

THE CLASSICAL EDUCATION QUARTERLY

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THE CLASSICAL EDUCATION QUARTERLY - A NEW KIND OF EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

A blessed Holy Week and Easter to all our readers of the CEQ. It was the passion and empty tomb of Jesus that turned the world upside-down with the message that death had been conquered and the future secured for all who would receive new life in Him. A Christian education is not truly Christian if this message of cross and resurrection are not the central truths by which the faith-life of our children is nurtured. This Gospel delivers the grace by which life with God is secured and service to the neighbor enabled.

Here, we present to you a most stimulating and thought-provoking first issue of the second year the CEQ. Classicist, E. Christian Kopff makes an impressive case that the roots of the U.S. Constitution are mostly imbedded in the classical traditions of the ancients rather than the more recent Enlightenment thinking of the Eighteenth Century. He documents that while Benjamin Franklin certainly sought to interject enlightenment thinking into the shaping of the Constitution, he was politely, but firmly rebuffed by the majority of the Founding Fathers. Ross Betts advances the position that modern science became truncated and incomplete when inquiries concerning the purpose of things was ignored. A classical approach embraces the presupposition of design and therefore understands the study of final causes to be that element that provides coherence in scientific knowledge. Brandon Booth challenges the reader to consider a classical pedagogy as wholistic. The language skills of the *Trivium* are to be seen to terminate on raising up a skilled rhetorician capable of tackling the great issues of human existence. S. A. HEIN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CLASSICAL ELEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

BY E. CHRISTIAN KOPFF

In the *LA TIMES* for September 24, 2004, two months before the Presidential election of that year, Edward L. Glaeser, Professor of Economics at Harvard, tried to explain what he saw as a paradox. No matter who wins the election in November, Glaeser wrote, "the United States will be the most conservative developed nation in the world. Its economy will remain the least regulated, its welfare state the smallest, its military the strongest and its citizens the most religious." After citing evidence for these assertions, he continued, "It wasn't always so. At the start of the 20th century, the U.S. looked progressive compared with Europe's empires. The big difference between the U.S. and Europe is that the U.S. kept its 18th century Constitution, while most European countries discarded theirs."

Much of what makes our Constitution distinctive does not come from the 18th century, but from the ancient world.

No one—not even Professor Glaeser, as his article goes on to show—would attribute all of America's current condition to its Constitution, but few would deny that the Constitution is an important element in what makes America what it is. Glaeser's words provide us with an appropriate text on which to meditate in a journal devoted to Classical Education. I think he ignored two important considerations. Much of what makes our Constitution distinctive does not come from the 18th century, but from the ancient world. These factors, including the ideas of a mixed constitution and checks and balances, are not two hundred years old, but more than two thousand years old. Secondly, the Founders were well aware of this situation. They were not stuck with political ideas and ideals that were millennia old because nothing more recent was available. On the contrary, they considered their

... IN THIS ISSUE

CLASSICAL ELEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

BY DR. E. CHRISTIAN KOPFF PAGE 1

KEEPING SCIENCE IN CONTEXT: THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

BY DR. ROSS BETTS PAGE 4

REVERSING THE TRIVIAM

BY BRANDON BOOTH PAGE 7

antiquity a mark of their quality and validity.

The Framers of the Constitution were not modifying a modern theory, but returning to the historical models of checks and balances of the Roman republic . . .

Scholars defend the essentially Enlightenment character of the Founding by pointing out that many state constitutions explicitly mention the doctrine of balance and separation of powers that was theorized in the 18th century by Montesquieu in his influential *Spirit of the Laws* (1748). The US Constitution, however, institutes what we now call a system of "checks and balances," defended by James Madison in *Federalist* 47. As historian Jack Rakove explains, the Constitution "sought to preserve the balance and equilibrium of the departments of government not by separating them rigidly, but rather by giving each institution peculiar means of self-defense and by varying the modes of their appointment and their tenure in office." Rakove is right here, but not when he goes on to write, "In this revised form, separation of powers came to replace the older theory of 'mixed government.'" (Rakove, 117) The Framers of the Constitution were not modifying a modern theory, but returning to the historical models of checks and balances of the Roman republic, as recorded by Livy and theorized by Polybius and Cicero.

