norms and standards of what in known in Australia as the new public management organisation. What can my story here tell us? How can a contemporary organisation be both (and neither) a traditional Yolngu Aboriginal organisation and a competitive enterprise centre, marketing services to their kin and compatriots? It seems a wave, albeit forming in a new current, has engulfed my thinking yet again. Excuse me while I struggle to discern which way is up.

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Philosophy as Auto-Bio-Graphy: The Example of the Kyoto School

Abstract
In the following, I would like to advance the position that it is too early to write down my own ›auto-bio-graphy.‹ For this purpose, I attempt to develop the idea of philosophy as auto-bio-graphy in three theses and to do so with the example of the philosophy of the Kyoto School so that the conception of philosophy as auto-bio-graphy can be expounded in consideration alongside some of the aspects of the philosophy of the Kyoto School.

Keywords
Kyoto school, Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, Nishitani Keiji, noetic union, nothingness.

1 Outline of the Kyoto School

In the following, I would like to advance the position that it is too early to write down my own ›auto-bio-graphy.‹ For this purpose, I attempt to develop the idea of philosophy as auto-bio-graphy in three theses and to do so with the example of the philosophy of the Kyoto School so that the conception of philosophy as auto-bio-graphy can be expounded in consideration alongside some of the aspects of the philosophy of the Kyoto School.

Before doing this, the outline of the Kyoto School should be briefly explicated.[1] Somewhat like the Frankfurt School in Germany, the Kyoto School developed over several generations. Its founder, Ni-

[1] For more on the philosophical background of the Kyoto School see the »Introduction« of my edited volume, *Die Philosophie der Kyōto Schule: Texte und Einführung* [*The Philosophy of the Kyoto School: Texts and Introduction*] (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 1990 [²2011 is a expanded volume with a new Introduction; ³2014]).

shida Kitarō (1870–1945), certainly did not intend to become the founder of a school, but his personality and his philosophical thinking attracted many students, who then developed the thinking of their teacher in various directions, albeit departing from it as well. This thinking can be characterized in the following way: One of its roots lies in European philosophy, while the other lies in the East Asian spiritual tradition. If one understands the so-called ›first philosophy‹ in the Occident as ontology, that is, the philosophy of Being, then the Kyoto School developed the philosophy of absolute nothingness. On the one hand, Nishida incorporated the thinking of William James' (1842–1910) pragmatism, Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) life philosophy, Emil Lask's (1875–1915) Neo-Kantianism, etc., but on the other hand he occupied himself intensively with Zen practice, without whose experience his philosophizing would not have come about in the way that one knows it today.

With regard to philosophical thinking, his successor to the chair Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962), was certainly the greatest critic of Nishida. However, despite his criticism of Nishida, he likewise developed a philosophy of absolute nothingness, which was later influenced more and more strongly by the Buddhist body of thought. If one dubs Nishida and Tanabe the first generation of the Kyoto School, then several of their students like Hisamatsu Shinichi (1889–1980), Kōsaka Masaaki (1900–1969), Nishitani Keiji (1900–1989), and Kōyama Iwao (1905–1991) are understood as the second generation of the school. The philosophers of the second generation were persecuted towards the end of World War II in the Pacific by the extreme right within the military regime. Their historical-philosophical thinking was said to denote simultaneously a latent but decisive critique of extreme nationalism. After the end of the War in the Pacific, the philosophers named above were repeatedly attacked mainly by left-oriented critics who passed themselves off as liberal. They were attacked on the grounds that these philosophers had collaborated with the military regime.

The third generation of the Kyoto School consisted of disciples of the philosophers of the second generation. Their confrontation with European philosophy too takes place more or less in the direction that had been introduced by Nishida and Tanabe and sustained by the second generation.

2 The ›Auto‹

My first thesis reads: Philosophizing is the knowledge of *›to auto,‹* that is, ›the self.‹ It is to know one's own self. At the beginning of the history of Western philosophy, Plato understood the adage handed down in the Temple of Delphi, »*gnōsi sauton*« [know yourself], as an instruction for oneself. This thesis implies that my own self, as well as the self of the world, is indeed always somehow familiar to me, but they are not known by me. One's own self must first be known. As with all philosophical themes, one also finds here the starting point of aporia and astonishment: As long as I wonder what my own self and the world is, I know what it is, but as soon as I ask myself about it, I do not know it anymore.

