionalist.

The only general conclusion Hamlyn draws is based on Ayer's development in The Problem of Knowledge (1956, pp.130ff), namely that it is logically impossible that all people be fooled all the time by their perceptual states. But this is only a negative criticism. It does not give a coherent account of perception. To move beyond this impasse, Hamlyn simply asserts that what primarily exists is not sense data, but immediate awareness of an object. He adds that we must pick back up the idea of an a priori conceptual framework which gives us the ability to have information based on the object experience (pp.178-186).

Hamlyn concludes that a philosophical investigation of the concepts of any sphere should result in the acceptance of statements that have a claim to necessary truth. This is "...to lay claim to the ability to arrive at an understanding of how certain things must be understood." (p. 274) He does not make the stronger point that if, in discussing concepts, we find a concept which is necessary, then it is necessary in all possible worlds; nor the converse that if a concept is necessary in all possible worlds, then it is necessary in the real world. Hamlyn has said that the needed points of development are in concepts as bases for explaining perceptual experience and in a closer analysis of the perceptual acts themselves. The need is to analyze the parts of the perceptual event while holding on to the unity of what is presented.

### Frege

This attempt at analysis of perceptual states through concepts has been best done by Frege and Lonergan. Frege has analyzed concepts, particularly in his ideas about "sense" and about the "mode of presentation" of the referent in the sense. While we do not have to agree with his ontological conclusions, his explanation of concepts and his depth of analysis are helpful. Lonergan has analyzed the act of perception in ways that are pertinent to this discussion.

In his classic, "On Sense and Reference" (1952) Frege gives his primary presentation of the notion of "sense" (sinn). The first use of 'sense' occurs on page 57:

It is natural, now, to think of there being connected with a sign (name, combination of words, letters) besides that to which the sign refers, which may be called the reference of the sign, also what I should like to call the sense of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation is contained.

The closest to a definition in this passage is that sense contrasts with reference, which is very little help.

Commentators have taken Frege to mean two things. Begin with the simple idea that a sense exists as a meaning. Wells says that to assert that an expression has a sense "is only to say it has a meaning that is (a) objective, like the denotation, yet (b) distinct from the denotation." (1968, p. 18) However, even at this beginning point there is disunity among scholars. Wienphal denies that Frege's "sense" has any objective existence. (1968, p. 209) He says that a sense is to be understood as the combination of an object's physical properties. I think Frege intends sense to be understood as objective. In a later passage he discusses the relation between reference, sense, and the idea associated with a sign.

The reference and sense of a sign are to be distinguished from the associated (idea). If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image arising from memories of sense impressions which I have made and acts, both internal and external, which I have performed. Such an idea is often saturated with feeling; the clarity of its separate parts varies and oscillates. The same sense is not always connected, even in the same man, with the same idea. The idea is subjective; one man's idea is not that of another. This constitutes an essential distinction between the idea and the sign's sense, which may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part of a mode of the individual mind. (p. 59)

Let us assume from this that the sign, reference, sense, and idea are different. The sign has been defined as the letters or words which constitute the visible or audible expression. The reference may be an object perceivable by the senses, although it does not have to be.

The idea is an internal image, which is private, or personally subjective. Frege adds that the sense may come to be the property of many people.

On the surface, this seems to mean that there is an objective thing, not a physical object, which is the sense and which a number of people may share somehow. This abstract object becomes the common property of many individuals. How the objects become a possession of someone is not given. Elsewhere, Frege says that we "grasp" or "apprehend" senses (if senses are taken as synonymous with thoughts--see "Thoughts" in Logical Investigations (1977). "Grasp" or "apprehend" should be taken in the sense of direct appropriation by a mental faculty, i.e., thinking. Frege could mean that we all directly cognize the abstract thing and thus "appropriate" it as our possession (cf. Hanna, 1981 on veridicalism). Frege held to a direct realism of perception.

We can include with ideas the direct experiences in which sense-impressions and acts themselves take the place of the traces which they have left in the mind. The distinction is unimportant for our purpose, especially since memories of sense-impressions and acts always help to complete the perceptual image. One can also understand direct experience as including any object, insofar as it is sensibly perceptible or spatial. (1952)

This same realism is true of Frege's "senses" according to Wells:

Frege's ontological contribution is mainly concerned with abstract entities. Many ontologists today, especially moderate realists in the Aristotelian tradition, would regard all these as beings of reason (*entia rationis*). Frege takes a more extreme--realistic view of them.(1968)

These arguments about the objective reality of both the independent world and the realm of senses is taken further in Frege's "Thoughts."