When the convention called in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation decided to ignore its charge and write a new constitution, the delegates began by debating the structure of the legislature. Should it be unicameral, as delegate Benjamin Franklin hoped and the Enlightenment philosopher Turgot had argued in print, or bicameral, like the influential constitution of Massachusetts, whose author, John Adams, was American ambassador to the Court of St. James in distant London? Adams wrote the first volume of his *Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States* to defend the bicameralism of the state constitutions against Turgot and Franklin. He devoted many pages to Polybius VI, the locus classicus for the role of checks and balances in Rome's constitution. Published in January 1787, the first volume crossed the Atlantic by March and was re-printed several times before the Convention opened on May 25. As Gilbert Chinard saw, "Even a casual glance at the records of the Federal Convention will show that Adams' book was used as a sort of repertory by many

speakers, who found in it a confirmation of their views, and chiefly convenient illustrations and precedents." (Chinard 1933, 212)

The situation was not lost on Benjamin Franklin, who saw his dreams of a highly centralized government and unicameral legislature disappearing before Adams's arguments and the prestige of the Classical Tradition. Before the first week was over, on Thursday, May 31, according to Madison's notes, "The 3rd. Resolution, 'that the national legislature ought to consist of two branches,' was agreed to without debate or dissent, except that of Pennsylvania, given probably from complaisance to Doctor Franklin who was understood to be partial to a single House of Legislation." (Farrand, 48)

The month of June went by, filled with classical citations. At last, on June 28, Franklin had had enough. Most of that day and the day before had been spent listening to Luther Martin of Maryland, who defended with frequent references to the ancient world the view that while representation in the House should be based on a state's population, every state should have an equal number of Senators. Madison, who had stopped his usual assiduous note-taking in disgust at the length and content of Martin's speech, rose to object: "There has been much fallacy in the arguments advanced by the gentleman from Maryland." Heated squabbling ensued and finally Franklin rose to speak. We know what he said because he gave a copy of his remarks, which were far from extemporaneous, to Madison to insert into his record of the proceedings of the convention.

We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of Government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed Modern States all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances. In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our

understandings? (Farrand, 451-2)

After more pious reflections Franklin moved that the local clergy be invited to begin each day's deliberations with prayer. He was asking the delegates to ignore the lessons of history and especially of classical antiquity and trust to their own lucubrations to create the new constitution. For Franklin, the Father of Lights had a different and better lesson to teach than the Author of History, with whom He is sometimes confused. Hamilton and several others tried to squelch the resolution. "After several unsuccessful attempts for silently postponing the matter by adjourning," wrote Madison, "the adjournment was at length carried, without any vote on the motion." (Farrand, 453-8)

Classical political thought provided the ideas and patterns used by the Framers in their deliberations—for example, that government is best understood as the rule of the one, the few, and the many; and the best government is a mixture of all three.

The power of the classical tradition over the Framers was so great that they denied the courtesy of a vote to a motion from the Convention's most distinguished member, Benjamin Franklin. This, however, is not the whole story. Although Madison's notes are usually the fullest, in this case, his disgust with Luther Martin led him to ignore an important point, preserved in the laconic jotting of William Patterson of New Jersey: "Amphictyonic Council of Greece represented by two from each town—who were notwithstanding the disproportions of the towns equal—Rollins Ancient History 4 vol. pa.79." (Farrand, 459) "Who would have thought," Gilbert Chinard wrote, "unless such positive texts were produced, that the limitation of two senators for each state might perhaps be traced to the Amphictyonic Council of Greece." (Chinard 1940, 49) Rather, I would say, who can deny that the documentary record proves that the Amphictyonic League provided the precedent for the idea of two senators from each state? Who can fail to be impressed that this happened in the face of the vigorous objections of James Madison and the weary protests of Benjamin Franklin? Such was the hold that the classical tradition had on the minds of the Framers.