One's own self is neither identical with one's own ego nor with the subject, although conversely this ego or subject, thematized again and again in modern philosophy since René Descartes, is a modern name for the self. The development of modern philosophy is the development of the thinking about the ego, that is, the subject as »res cogitans,« as Descartes in »Meditationes secunda« said. The principle that he discovered was supposed to be the foremost certainty, upon which the secure building of philosophy could first be erected. Indeed, the Cartesian ego could not fully become aware of its own self. It certainly knew *that* it *is*, but it did not know *from where* it was supposed to have come. As is well known, Descartes further asked in »Meditatio tertia« from where this otherwise self-secure ego came: »Nempe a quo essem?« (1964–1976: 48).[2] This »a quo« (from where) was in the end dubbed »God,« upon which the ego could first be grounded.

I do not want to undertake an historical tracing of the modern lines of development of the philosophical thinking that lead to the ego and the subject here. It would suffice to indicate that terms like Gottfried W. Leibniz's (1646–1716) ›monads,‹ Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) ›transcendental apperception,‹ Johann G. Fichte's (1762–1814) and Friedrich W. J. Schelling's (1775–1854) ›absolute ego,‹ Georg W. F. Hegel's (1770–1831) ›absolute,‹ Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) ›transcendental ego,‹ etc., despite all the distinctions that could be made among them, all imply the same thing: modern philosophy

[2] R. Descartes, »Meditationes de Prima Philosophia,« *Oeuvres de Descartes*, C. Adam, and P. Tannery (eds.), Vol. 7, Paris: J. Vrin, 1964–1976.

was the impulse to bring to full consciousness one's own self, as well as the self of the world, within the horizon of subjectivity.

The philosophy of the Kyoto School likewise involves this facticity of the self. In order to illustrate the experience of one's own self and the self of the world that is preserved and handed down in the Kyoto School, I will cite Nishitani Keiji, who in an autobiographical essay [»Waga shi Nishida Kitarō sensei wo kataru (Memories of My Teacher Nishida Kitarō)«] describes a memory of his teacher, Nishida Kitarō: »For these essays of Nishida, I had a more intimate feeling then I had for any other essay I had read before, as well as for no other person that I had heretofore met. They gave me a qualitatively different impression, for it seemed as if it has originated from the innermost depths of my own soul« (Nishitani 1978: 16).[3]

The expression ›out of the innermost depths of my soul‹ reveals the inborn affinity between the two thinkers. Beyond that one can hear his appeal to Nishda's conception of the ›self,‹ which he partially worked on in his study of Meister Eckhart (1260–1328). Furthermore, the appeal becomes clearer when one hears the following words: the encounter with Nishida would have been for him the encounter with a person, »who is closer to me than I am to myself.« The expression ›closer to me than I am to myself‹ was very probably adopted from Meister Eckhart, who said God is »nearer than the soul is to itself,« just like the Holy Spirit »is more immediately present to the soul than the soul is to itself« (Meister Eckhart 1955: 201).[4] For Eckhart, the soul was not an objectively describable object, but rather the inside of ›me.‹ Eckhart would also have said that God is nearer to me than I am to myself. When Nishitani perceives the relationship between God and the human in the relationship between his teacher and himself, this does not mean a mystification of the teacher-student relationship, but rather an experience of what my own self is: the self of another is the same as the self of my own ego. When one understands by this ›other‹ any other that is in the outer world, then this

[3] *Nishitani Keii Chosaku-shû* (Collected Papers Keijii Nishitani's), Vol. 9, Tokyo: Sôbunsha, 1978.

[4] Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, J. Quint (ed. and transl.), Munich 1955. See Meister Eckhart, »Sermones,« *Die Lateinischen Werke* [*The Latin Works*], J. Koch et al. (eds.), Vol. 4, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1956. The sermon in Latin reads: »(Deus) intimior est animae quam anima sibi ipis« (1956: 356). To quote the first sermon: »Spiritus sanctus immediator est animae quam anima sibi ipsi« (*ibid.*: 3).

self is the same as that of the world. The question repeats itself here: what is this self?

