

nothing – what we are is what we are – even though we may choose to keep it out of our awareness.

This raises for me a question about online counselling and other electronic means of communication. Where is the silence? If, as a counsellor, I pause for a time, does my client think that we have been disconnected? Oh, how many meanings that has! How do I listen online?

There are a few ideas that I query; for example: I take issue with Wilberg's statement (p113) that counsellor training does not focus on the counsellor as listener – even within the very specific terms of his definition. If I had not been enabled to 'listen' during my training, his book would not have been so full of familiar things. Another point is that this book is a series of essays and inevitably it becomes a bit repetitive, but in my opinion, it is worth persevering with.

When I first read this book I wondered if all I needed to say was that I think it is unmissable – just read it – you won't be disappointed.

A final thought: balance this book by reading the brilliant *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman.

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World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis

Robert D. Stolorow. (2011). New York. Routledge.

Trauma as a bridge to authenticity

Overview

In the phenomenological psychoanalysis of Robert Stolorow and company, what a difference twenty-odd years make. In 1984, Stolorow (with his collaborator George Atwood) wrote in discussing Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962/1927), 'The question of the meaning of being, as we understand it, does not enter the field of concern of psychoanalysis, even at the level of pretheoretical assumptions. The analyst takes it for granted that man is' (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984: p22). Reversing this declaration, Stolorow is now of the opinion that '*Being and Time* is a unique blending of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and contextualism and thus has great potential for providing philosophical grounding for Post-Cartesian psychoanalysis.' (2011, p2). Apparently, the analyst is taking less for granted these days, including the possibility that a person's *being*

himself or not himself is related to his psychological well-being. His two most recent and commendable books draw heavily from the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. The latter book (2011), *World, Affectivity, Trauma*, which is the topic of this review, is a more thorough explication of Heidegger's philosophy than appears in the earlier one (2007), *Trauma and Human Existence*. One is tempted to skip the earlier, monograph really, which would be a mistake, since that is an exquisitely personal work and valuable for anyone dealing with episodic trauma, as distinct from developmental trauma, which is the focus of *World, Affectivity, Trauma*. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations which follow are from this 2011 work.

Stolorow has come to recognize that Heideggerian thought provides a surer and richer foundation for psychoanalysis than does the Cartesian-based thought of conventional psychology and psychoanalysis. For those unacquainted with Stolorow and his collaborators, their work is an effort 'to rethink psychoanalysis as a form of phenomenological inquiry... [which, they say] in turn led us to a contextualist theoretical perspective' (p2). Combining this with a reliance on affect theory (as opposed to drive theory) and situating their discussion within the discourse of relational psychoanalysis, this group presents an enticing phenomenological alternative to American forms of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, which tend to have weak grounding in continental philosophy in general and existential-phenomenology in particular. The lack of philosophical depth which Stolorow addresses exists for many Existential-Humanistic therapists only slightly less than it does for analysts and therapists in the empiricist mainstream. Thus, many American Existentially-oriented therapists who are intrigued by, but unschooled in, philosophical inquiry, are in the odd position of being introduced to Heideggerian thought, and its applicability to psychotherapy, by a psychoanalyst who has remained (until recently) outside of Existential-Humanistic circles. For this reason alone, American (at least) Existential, Humanistic and experience-near therapists in general owe Stolorow a debt of gratitude.

Existential-phenomenology, which involves the privileging of intersubjectivity over objectivity, presents a rigorous alternative (post-Cartesian) foundation for the much sought after, yet still elusive, holistic paradigm shift in psychology. However, the focus of *World, Affectivity, Trauma* is not so ambitious as to attempt a paradigmatic regrounding of psychology, but has a more limited twofold purpose. Primarily, it aims to introduce the thought of early Heidegger to depth therapists. Secondarily, it aims to 'enrich' (pp105-108) Heideggerian philosophy by incorporating concrete foci of psychoanalytic knowledge, such as psychodynamic inquiry, relational contexts, and the psychological phenomenon of trauma, into the more abstract structures of philosophical reflection. The first aim succeeds rather better than the second. However, the main value of the book is not in the

separate enrichment of psychoanalysis on the one hand and philosophy on the other, but in permeating the barriers between them. As an interdisciplinary dialogue, this book opens a door to something that is neither Psychoanalysis nor Philosophy as traditionally practiced. Even though the author does not take us very far through this door, he contributes to the conversation that seeks to integrate philosophical *theoria* with therapeutic *praxis*.