Classical political thought provided the ideas and patterns used by the Framers in their

deliberations—for example, that government is best understood as the rule of the one, the few, and the many; and the best government is a mixture of all three. Many since Turgot and Franklin have argued that Americans should ignore this view of government, which is based on ancient Greek and Latin practice and reflection, but, so far, in vain.

John Adams wrote his old friend, Dr. Benjamin Rush on June 19, 1789, "I should as soon think of closing all my window shutters to enable me to see as of banishing the Classics to improve Republican ideas." (Butterfield, 518, n.2) The Framers of the Constitution agreed. They knew that citizenship was a legacy from the ancient world, and free government was safest when founded on a mixed constitution guarded by a system of checks and balances. The traditions they knew and valued are still available in today's world. First, however, we have to open up John Adams's shutters, that is, the mission of educators, parents and students who are committed to Classical Education.

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... ABOUT CCLE

THE PURPOSE OF **THE CONSORTIUM FOR CLASSICAL & LUTHERAN EDUCATION** IS TO PROMOTE, ESTABLISH, AND EQUIP INDIVIDUALS AND SCHOOLS COMMITTED TO CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN DOCTRINE AND A CLASSICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION.

THE CONSORTIUM AND EVERY MEMBER ACCEPTS WITHOUT RESERVATION THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS AS THE INSPIRED AND INERRANT WORD OF GOD AND ALL THE SYMBOLICAL BOOKS OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AS A TRUE EXPOSITION OF GOD'S WORD.

KEEPING SCIENCE IN CONTEXT: THE CHALLENGE FOR THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

BY ROSS BETTS

During the 1980s our first son attended a Lutheran school in Minnesota. His fourth grade teacher there had a tremendously positive moral presence, a loving disposition toward the children, and a captivating Bible story telling ability. In the matter of teaching science, however, she followed a practice of having the students redact from their science books any reference that might contradict Scripture, especially those which might suggest that the world was more than 6000 years old.

A better approach to contextualizing science in a classical education would be to incorporate historical and philosophical inquiries into science, its foundations, and its ongoing assumptions.

While this teacher's practice may have been appropriate for fourth graders, emphasizing the primacy of the truth of revelation over scientifically-derived truth, such a practice would not be appropriate for the upper grades. For older students, this approach would tend to pit revelation against science, a strategy which invites a compartmentalization of understandings, encourages dualism, and exacerbates the faith-reason distinction. A

better approach to contextualizing science in a classical education would be to incorporate historical and philosophical inquiries into science, its foundations, and its ongoing assumptions. Doing so not only makes for better Christian apologists but also helps Christians practice in the scientific realm with an intact faith.

Darwinism is a unique challenge for science education in a Christian context. That said, one should understand that Darwinism, while being an important scientific movement, is much more significant for the English-speaking world than it is for other European cultures. French scientific tradition, for example, is less receptive to Darwinism than is the English tradition (Glick). It is worthwhile to examine how other cultures critique English Darwinism so that our own approach to addressing it might be improved. We might also be able to engage mechanistic science and its worldview with a critique based on classical principles.

When final causality is excluded from discussions of biology, our notion of the biological is diminished.

Etienne Gilson, the 20th century French historian of philosophy, has written a small volume, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Evolution Species and Final Causality*. This book provides ample information for a critique of Darwinism not usually seen in English circles. It explains the philosophical world-views that informed the thinking of Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, and Asa Gray. Gilson discusses the problem of final causality, that is purpose or end, in the study of biology. When final causality is excluded from discussions of biology, our notion of the biological is diminished.

The modern world from its inception was characterized by a break with medieval thinking. Discoveries in astronomy undermined Aristotelian scientific commitments. As a consequence, too, Aristotelian philosophy was undermined, especially in the area of causality and metaphysics.