Nishitani describes the core of the relationship between God and the human phenomenologically as it were, and finds in it ›the end part of the noetic union.‹ The union in the customary sense is that of present essences A and B in a higher essence C. A noematic union of that kind concerns the present objects, but it is not the noetic union in Nishitani's sense, namely, different eyes becoming the same in their inexchangeable noetic act of seeing. In lieu of seeing, one can also bring into play hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting, etc. In this simple act of perception, no one can take the place of the other. Even the most intimately familiar person to me can never see, hear, feel, smell, taste, etc., in my place. What is of concern here is not a mystical experience, but rather the experience that everyone constantly and without noticing has in a quotidian fashion.

In this banal experience everyone is actually someone in whose stead no one can enter. This uniqueness can be ascribed to everything that exists and is indeed the self of each thing. Yet humans first know this uniqueness. For them this means: everyone is the other to everyone else. This otherness of the other shows itself in each sensation and each feeling, and, in the most extreme case, in death. Even humans who love each other cannot make the death of the other into their own experience. Yet precisely with regard to this noetic act that can never be exchanged with the other, everyone is in the same manner of being like the other. In the noetic aspect of this otherwise utterly banal perception and sensation, everyone is the other to everyone else. In this respect everyone is the same as everyone else. Precisely at the point, where everyone maintains their otherness and uniqueness in opposition to everyone else, is everyone united with everyone else.

One remark is indispensable here. In this noetic union, bare egoity is breached. In a pure noetic act one is without ego. An example: In play one forgets oneself, and precisely at the point in which one forgets oneself can one play best. Even the sober supervision and calculation of the game demands this lack of an ego. In this ego-less dedication one is unified with the noetic that is likewise exercised in the game.

This lack of egoity comes close to the concept of ›nothing.‹ This nothing is what the Kyoto School called ›self,‹ preeminently in the sense used by Nishida and Nishitani.

3 The ›Bios‹

My second thesis comes to bear precisely here: Philosophy always concerns the *bios* of the *autos*, life by which the otherwise ego-less self of my own ego expresses itself and maintains its egoity. In this self-expression one also recognizes the other, with whom the ›world‹ forms an ego and is determined by this ›world.‹ The philosophy of ›selfness‹ as the philosophy of the ›nothing‹ must develop itself as the philosophy of ›life‹ and of the ›world.‹ This thesis is also not new at all. The leading idea of Greek philosophy, ›to live well,‹ already refers to this idea. The moot point in the debates between Socrates and the Sophists was whether the good life in the sense of *eudaimonia* is finally achieved through the acquisition of power, wealth and fame in this world or first in the world of the *eidos* as the state of the soul. After philosophy had achieved the position of a discipline within the university, around the time of the Enlightenment, and became more and more a drive towards scientific activity in the name of research, it lost this leading idea of *eudaimonia*. But as long as written texts engage with the good life, mere philologically oriented research alone cannot entirely depart from this objective.

In the structure of life first of all is just to see what was just now glimpsed in the structure of the ›self‹: my life is thoroughly my own life, and nevertheless it is united with that of others. Indeed, no one can carry out my life in my place, but precisely in the mode which I carry out my life, which is otherwise independent from that of all others, I stand in the same manner of being that the others bear as others. One is united with the others in the noetic immersion in this manner of being. This noetic unification can only be proved true in noetic transcendence, that is, in the immersion in one's own ego-less self. The biological connection of individual creatures that is visually detectable in the evolutionary lines of all creatures since ancient times, but also in the ecological context of the natural world, is the reflection of this noetic unity. No creature has given birth to itself but was rather born from another. The death of an individual creature is seen precisely as Leibniz once described it in his mature treatise, *Principes de la Nature et de la Grace, fondés en raison* [*Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*]. It is not the mere cessation of life, but rather the »metamorphosis« of the components of the organic

body, which always transform themselves into another life (Leibniz 1965: 601).[5]

The relationship of individual creatures to the organic whole, like to the great life, which is easy to see in the biological world, is similar to the projection of infinite plenitude. From the perspective of the theory of plenitude, each part *is* the whole. This relationship of biological life must also hold for social and historical life. It first becomes clear in social and historical life that the individual life *is* not only the whole, but rather also a unique life opposed to other individuals, that is to say, that it is free and creative and that it cannot be substituted with another.