This book excels in three areas: 1) in the introduction of some key constructs in *Being and Time*, especially as regards the function of anxiety in authentic presence, 2) in the understanding of trauma as a bridge to the discovery and enhancement of authenticity, and 3) in identifying how a therapeutic relationship, be it professional or personal, may provide a 'relational home' for working with unintegrated trauma. Additionally, there is an insightful psychobiographical chapter examining Heidegger's Nazi involvement that goes beyond previous biographies, imagining something of the young Heidegger's unresolved inner conflicts and defensive compensatory reactions that may have contributed to this reprehensible participation.

Surely, anyone bold enough to wade into the thickets of Heideggerian thought deserves commendation. And anyone who proceeds to understand, which means to *translate*, Heideggerese into something approaching plain English (as Ezra Pound insisted) deserves our gratitude for such earnest labour. I mean, even before Heidegger was an unapologetic mystic, and by this I refer to the 'later Heidegger', the Black Forest Professor was still a mystic, even though this radicality was cloaked in academic philosophical language in *Being and Time* (the 'early Heidegger'). We ought not forget that a prime purpose of his publishing that remarkable work was to land a better-paying and more secure academic job. Heidegger wanted both to accord to the philosophical discourse of his day, thus facilitating his being accepted within that world, *and* to transcend the old philosophical discourse and the world it construed. Heidegger was a mystic in the sense that he re-envisioned the fundamental grounds of the modern self and worldview based remotely in Aristotle and more immediately in Descartes. His radical revision challenges readers to step outside of taken-for-granted conventional assumptions and think like philosophical mystics themselves in order to better attune to his vision. For this reason, I think it is incumbent on students of Heidegger to *discover* his more profound meanings rather than to merely *adopt* the conceptual constructs of his philosophy. Still, anyone who seriously reads Heidegger and tries to discuss it with others soon realizes it is difficult *not* to adopt his nomenclature without running the risk of losing the profundity that streams through the radical uniqueness of his thought. Stolorow is no exception to this.

The text

To more rigorously support the shift from drive mechanics to affectivity as 'the motivational center of human psychological life,' (p25) Stolorow

introduces Heidegger's central concept of *befindlichkeit*, translated accurately, but not satisfactorily in my opinion, as 'disclosive affectivity' (p25). Drawing upon Eugene Gendlin's (1978-79) discussion of *befindlichkeit*, he observes that this 'denotes both how one feels and the situation within which one is feeling, a felt sense of oneself in a situation, prior to a Cartesian split between inside and outside (p25). Stolorow highlights both the *contextuality* and the *felt sensing* (which, following Gendlin, is my preferred translation of *befindlichkeit*) of human being. Thus grounded, psychoanalytic insights from Kohut and others focusing on inter-relatedness and affectivity, including the value of mirroring, empathic attunement, and felt meaning for instance, are explicitly strengthened and implicitly reoriented. The reorientation following *Being and Time* remains implicit for Stolorow in that he has not yet decidedly moved from a 'Self'-centred Psychology à la Kohut to a non-self-centred psychology à la Heidegger. Softening the split between inside and outside is one thing. Overcoming dualistic vision is another thing entirely.

For Heidegger, inter-relatedness is fundamental to the human condition rather than derivative. That is, rather than positing the self as fundamental to the human condition, which subsequently relates to other independent selves, Heidegger (as in Buddhism and Taoism, for instance) posits inter-relatedness as primary. This reverses a tacit assumption of virtually all contemporary (Cartesian) psychologies, which see selfhood as the primary datum of the field. Instead of taking the Self as the entity which forms the ground of one's existence, Heidegger observes that fundamentally human existence is no thing but an inter-relational occasion of inter-being, accessible through non-conceptual, *felt* experiencing. On this basis, Stolorow discusses how it is therapeutically valuable to access and integrate traumatic states within an empathically robust 'relational home'.