According to Aristotle, in his book *Physics*, there are four types of causality, modes of explanation that make a thing what it is. There are material and efficient causes. There are also formal and final causes. The *material cause* of something is the literal stuff of which it is made. A couch is made of wood, fabric, nails, etc. The couch could not exist without these material elements; they are materially necessary for an understanding of the couch. The *efficient cause* of an object is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing matter and form together in the production of the object. Carpenters and artisans are the efficient causes of the couch. The *formal cause* is the pattern or essence of something; materials are assembled in conformity with this pattern. This would be the "ideal" thing of which the actual thing is a particular instance. The model or blueprint of the couch would represent its formal cause. Lastly, there is an object's *final cause*. The final cause is the end for which the thing exists. A couch exists to provide relaxation; that is its purpose. The couch would never have been built in the first place if there weren't the need for relaxation.

To use another instance of a thing described in this manner, consider a statue. Its material cause is the marble of which it is made. The efficient cause would be the sculptor. The formal cause would be the idea of the statute, the mental conception of it. The final cause or purpose would be beauty.

Metaphysics is not something ethereal or unreal, but it contains categories necessary to describe all matter in its fullness.

Formal and final causes belong to the realm of metaphysics. Material and efficient causes do not require metaphysical consideration. Metaphysics is not something ethereal or unreal, but it contains categories necessary to describe all matter in its fullness.

Early in the modern period, Descartes and Francis Bacon sought to promote empirical science for the relief of man's estate, improving the practical lot of man. As such, both tended to discard those aspects of previous philosophies that impaired this project. For them, formal and final causality were not helpful in the mastery of

nature through science. They insisted that science and knowledge generally should avoid metaphysical speculation and concentrate on material and efficient causes.

The result has been a very successful enterprise which, when combined with technology, has provided great material blessings. Descartes advanced physics by establishing it more on a mathematical grounding. Of interest to us also though, he attempted to establish biology and medicine on a similar basis to physics, and failed after considerable effort (Gilson). The elimination of final causality at the outset of his thinking impaired Descartes' ability to develop an adequate philosophy of biology. As Avery Dulles has pointed out:

"Final causality is particularly important in the realm of living organisms. The organs of the animal or human body are not intelligible except in terms of their purpose or finality. The brain is not intelligible without reference to the faculty of thinking that is its purpose, nor is the eye intelligible without reference to the function of seeing." (Dulles)

While undergraduates learn biology from an evolutionary perspective, medicine is learned and practiced from the perspective of final causality.

An adequate understanding of biology ought to encompass the idea of purpose. People devoted to mechanism only (material and efficient causes), such as Descartes, and ultimately Darwin, have difficulty accounting for purposes and ends, which seem obvious in biology. Richard Dawkins, the contemporary Darwinist, famously claims, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." The appearance of a purpose would tend to indicate that there is a purpose, except to a person who has an *a priori* assumption that no purposes exist in nature.

The notion of final causality is very important for the practice of medicine. While undergraduates learn biology from an evolutionary perspective, medicine is learned and practiced from the perspective of final causality. Physicians are comfortable saying that an organ functions in a certain way. The idea of function in an organ implies that it is functioning as it *ought* to function, as it was *designed* to function. Most of the intuitions a physician has regarding therapy are guided by an assumption of design. Pathophysiology, the study of disease, describes those situations where the purposes of bodily systems work against each other.

Most of the intuitions a physician has regarding therapy are guided by an assumption of design.

Darwin himself struggled with the extent to which his theory undermined final causes in nature. A trenchant observer of nature, he was often captivated by its beauty. He wrote to a friend, "You speak of adaptation being rarely visible, though present in plants. I have just recently been looking at the common Orchis, and I declare I think that its adaptation in every part of the flower quite as beautiful and plain, or even more beautiful than the woodpecker...I never saw anything so beautiful."(Gilson, 92))

Consider too Darwin's famous statement from *The Origin of Species*:

"There is *grandeur* in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms *most beautiful and most wonderful* have been, and are being, evolved..."