According to the philosophy of the Kyoto School, the self-consciousness of this historical life is expressed in the form of a historical philosophy. That the philosophy of absolute nothingness can be thematized as something like history, and the manner in which this can be done, would be found as quite problematic. For history is certainly the world of being and not the world of nothingness. But, as stated above, what is called nothingness is not a mere vacuous nothingness in the sense of an absence of objects, but rather the self, which since it cannot be objectified does not admit of predication and thereby admits of the genuine status quo of creation.

Incidentally, it was not the Kyoto School which considered history for the first time under the aspect of nothingness. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) already perceived the Christian European world under the aspect of the nihilism of the eternal return of the same. In the world in which God is dead and/or has been murdered, there lacks, he said, a final answer to the question ›why.‹ The historical world, which recurs without an answer as to why, has neither a goal nor a meaning. Nietzsche did not call the overcoming of this nihilism a deception about this insignificance. In the well-known allegory of the »Three Metamorphoses,« he narrates the bearing and enduring of the heavy burden of this insignificance of the world, until the bearer, the camel, transforms into a lion. The latter affirms even this insignificance as »I want« in order to finally transform in

[5] G. W. Leibniz, *Principes de la Nature et de la Grace, fondés en raison*, §6, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, Vol. 6, New York, Hildesheim: Olms, 1965. The English passage can be found in *Philosophical Essays*, R. Ariew, and D. Garber (trans.) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), p. 209.

this »great Yes« (»großes Ja«) into a »child« (Nietzsche 1988: 29–31).[6]

Then again, when Max Scheler (1874–1928) after the World War I elucidated »absolute nothingness« as the point of departure for philosophizing, the spiritual situation of Europe had changed. Doubts about the reliability of reason were still intensifying in the face of a world catastrophe, which was thought to be a consequence of Enlightenment and its respective civilizations. Furthermore, Scheler believed that Europe's position had been put into question by Asia's drive to expand. He deemed First World War I a »conciliation« between these East-West contraries (Scheler: 1954: 430).[7] The altogether unstable nature of this parity soon showed itself in the 1920s and 30s. The ground of existentialism, *angst* about nothingness as the mood of the times, was already underway. The philosophy of nothingness according to the Kyoto School was in any case not a solo effort, but rather belonged to the contemporary path of philosophy in the twentieth century in Europe and Japan.

The ›nothing‹ of the Kyoto School is, as has been said, the formless self of the subject, which never admits of reification. The ›subject‹ was never conceived by these philosophers in the direction of ›subjectivity,‹ but rather in the direction of subject-lessness. The subjectless subject was simply what the Kyoto School meant by ›nothingness.‹ The latter as the self of my own ego does not form an egotistical center, from which the ego would be individual and sovereign and rule the periphery. The Kyoto School wanted to question the previous view of the conception of history, according to which the world should be universal and whose center signified Europe. ›Nothingness,‹ otherwise understood exclusively as a thought belonging to the philosophy of religion, was in this context conceived as the principle of the historical world and dubbed the »universal of nothingness« (Nishitani 1956: 319).[8]

Only insofar as one takes this nothingness as one's point of departure, can the individual be creative and inwardly bound with the state, which likewise takes this nothingness as its point of departure, and which co-forms the »world-responsible-world« (Japanese: *sekai-teki-sekai*). The Kyoto School wanted to consider this world-responsible-world as one in which the Eurocentric Anglo-Saxon, modern world would have been overcome. The religiosity of the ›nothing‹ should also not only be realized in human interiority, but also in the world-responsible-world.