This is a lovely term, even if it is nothing new to psychoanalysis. Ferenczi, Jung, and Binswanger spoke in their own rudimentary ways to this early on. And of course, Winnicott's discussion of 'holding environment' captures the sense of 'relational home' quite well. Many others, such as Carl Rogers, Clark Moustakas, and H.S. Sullivan also recognize the primacy of relationality in psychological life and psychotherapy. While it is valuable to be reminded of this important orientation, especially as amplified under the lens of affect-trauma theory, in drawing from Heidegger (if not Winnicott (1971), in regard to his notion of 'transitional phenomena'), there is a deeper reorientation to be explicated. As Stolorow understands it, intersubjectivity refers to interactions between separate subjectivities, or selfhoods, each of which is constituted by its own, independent 'unconscious organizing structures' (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). Thus, his conception of intersubjectivity is more properly an understanding of *bi-subjectivity*, as I have discussed elsewhere (Bradford, 2007). While the more holistic understanding of

interacting subjectivities softens the severity of the Cartesian split between self and other, it does not transcend it and does not yet capture the radical reconceptualization of human subjectivity Heidegger proposed as '*Dasein*' (Heidegger, 1962/1927).

Leaving behind Cartesian dualism and the illusion of security it envisions, including the positing of a safe, inner self separated from a dangerous, outer world, we enter Heidegger's holistic vision of human being. *Being and Time* construes a selfhood *as* a worldhood that is completely saturated with existential insecurities from which there is no escape. The existential embeddedness of being-in-the-world appropriately grounds depth therapeutic practices, since it is through the willingness to be exposed to existential actualities that allow for an eventual acceptance and integration of them. As Stolorow reviews, within this vision a human being does not exist as a self-grounded, self-secure entity, but as *dasein*. Literally translated, this conceives of a human being as an occasion of there (*da*) being (*sein*), rather than as a subjective self existing in an objective world. *Dasein* is there-being in two senses, one radical and the other super-radical. In the radical – contextual, post-Cartesian – sense, which is Stolorow's principle focus, one is 'situated' (p8) multidimensionally in the world in one's body (*umwelt*), with others (*mitwelt*), and in regard to one's own potentialities for being (*raison d'être*) (*eigenwelt*). Of these dimensions of *thereness*, Stolorow focuses exclusively on the dimension of being with others, highlighting social contextuality, inter-subjectivity, and the therapeutic value of the relational home for coming to better terms with trauma.

As an antidote to the felt estrangements common to modern individualistic societies suffering the splits between mind and body, self and other, and self and world, it is therapeutic and no small solace to recognize the fundamental human kinship we have with each other and to allow that 'we meet as brothers and sisters in the same dark night' (p64). The humility and sympathetic warmth that comes from recognizing this vulnerability breaks down the analytic distance in which the therapist removes himself in a contrived attitude of neutrality, protecting the patient against the empiricist devil of objectification and extending to the patient the 'old magic' of human compassion. Stolorow feels that 'longings for...emotional kinship [arise] as being reactive to emotional trauma, with its accompanying feelings of singularity, estrangement, and solitude. When I have been traumatized, my only hope for being understood is to form a connection with a brother or sister who knows the same darkness' (p65). It is within 'deep emotional attunement...that devastating emotional pain can be held, rendered more tolerable, and, hopefully, eventually integrated' (p65). This makes as good clinical sense for psychotherapy as it does common sense for everyday life. Still, it leaves open the question as to what is meant by the 'integration' of emotional trauma.

Trauma can give rise to ‘longings for emotional kinship’ which are ‘reactive’ to that trauma. Of course, trauma can also give rise to rejection or avoidance of emotional closeness, but in that case one is most likely in denial of the impact of the trauma, which is in any case merely another kind of reactivity. The point, which Stolorow makes quite clearly, is that trauma opens one to one’s actual vulnerability/being in the world, and thus presents an opportunity for authentically coming to better terms with that inherent and inescapable actuality.