As Gilson points out, "from (Darwin's) sentiment(s) to the notion of final causality the distance is short. The beauty of adaptations is that of means to ends. The adaptation of an organism to its surroundings and to its condition of existence, and those parts of an organism to other parts of it, are intelligible only from the point of view of their final result."(Gilson, 93) There is no grandeur in a mere mechanism. A transistor is interesting, possibly fascinating, but never grand. Grandeur is the

sentiment felt in the presence of the beautiful, a sentiment corresponding to the perception of a final cause. To comment on beauty as he does shows that Darwin is attracted to ideas of final causality.

Yet for all this implicit attraction to beauty in nature, and thus purpose in biology, Darwin, as a good though unwitting Cartesian, says regarding flowers, butterflies, and birds that their beauty "has been effected through sexual selection, that is, by the more beautiful males having been continually preferred by the females, and not for the delight of man."(Gilson, 92)) Contemporary Darwinians E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins are more consistent in their refusal to admit purpose into biology. They are more theorists rather than observers of biology as Darwin was. They certainly have no experience in medicine, where notions of purpose in the individual organism are both obvious and necessary.

Leon Kass, a physician and professor at the University of Chicago, has argued for a broader consideration of both formal causes and final causes in biology. He notes that a problem with Darwinian thinking is in the notion of "higher." As Darwin says in *The Origin of Species*:

"Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exulted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of higher animals directly follows."

According to Kass, biological science requires philosophy in order to gain coherence.

Darwin seems to mean by "higher" not higher in terms of reproductive success but higher in the common sense way one might think—higher in awareness, more fully alive and open to the world. Kass calls this higher "soul." "Soul" represents a formal cause of an organism. Kass argues that the Darwinian idea of ascent from simpler to higher life forms causes us to consider the "en-souled" nature of all life. He notes:

"Precisely Darwinism itself, which regards

the life of man as continuous with the rest of living nature, invites one to reconsider whether a notion of soul might be necessary in order to understand the aliveness of all living things, down to the very simplest." (Kass, 269-71)

Kass demonstrates the shortcomings of biology where philosophical considerations have been neglected. According to Kass, biological science requires philosophy in order to gain coherence.

Teaching science in the modern era, while being intentionally Christian and classical in our orientation, can provide many challenges. If we are to prepare Christians to enter this important field, we will need to provide them with all available weapons to keep science within its proper context. This needs to be done both for the sake of science students and so that we might develop a more humane science, one less prone to excessive and dehumanizing claims. Philosophy can be an ally in that goal, as Kass and Gilson show. Our Minnesota fourth grade teacher had the best of intentions, but to give our children the dichotomy of faith vs. science is to leave them vulnerable. Arming them with revelation alone is to have them enter the fray less than fully prepared.

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REVERSING THE TRIVIUM

BY BRANDON BOOTH

As classical educators we are quite familiar with the *Trivium*. Its grammar, logic, and rhetoric describe more than a simple order of student development. They also describe a complete methodology for learning any subject at all. The *Trivium* is sacrosanct, but in order to understand it properly we must look at it in reverse. While our students progress from grammar up, our understanding of the *Trivium* as teachers ought to move from rhetoric down.

To be sure, grammar is the means (s/b first stage in the learning process) to a great education. Without it nothing else can be achieved. This obvious truth explains why this learning skill of the *Trivium* is easy to sell. In our culture where fundamentals are neglected in favor of encouraging self-esteem, it is

not surprising that many classical educators begin explaining the virtues of classical education by extolling the benefits of grammar. Even a Modernist mind can understand the utilitarian value of memorizing multiplication tables and phonics. A student with a suitable grammar education will be well equipped to read, write, and perform arithmetic.

We can only truly know how to educate when we know the purpose of education.

Yet, if the wisdom of the ancients has taught us anything, it is that ends, not means, hold preeminence. *The Philosopher*, as our medieval fathers nicknamed Aristotle, showed us that a thing's essence, its true definition, could only be found by discovering its *telos*, its end or purpose. We know what a hammer is only when we know its purpose. A hammer is just that device whose purpose is to pound nails. More to the point, we only know how to use a hammer when we know the end for which it was created.