As was mentioned in the beginning, radical right partisans attacked the Kyoto School because the latter's views were contrary to ultra-nationalistic views of the time. These views imply de facto that one should maintain the self-consciousness of one's own nation so that the other nations and peoples are seen only out of this minute angle and not from the perspective of intercultural togetherness. The plurality of the world was never as such envisaged. To defend this plurality meant at that time a critique of the prevailing ultra-nationalism. When one thinks of confrontations with totalitarian regimes and fundamentalists of yesterday and today, one can imagine how serious the jeopardy to one's life was for those who uttered such a critique. For its part, the Kyoto School had indeed not practiced any explicit critiques of the regime at that time, with the exception of Nishida's Marxist-oriented students such as Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) and Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945). They must have died tragically in prison shortly before or after the end of the Pacific War respectively. The other philosophers of the Kyoto School attempted with their philosophy of history to provide a new orientation for and justification of the Pacific War, which more or less meant a latent critique of the military regime. The imprisonment of Nishida by the military regime did not occur in the end, but it had in fact been planned. Without the aid of the Marines, he would possibly have soon been arrested together with some of his students (cf. Ohashi 2001: 12).[9] The tragedy

[6] *Cf.* F. Nietzsche, »Also sprach Zarathustra,« in *Sämtliche Werke (Kritische Studienausgabe)*, Vol. 4, G. Colli, and M. Montinari (eds.), Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, Berlin, and New York: de Gruyter, 1988. The English citation can be found in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, G. Parkes (trans.), (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 23–24.

[7] M. Scheler, *»Vom Ewigen im Menschen,«* in *Gesammelte Werke*, M. Scheler (ed.), Vol. 5, Berne: Francke Verlag, [4]1954. The English citation can be found in *On the Eternal in Man*, B. Noble, (trans.) (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 430.

[8] »Sekaikan to kokkakan« [Worldview and Stateview], in *Nishitani Keii Chosaku-shû* (Collected Papers Keijii Nishitani's), Vol. 4, Tokyo: Sôbunsha, 1956.

[9] R. Ohashi, »Kyoto gakuha to nihon kaigun – shin shiryô »Ôshima memo wo megutte (Kyoto-Schule and the Japanische Marine – To the new Materials »The Memorundams of Ôshima«), PHP, Tokyo 2001. See also: H. Furuta, »Sekai shin chitsujo no

of imprisonment could be avoided, but another, much longer abiding tragedy accompanied it: their attempt at a new orientation of the reality failed in the end not in its execution, but rather in the hardness of the reality itself, which was prosecuted by a monstrous state will. Japan's capitulation aggravated for some philosophers of the Kyoto School the extreme living condition that resulted from losing their positions. But mentally the capitulation meant the failure of their thinking about the Pacific War. However, it is therefore important to investigate whether their idealistic arguments were really in no respect sensible, or whether the arguments, liberated from the conditions of their time and seen anew from a contemporary standpoint, contain insights that can only be appreciated today.

4 The Graphē

We now come back to the theme of ›auto-bio-graphy.‹ Our third thesis is: Philosophy as the *biōs* of the *autō*, the life of the self, demands *graphē*, that is to say, the description of a particular meaning. Philosophy as the description of the life of the self is in accordance with its form as an auto-bio-graphy.

The philosophy of history as it was pursued since Augustine (354–430) and further pursued in a secularized form in Kant, Hegel, and Karl Marx (1818–1883), and whose echo can be heard in Alexandre Kojéve (1902–1968) and Francis Fukuyama (1952–), is essentially characterized as Christian-eschatological. That is to say, what appears in experience can never be constructed in the whole of history, despite all of the variations, by the Christian-eschatological idea. As a consequence of this, it must have a metaphysical character. The writer *(grapheus)* of history in particular always contemplates it from a bird's eye view, which does not suit humans, and by which the writer constructs the historical world in accordance with an idea and predetermines it through this idea. The historical world represented in this way is not the brute fact that one encounters in immediate experience.

If one wants to liberate oneself from this kind of philosophy of history, one will be confronted with the following question: how

genri kō« [Considerations Concerning the Affair ›Principle of a New World Order‹],« Nishida Kitarō zenshū, furoku (Nishitani 1978: 107–110, 165–170).

should one in the description of all of what is and what happens, that is, the world, describe it as how it is, and thereby as the world, as it is encountered in immediate experience? If the claim ›to the things themselves‹ may be understood as the leitmotif of phenomenology, then the question posed above is one of phenomenology.