Following Heidegger, Stolorow notes that it is possible to open more or less fully to the situation in which one finds oneself, and so to integrate more or less fully with that situation – which not other than oneself. Continuing to draw from *Being and Time*, he observes that existential anxiety is a kind of portal to becoming aware of one’s actual situation, and on this basis observes that trauma is an opportune situation that exposes one to the anxious actuality of the transient thereness of one’s being. Depending on one’s capacity for letting oneself be present *as* one is (*dasein*), one will be more or less ‘authentically’ *who* one is. The reorientation this understanding invites is super-radical, because it means that to honestly face who or what one is, one must face who or what one is not. That is, the ‘who’ or ‘what’ that one is is no thing. Not a discrete entity or self, but a dynamic occasion of inter-being that is continually in the process of changing into something else.

For depth psychotherapy, the moment-to-moment choice for both therapist and patient is whether to be-in and be-with the transitory situation of unfolding experiencing or, to resist the flux and upwellings of the emerging presence one is by fixating on a particular content and securing oneself in a fixed position. This revisioning challenges both therapists and clients to be open and responsive *as* the field of their *inter-being*. This challenge is nothing less than the release of self-centredness. Thus understood, is there any doubt why this approach lacks in popularity? The dreams of security that psychology dreams for an independent, separate selfhood, well defended against life’s humiliations and defeats is revealed to be an illusion, partaking of the inauthentic dream of consensual reality constructed and policed by *the They* (*das Man*) (pp35-42).

Stolorow sees psychoanalysis as facilitating the transition from living inauthentically as a *They-self* to a more authentic selfhood. Crucial to this transition is opening to the existential anxiety that arises to remind us that we are living in an illusory, constructed reality, and to this extent out of sync with who we truly are. It is in states of anxiety that we are especially able to feel our ‘lostness’ in *the They*, in the sense of ‘not being at home’ (p37). In feeling anxious, we are uncomfortably awakened to the way things actually are rather than the dream of how we think they are. This authentic awareness is particularly acute in ‘being-toward-death...[in which]

we are utterly and completely alone' (pp39 & 40), finding ourselves torn out of embeddedness in *the They* and returned to ourselves. The immediacy of 'being-toward-death' is a vividly felt experience that may lead to the discovery of authentic existing. As Stolorow puts it, 'Anxiety, in particular, is grasped as "a bridge to the *truth of Being*", from the ontical, or psychological, to the ontological' (p107, my emphasis).

The 'bridge' of anxiety is especially available in trauma, when one may be catapulted-toward-death in riveting states of panic, disorientation, dissociation, and akin ('post-traumatic') states of terror and estrangement. Following Heidegger and contra-psychiatry, Stolorow observes that these kinds of extreme anxiety states, which precipitate feelings of groundlessness, are not necessarily deficient or pathological, but are states of potential lucidity in which one is ejected from the illusion of being securely grounded in the world of consensual reality and faces something of the truth of one's actual situation. The breakthrough of groundlessness that occurs in traumatic anxiety as a form of being-toward-death, or -loss, rips asunder the secure illusion of self-groundedness, exposing one to the actuality of self-ungroundedness, or as is said in Buddhism, selflessness, or 'emptiness' (*sunyata*). We tend to live in ignorance of this truth, which is to say *inauthentically*, thus remaining vulnerable to a breakthrough of anxiety, which we fend off in any number of ways following the tranquilizing options offered by *the They*. Alternatively, we can face existential anxiety directly and discover what it is to live authentically in light of the way things actually are.

Unintegrated trauma that haunts us is a valuable occasion for facing these two givens of human existence. Again, one is that 'I' am not safe from impermanence and loss, and can never be safe from these existential shocks. Secondly, "I" do not exist as the secure ground I take myself to be, but exist only as an inter-being carried away in a current of time I know not where. As Heidegger notes, to accept these truths requires 'resoluteness' (p43). A potent therapeutic relationship requires that the therapist provide both sober resoluteness and a relational hominess for the patient. It is in this combination that a paradox arises which Stolorow could more thoroughly address. As a relational home, the therapist and therapy journey is bidden to be warm, empathically attuned, and a place of dependable and consistent holding in which a client can risk the re-emergence of traumatic terror with the confidence that it will be more manageable, and understandable, as a shared burden. Within the warmth of a relational home, one can risk feeling the authentic anxiety of 'not being at home' (p37), and so be less self-securing/grounded and more open and insecure/ungrounded. In being less self-managing, one relaxes, letting oneself be at home in an inter-subjective relationship. At the same time, the relational home of this inter-being is nowhere in the sense of it being non-fixated, ungrounded, open presencing. Quoting Heidegger, Stolorow notes that in being authentically resolute, one faces 'the fact that

[one] is the null basis of [one's] own nullity' (p48).