The only clue for a further definition of sense is in the last line of the quote we first looked at from "Sense and Reference." The use of the word "thoughts" seems to parallel the position of objective senses, which are neither ideas nor material objects. "Thought" may be Frege's term for the sense of a sentence. If so, then "senses" function much like Platonic forms, in that they have a non-spacio/temporal, but nevertheless real, existence.

This interpretation is in keeping with Frege's reference to the relation between sense, reference, and ideas. The reference of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its name; the idea, which we have in that case, is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself. (p. 60)

The sense is neither physical (as the object may be) nor merely a private idea. It must then be of another kind of entity which can be called abstract. Therefore, a sense may be described ontologically as an abstract entity which becomes known by us through the medium of thinking and reflection regarding signs, objects, and ideas.

That Frege holds to a realism regarding the external world, is clear from his comments on page 61 regarding the moon illustration. "When we say `moon' we do not intend to speak of our idea of the Moon, nor are we satisfied with the sense alone, but we presuppose a referent." He goes on to affirm that this is best taken as a simple presupposition which few people would contest, rather than to produce an argument (however, in "Thoughts" Frege does argue for the external existence of a real world which is knowable by us; cf. pp.20,27).

In the succeeding discussion of a declarative sentence, Frege portrays the sense of a sentence as a "thought." His definition of a thought again confirms his belief in an objective realm of abstract entities: "By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers." (p.62) Note the use of the common property allusion again. The way Frege uses this allusion indicates both the objectifiability of the sense, i.e., that it is an object independent of an particular knower, and that it can be appropriated by more than one person. This sets the realm of senses apart from the realm of physical objects.

Commenting on these separate realms, Grossmann says:

There are things which are localized in space and time. There are things which are not so localized. All senses in general and all concepts in particular are of the latter kind. That these things exist, even though they are not localized in any sense, is shown by the fact that they can be apprehended by minds. What exists, in this sense, is what can interact with minds. (1968)

While I agree with Grossmann's explanation of non-spatio/temporal things, he leaves two problems. First, he seems to limit what exists to what can interact with minds. While this may be in keeping with Frege's direction, Grossmann has not shown this. The problem may develop that "existence" could fall into an explanation of things as mind-dependent.

The second problem with Grossmann has to do with apprehending. We can know about physical objects but we cannot directly apprehend these, in the sense of a personal appropriation. We are said to be able to appropriate senses, but so far, "appropriation" is explained only in terms of "grasping." Since Frege did not give any clearer epistemological discussion nor use more formal terms (intuition, direct cognition, veridical knowledge, etc.) I can find no compelling conclusion.

The other question raised by Frege concerned the meaning of a "mode of presentation." There was one earlier use of this phrase which may help clarify the intended meaning. "A difference can arise only if the difference between the signs (a' and b') corresponds to a difference in the mode of presentation of that which is designated." (p.57) Both references to "mode of presentation" could refer to an objective relation between senses and persons or things. Or, it could refer to a relation between the senses and linguistic expressions. I don't believe these two interpretations conflict (however, see Bergmann's and Klemke's articles in Essays on Frege).

By "mode of presentation" Frege means the expression's way of presenting its referent. Thus it is a relation between the sense and the object it represents. The suggestion is that Frege means the mode or manner of the presentation of the object by the sense. In other words, it may refer to the way in which a sense presents the object to us.

If this is how the phrase "mode of presentation" is to be understood, it would parallel the meaning of sense as a limited kind of objective idealism. "Mode of presentation" would take this a step further by indicating that the objective ideal sense presents itself to us in connection with our experience of the physical object, or in the case of a sentence, with the thought of the sentence.

But this reading has some problems. If Frege limits knowledge to a Kantian phenomenal experience, even including the direct cognition of a sense as it presents itself to us, we do not have a grasp on the noumenal world, nor do we have any detailed or reliable knowledge of the realm of senses. What we now have is a universe populated by persons, ideas, signs, senses, thoughts, and references, in which our actual knowledge is limited to ourselves and the ideas we have.

If we assert that because we have the sense, we have in some way (intuitively?) grasped or apprehended the ideal object, and therefore, that we have certain knowledge of the realm of sense, I don't see how this could be supported. In order to assert knowledge, we need some way to grasp the realm of senses with certainty, or we need some point of immediate contact with the noumenal world.