The fundamental idea that the Kyoto School's philosophy wants to contrive is an answer to this question. By way of an example: Nishida answers this question by referring to the self-determination of the world. The world, which in natural science is described and determined in a mathematically and physically objective fashion, is not yet the ›primary world,‹ as Husserl for example understands it. This world stands before any objectification. The objective image of the world is basically subjective insofar as there cannot be an object without a subject. Even if this subject does not mean something merely individual, but rather a faculty for cognition common to all humans, or even intersubjectivity, objectivity continues to remain the flipside of subjectivity.

The ›self-determination of the world,‹ as Nishida termed it, is the event that emerges in immediate experience before any subject-object division, before it is reified, calculated, and analyzed by the beholder. The arising of the world-event in the particular immediate experience of an individual, seen from the perspective of that individual, means that it becomes ego-less, but in such a way that the description that ›I‹ undertakes, is indeed egoistic but nonetheless also ego-less, so that it counts as the self-determination of the world. Nishida elucidated this seemingly abstract formula with a simple example: »Not that ›this bird‹ flies, but rather the fact ›this bird flies‹ is what there is« (Nishitani 1978: 168).[10] Neither is ›this bird‹ perceived noematically as the subject of a proposition nor does the noetic ›ego‹ as a knowing subject see this bird. In the ›there‹ of the factual world, the brute fact ›this bird flies‹ arises and this arising belongs as much to the ego as it does to the bird. The dawning awareness of this fact is the realization of the self-determination of the world. The writer is not an egoistic subject, but is rather nothingness in the sense of the subjectless subject.

More words regarding the structure of this description are in

[10] »Watashi no zettaimu no jikakuteki gentei to iu mono« [My Sense of the Determination of Absolute Nothingness Becoming Aware of Itself], in *Nishitani Keii Chosaku-shû* (Collected Papers Keijii Nishitani's), Vol. 6, Tokyo: Sôbunsha, 1978.

order: every *graphē*, every description, is the achievement of a subject. Yet this subject does not absolutely have to be egoistic. It can be subject-less so that her or his description can be grasped as the self-description of the world materializing through her or him. This relationship can be understood more easily in the realm of art. The work of an artist, who is somehow ›inspired‹ and motivated by this inspiration, is surely the artist's work, and at the same time the artist is not simply his work. What the artist has created can be understood as the self-creation of the world as it happens through the artist. The term ›gift‹ in relationship to ›gifted,‹ as in the expression ›this artist is gifted,‹ refers to this subject-less dimension of consciousness in the artist who otherwise wants to be strongly individualistic. Every focus of the self-determination of the world is always individualistic and unique.

The description of the world by a subject-less subject, who strives to know his own self and the self of the world, results in the knowledge of the ›*auto*,‹ as the performance of the ›*bios*.‹ It results in the auto-bio-graphy of the world. The philosophy of the Kyoto School was a special case of this auto-bio-graphy.

As is the case of every philosophy, the philosophy of the Kyoto School also finds itself in a historical becoming, which continues to this day. The question posed above regarding the argumentation of the Kyoto School concerning the Pacific War (which admittedly remains partly too idealistic) was sensible in some respect when seen anew today, also applies to becoming. That is to say, this philosophy can be understood as a question that is posed in the contemporary constellation. In today's intercultural times, one sees that the philosophers of the Kyoto School had anticipated and foreseen something, which only in recent times is explicitly stated and should be made clearer. This is the necessity of the world-responsible-world, in which every cultural world by maintaining its creative subjectivity, co-determines this ›world,‹ without recourse to any ego-centered domination, let alone to ›Orientalism‹ or ›Occidentalism.‹ It is admittedly a further question as to how one would describe the self auto-bio-graphically in the contemporary world, a world being molded through normalization and leveled by so-called ›world technology‹, which orginates in Europe. Having posed this question, I now provisionally conclude my considerations.

Accordingly, my own ›auto-bio-graphy‹ should follow, however not yet, and, for now, it remains uncertain how long this ›not yet‹ will

take. For, to write an auto-bio-graphy means a kind of accomplishment of the author's life; hence I must wait till my life is accomplished.

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