This brings us again to the super-radical sense of *dasein*, which Stolorow winks at, but does not consider in any depth. To arrive at the fundamental 'truth of Being' (p107) means to realize one's true nature. And in order to realize one's true nature, one must first recognize it. But in order to recognize who one is, one must see that there is nothing and no one to recognize... yet...there is cognizance. This paradox takes one across the bridge of anxiety to the threshold of awe, irony, and wonderment. I get the sense that Stolorow knows this threshold, yet may be, at least in his writing, reluctant to step over it. On the other hand, it is obvious from much of Heidegger's later writing, that he not only stepped into the open region of awe, but spent a good deal of time wandering around in it, making sense and nonsense along the way.

Beyond the text

Apparently, Stolorow is of the school that values the early Heidegger over the later, considering Heidegger's later work to be both less philosophically rigorous and more psychopathologically compromised. I couldn't disagree more. Stolorow sees a 'progressive reification and even deification of Being in Heidegger's later philosophy,' (p100) noting for instance, that 'Being became something like a divine force or power' (p99). Apparently, Stolorow finds Heidegger's sacralization of existence to be questionable. But what about the de-sacralization of existence (which Heidegger exposes) that is part and parcel of the empiricist vision of nature, including human nature, and its dehumanizing technological march to ecological, if not psychological, disaster? While I also find some of Heidegger's later work to be obscure, fantastical, and at times uninteresting, I also find a profundity, improved accessibility, and at times poetic brilliance in some of his more mature work that is not at all reifying and goes beyond *Being and Time* in both breadth and depth. Many examples of his later essays and addresses could be cited on this point. I will mention but one pertinent to depth psychology.

In 'On the essence of truth', Heidegger (1977/1944, pp113-142) explicates how the essence of truth is neither a question of historical ('material') truth regarding what actually did or did not happen in the past, nor a question of narrative ('propositional') truth, regarding the meaning one has made of past experience (pp118-122). Going beyond this dualistic framing of the conventional psychoanalytic conversation (Spence, 1982), Heidegger discusses how '*the essence of truth is freedom*' (p125), in the sense of it being an 'inner possibility of accordance' (p122) between what historically happened and how one understands, or 'takes' what happened. This 'open region' allows for truth to emerge as a moment of unconcealing (*alethea*) (p127). Importantly according to Heidegger, to facilitate the – potential therapeutically healing – revelation of truth requires above all

an according to the openness of inter-being and an approach (in regard to the other) of ‘letting beings be’ (p127). This ‘letting be’ (*gelassenheit*) applies both to the other person and to the psychological issue as it lives within and between oneself and an other. Certainly, this small section of merely one essay of Heidegger’s later work is worthy of depth psychological consideration, is it not?

Beyond this, Heidegger proceeds to discuss that the letting-be of unconcealment is itself grounded in the still greater ‘concealment of beings as a whole,’ which is ‘the one’ inexhaustible ‘mystery’ (p132). In this, he observes that a search for truth may well discover many insights. But if carried deeper, one finds that whatever insights, breakthroughs, or epiphanies arise which one may wish to cling to in order to better ground/understand oneself, will always remain incomplete as one faces the truth of one’s inherent groundlessness. This is to say negatively what Heidegger also suggests more affirmatively in the sense of letting oneself be open, allowing for emergence of the ontological recognition that we will always be children of wonderment. Our choice, and I would say an essential therapeutic choice, is how deeply dare we look into, recognize, and live forward this mysterious truth.

On the point of psychopathological contamination, Stolorow discusses how Heidegger’s later philosophizing was compromised by his motivation to avoid or take the edge off his own existential anxiety. He finds that Heidegger’s later – reified and deified – work ‘served as an antidote to the annihilating aloneness into which his quest for authentic selfhood had led him’ (p100). This may be a fair analytic interpretation, but again, fair only to *some* of his later work: those guilty of reification. Is it not also possible that Heidegger’s most brilliant, non-reified work was likewise motivated by a ‘quest for authentic selfhood,’ resulting the revelation of his most penetrating insights?