We must begin by understanding its end, rhetoric.

The same applies to education. We can only truly know how to educate when we know the purpose of education. And to do this, I contend, we must reverse the *Trivium*. We must begin by understanding its end, rhetoric. Strictly speaking, rhetoric is the specialized art of eloquent persuasion. The ancients awarded it a category of its own among the arts, making it a distinct subject which could be systematically studied. It was often likened to the war-time art of generalship. There are, of course, certain guidelines which must be followed, but just as it requires more than memorizing troop formations to be a masterful general, being an eloquent rhetorician requires far more than following a list of rules about how many paragraphs a good essay should contain. Eloquence is not a singular skill; it is the practice of all the language skills in a discerning and creative way.

According to *The Philosopher*, falsity is repugnant to reason, evil is repugnant to virtue, and ugliness is repugnant to mature taste. Thus, only that which is true, good, and beautiful can ultimately be persuasive. This clearly applies to the character of the topics about which we speak; but, as the ancients stressed, it also applies to the character of the speaker himself. A master rhetorician must be, first and foremost, discerning, morally upright, and mature.

By extension then, in the *Rhetoric Stage* students put their discernment, moral character, and maturity to use. Ideally, they no longer need to learn the basic skills; instead, they practice those skills on the arts. Students graduate into the rhetoric stage, never out of it. This is the purpose of education: to produce masterful rhetoricians, men and women who are eloquent in whatever they do. Whether they are eloquent mathematicians, plumbers, or writers does not matter, for they will be prepared for whatever their calling may be.

How are we to produce masters of truth, goodness, and beauty if we have no access to The Truth, to The Good, and to The Beautiful Himself?

Thinking of the *Trivium* in this reversed manner has important and interconnected implications. First, if the essence of "classical" education is not its connection to the past but to the goal of creating rhetoricians, then any classical education divorced from a scriptural worldview is not truly classical. It fails in its purpose. How are we to produce masters of truth, goodness, and beauty if we have no access to The Truth, to The Good, and to The Beautiful Himself? The philosopher could see in general what was required to be a masterful rhetorician, but he could never grasp it in its particulars.

A school's essence lies in its purpose, not in its curriculum.

The corollary to this truth is that "Christian" education, which is not classical, is not truly Christian. The two are inextricable. A traditional-modern school, whose goal it is to produce cogs in the economic machine, whether or not its curriculum includes Bible classes, can be Christian in name only. A school built to make disciples can never have as its primary goal the production of slavish consumers. A school's essence lies in its purpose, not in its curriculum.

Second, a "classical" education which ends before students reach the rhetoric stage is also not truly classical. Once we see that the *Trivium* is an organic whole to be understood from the top down, this implication is obvious. Classical grammar schools

which are not consciously preparing students for entrance into a formal rhetoric school are headless and without direction. Parents who send their students to a classical school only through the *Logic Stage*, and then on to the traditional-modern high school, expose their children to utilitarian and unchristian values. These are hard, but inescapable truths when ends inform means.

A true classical education is one complete entity united by its essential goal. . . . a grammar and logic education aimed at anything other than rhetoric is no education at all.

Finally, all of this implies that classical educators, who "sell" classical education primarily on the merits of the *Grammar Stage*, are not selling true classical education. They do a disservice to the method, and more importantly, a disservice to their audience. To be a life-long learner requires far more than mastery of the three "R's", and a true grammar education is far more than these anyway.

A true classical education is one complete entity united by its essential goal. Without a solid footing in the fundamentals, a student never learns to connect disparate lines of thought or break down complex ideas. Without critical thinking skills, a student never learns to appreciate truth, goodness, or beauty. Likewise, a grammar and logic education aimed at anything other than rhetoric is no education at all. It is like a rock used in place of a hammer. It might get something done, but you will never build a house with it.

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CCLE VIII

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