If the above represents Frege's theory--and it seems to me this is the best reading--based on the analogy with the objective conception of a sense, then the phrase "mode of presentation" does not explain much. It functions as an epistemological assertion about how a rather specialized realm of objects comes to be part of our experience.

We may now understand the expression as describing how a sense relates to a reference. The sense of an expression is a mode of presentation of the reference. Used in this way, it implies that we are presented with a reference through its sense. This option more closely associates the sense with the reference. It is as if the sense is an extension of the reference into an abstract realm. Thus, when we apprehend a sense, we are in fact experiencing the physical thing indirectly through the sense. Since we know Frege believes in a realm of abstract objects, this is a very plausible interpretation.

The phrase as used in the statement, "wherein the mode of presentation is contained" allows for the idea that the mode of presentation is not the whole of the sense, but is only a part of it. This would most closely relate with the reading of a relation between a sense and a reference.

In the latter case, the sense would be a conceptual representation of the referent, which includes a mode of presenting the referent via the realm of the abstract entities. This reading ties in most clearly with the use of the sense as developed in this article. If this is the correct interpretation of Frege's view, then "On Sense and Reference" is presenting a strong case for an empirical realism with the inner world of the subject and the realm of objects connected via the idealistic bridge of the realm of senses.

What Frege has contributed to our search for knowledge of self and others is a possible route to affirming the existence of and knowledge about other people and a public world. Senses are the means by which data is given to us. In the sense we have presented to us the actual referent of our discourse. Even if we reject Frege's granting of ontological status to senses and see him as a kind of nominalist on this point (as other authors in Essays on Frege do take him), it does not change the fact that in reflection and in conversation the concepts involved put us in touch with the references in something like the ways Frege indicates.

What needs to be done now is to return to an analysis of perceptual experience, since we now have a potential bridge to a noumenal world, to see if anything better than Hamlyn's position may be developed.

### Lonergan

Bernard Lonergan has developed a transcendental method which incorporates elements from Husserl and Heidegger into a neo-Kantian framework (1971, 1977). He considers that his method is transcendental in the Scholastic sense (parallel in some ways to Kant's use of the term transcendent) and in the formal Kantian sense in the phenomenal world. His hope is that "it brings to light the conditions of the possibility of knowing an object insofar as that knowledge is a priori." (1977, p. 14) In Kantian terminology, he wants to develop the conditions for a synthetic a priori, namely the conditions for knowledge of a public object. To do this, his method is to discover the transcendental method which will bring to light the conditions of such knowledge.

From Husserl, Lonergan begins with an analysis of human cognition. The subject becomes aware that certain operations take place, such as seeing, hearing, touching, inquiring, evaluating, etc. The subject discovers in his operations a dynamic relationship that seems to lead from one operation to another. Each operation is transitive in that it intends objects (this refers to such facts as that by seeing, there becomes present what is seen, etc.). In each case, the presence in question is a psychological event. Each operation also reveals a subject that is active in the event. The subject becomes aware of his own consciousness, he becomes present to himself. Thus, attending to the operations reveals both the intentionality and the self-consciousness of the subject.

Lonergan further subdivides intentionality and consciousness into four levels of operation (empirical, intellectual, rational, and responsible) and four different modes of intending: attending, imagination, insight (organization), and conception (synthesis). Our concern is to analyze what Lonergan means by insight and conception, and how these function in his epistemological system. His use of "attending" corresponds somewhat to Hamlyn's awareness of sensation.

In defining insight, Lonergan says that "what is grasped in insight is neither an actually given datum of sense nor a creation of the imagination, but an intelligible organization that may or may not be relevant to the data" (1977, p. 10). Insight is the human operation of making some sense out of the general data encountered at the level of awareness. This higher order mode of intending helps us to organize and categorize our experience.

These operations, and the concurrent awareness of intentionality and consciousness, are a priori. We have not even examined a single sensation or experience. What has happened is that we have analyzed the nature of human psychological functions and discovered three aspects (operations, intentionality, consciousness) which are further divisible under an analysis of the method of their functioning.

If we apply the mode of intentionality called insight, we will seek to find or supply some account of the subject who is thus conscious, intending, and operating. We will further seek to account for the objects discovered in the exercise of the operations.

As we seek to make sense of these things, we realize that we are able to conceptualize them (have an idea of the operation, etc.) and are able to directly manipulate the idea (compare or contrast it with other ideas, evaluate it, etc.). This level is called conceptualization.