The more important point, which Stolorow and company have been making consistently for decades (For instance, see Atwood & Stolorow, 1993), is that *all* philosophizing and theorizing is contaminated by contextual, strictly personal, and typically unconscious motivations. Soberly, the motivations to conceive and write, including this review you are reading just now, may be based on compulsions to compensate for felt limitations or unresolved personal dilemmas or to make a ground out of ideas that can serve as a bulwark against the inherent groundlessness of *dasein*. This however, is not the whole story. And, or, even ecstatically, thought and art, music and science, and creative acts of all kinds might also, or simultaneously, be motivated by the delight that comes in giving form to formlessness, playing the edge between the visible and invisible, playing in and with illusions of reality and the fleeting reality of illusion. Whether or not we recognize, we psychological thinkers and therapists, that ‘we are such stuff as dreams are made on’, isn’t that recognition an important

point? I consider it to be of the utmost importance. Such that when we see that our beliefs, doubts, memories, dreams, and reflections are nothing but the evanescent play of mind, and so shift from trying to get somewhere where we are not to relaxing more deeply into the mystery of where we are, we may come to bask in the contemplative bliss and gratitude that indeed, ‘thinking is thanking’ (Heidegger, 1968/1954: pp138-147).

Summary

World, Affectivity, Trauma takes a step forward in the phenomenological revisioning of psychoanalysis. True to Heidegger, it is post-Cartesian in maintaining that 1) there is no such thing as a worldless, decontextualized subject (*res cogitans*), 2) felt sensing (affectivity) is more fundamental to human being (and depth therapy) than discursive thinking/interpretation, and 3) the therapeutic focus shifts from objects to events, in the sense that trauma is reconceived as a temporal event rather than an internalized object or psychological state. It is therefore a welcome support for those depth therapists who chafe under the dualistic assumptions of conventional Cartesian psychology, and wish to find a bridge to more philosophically-rigorous holistic approach.

As an entrée to the thought of Heidegger, especially for those who have not previously read much of his philosophy, this text makes for a serviceable introduction to a few key concepts of *Being and Time*.

For those with some background in Heidegger, who wonder how his philosophy can have applicability to therapy, the book suggests how it might be applied to psychoanalysis in general and working with trauma in particular. In doing so however, it sketches a general approach without detailing many of the specific practices that follow from the theory. Allowing for a ‘relational home’ within which to confront unintegrated trauma is certainly one important specific, but this is more suggestive than experientially explicated (including no mention of its potential downsides). Particularly for those therapists who are trained in the experience-near innovations of Laing (1987), Gendlin (1978 & 1996), Bugental (1976, 1987 & 1999), Moustakas (1995 & 1997), and the growing contingent of mindfulness-based, somatic-focused, and energy-sensitive practitioners for instance, the lack of experiential detail and descriptive thickness stands out.

These nontraditional, aspiringly holistic, and experience-near therapies, which typically exist on the fringe of the medical model juggernaut, are strangely well ahead of most forms of psychoanalysis in breaking free from the dualistic, Cartesian vision of psychology, embracing alternate paradigms which are friendlier to lived experience. I consider this strange because psychoanalysts generally have much more rigorous training, both theoretical and practical, than the typical California holistic therapist. But if the analytic training is Cartesian-based, it can be a liability for the analyst

in being able 1) to be present with the other in a non-objectivising, relationally robust exchange and 2) to be an occasion of open *presencing* in the sense of authentic *dasein*. Stolorow's book understands the contextual and relational priorities of the first point quite well. The second point is less clear. And the thing is, if the nature of authenticity is not understood as unconditional presence, in the sense of being an ontological happening rather than as an ontic achievement, it limits the understanding of what a full integration of trauma might mean.

For instance, what is the far shore to which the 'bridge' of trauma leads? Heidegger had glimpses (*augenblick*) of the freedom of this far shore, discovering – surprise! – it is not other than the near shore. The Buddha fully recognized and awakened to this paradoxical presence. Stolorow has opened a worthy door to a potentiality of integration that opens however, to more than he may have bargained for, going well beyond what is contained inside the boundaries of what we think of as 'philosophy' and 'psychoanalysis': how marvellous!

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