This compounding of the data into ideas that make sense is transcendent in that we go beyond the sensation found immediately in

perception, yet is still a priori when applied to the subject. All we know so far is that a series of operations are taking place which follow a pattern.

We find that what is conscious can be intended by: 1) experiencing one's experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding; 2) understanding the unity and relations of one's experienced operations; 3) affirming the reality of one's experienced and understood experience; and 4) deciding to operate in accord with patterns immanent in the relatedness of one's experienced, understood, affirmed, experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding (1977, p. 14-15).

Thus, consciousness itself can be intended and examined by a variety of operations. The items thus experienced are not experienced singly but also in their relations which can be manipulated by intentionality. The unity of consciousness is thus itself experienced and understood, judged, and decided upon. The name we give to this "synthetic manifold" (1977, p. 17) is the "self."

This theory does not answer all questions. It raises more questions than we set out to answer. The key element is that the self is knowable as a transcendent entity prior to actual experience via this transcendental path.

Having developed a concept of the self through this transcendental method, Lonergan turns to analyze the objects of our operations. His steps are here presented in summary form:

1. awareness is analyzed
2. there is consciousness of intentional objects
3. there is consciousness of an intentional subject
4. there is consciousness of a pattern of operations
5. there is insight that the compound subject is the objective self
6. a concept develops of the nature and dimensions of the objective self
7. there is insight that the compound objects may be objective objects
8. there is understanding, judging, and deciding about the objects
9. there is development of concepts about the objects
10. there is discrimination of objects which recur spontaneously and fit the concepts, or which give rise over time to new concepts
11. there is approval of the objects as real.

With these steps completed Lonergan has moved from a phenomenal analysis of the conditions of human knowledge to a necessary self and a demonstrable knowledge of objects. Of course, this is a phenomenal analysis, not a transcendent one. The results are applicable within lived experience, not in an external world. Lonergan thinks that the analysis creates grounds for positing the self and objects as real in an external world. But he does not have, I think, a means to transition to the external world.

## Conclusion

Hamlyn raises the question of the possibility of knowledge of self and others. A means of analyzing the perceptual event is needed which can be seen to initiate a priori, hold on to the unity of what is presented, and generate a conceptual base for analyzing all experience.

Frege's theory asserts that conceptual representations of referents are present to us as senses, and that the senses include a mode of presentation of the referents to us as abstract objects.

Combining these ideas allow us to restate the problem as follows. Can a means of analyzing the perceptual event be developed which will initiate with a priori data (which we would then need to define as necessary in all possible worlds), hold on to the unity of what is found in the perceptual activity, and generate a conceptual base for further analyzing experience as real through some immediate connection between our perceptions and real objects? I think this is a valid question for us as Christians to address, for it has to do with the philosophical grounding of our beliefs regarding a real God and a real world which is accessible to all of us.

Lonergan presents just such a means of analyzing perception. We traced it as far as the assertion of the real self, and listed the fact that the same transcendental method, now based on a real self, is followed in the assertion of a real world. A key to the usefulness of Lonergan is the inter-objective world of Frege's senses and references.

Frege's theory, or something like it, is necessary to establish a bridge between our concepts or ideas and a real world. Can we accept the idea of senses as existing abstract entities? Does this actually preserve the needed unity between ideas or concepts and the empirical entities they present to us?

Lonergan's method, or something like it, is needed which begins with a priori truths and proceeds to an analysis that will generate the existence of the self and the world as logically necessary deductions based on phenomenological analysis of perceptual activity. If we begin to analyze the objects before we are clear on the perceptual acts we will confuse the issue. Therefore, the case for the existence of the self is critical to the development of a case for the existence of other people and the world.

This would bring us to the point of establishing a case for the existence of God. But now it would have the philosophical grounding to avoid either skepticism or subjective presuppositions and would have given us knowledge of the real self and a real world.

One of the points missing in Lonergan is an argument for content knowledge of the self and the world. Given a self and a world as logically adducible, there is still no content and thus nothing to use for analysis in any kind of teleological argument (although perhaps some kind of cosmological argument would have better ground). The closest Lonergan comes to giving this is his step in which differentiation of the real takes place through insight and conceptualization. This will probably need to be supplemented by a systematic consistency method based on a phenomenological analysis of existence (as in Popper, Carnell and MacGregor).

As believing Christians we are `given' God, Christ, and revelation as well as real selves and a real world. As individuals standing among people in the world we need to demonstrate the truths of these realities. May God continue to help us as we proceed in the philosophical search for truth.

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