Tolerance – An Issue of Christian Social Thought

Contexts, approaches, prospects

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A phenomenological approach towards tolerance, in a broader sense, may start with looking at its definition. All the more because definition does not mean just a descriptive term since it also reveals how something is being conceived and which views or perspectives are associated to it, i.e. in this case the *concept* and *idea* of tolerance. In this regard, excerpts from dictionaries can be quite useful, especially when they record a variety of meanings, like e.g. (a) "the willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them", and (b) "the ability to deal with something unpleasant or annoying, or to continue existing despite bad or difficult conditions"[1]. Though 'ability to deal' as well as 'willingness to accept' contain an *active* element, particularly the latter also implies some *passive* connotation, this virtually in line with the first two stages of motivation for tolerance as presented by Markus Vogt and Rolf Husmann within their three-tier model[2].

In addition, even from a dictionary-based preliminary insight it is obvious, that description, reflection and conversation concerning tolerance must never be separated from contexts, approaches, and prospects, including religious backgrounds, that affect its practical and theoretical significance[3] – which can also be seen in the historical development of the term.[4] Based on this observation, and focused on socio-scientific, anthropological as well as ethical references,[5] the following is not intended to trace the ramified history of interpretation of tolerance, but rather to discuss some

1 Cambridge Dictionary (2020): Tolerance – https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/tolerance (last access: 7–9–20).
2 Cf. Vogt/Husmann 2019: especially 6.
3 Further insights into this, by referring both to historical contexts and systematic reflections, are provided by: Werbick 1996.
4 Cf. e.g. Forst 2011: especially 530–532.
5 This focus includes any 'humane' significance of tolerance, like the political and cultural one, whereas some further connotations of tolerance, like in technology or medicine, are left aside.

select views of tolerance as an issue of Christian social thought, with some specific reference to Ukrainian aspects of the topic – with regard to the latter, however, explicitly from an external perspective and thus aware of the necessary caution and of unavoidable limitations associated with it.

I. Contexts: framing the understanding and acceptance of tolerance

As to the contextual dimension, especially the social connotation of tolerance seems to be very enlightening. This is because even in its very common perception as individual commitment and as acceptance of something 'different' tolerance appears as a rather *social phenomenon*, much more than its (limited) individual meaning at first indicates. Focussing on this, only three aspects will be mentioned in more detail: *Firstly*, commitment and acceptance of this kind, similar to intolerance, imply *relationality*, since it is about acting or reacting in regard of something that is 'socially' represented by other people or institutions. In addition, more important, whenever tolerance attains societal and political significance, beyond remaining just a private matter, it remarkably depends on and is influenced by the respective social and institutional framework – generally and most important by the political system and by socio-cultural conditions at large, but more specifically and in no way independent from the socio-political setting also by dominating realities of public discourse, education and formation.

A *second* context framing tolerance, though not unrelated to the one just mentioned, can be called the *'cultural' context*. This means that idea and practice of tolerance usually are deeply rooted in historic backgrounds as well as in people's life stories, and thus are embedded in personal and collective memories as well as in individual and joint experiences. Depending on the key characteristics dominating these memories and experiences, namely either restricting or fostering basic ingredients of real tolerance, like for instance freedom and diversity of opinion as well as the ability to deal with criticism and conflicts etc., they would contribute to either shutting down or freeing up respective social and individual resources. This kind of 'cultural genetics' as a framing factor should not be underestimated, it can be discovered in almost all societies, and it may be powerful

and lasting as can be observed particularly from the sophisticated processes in so-called 'countries in transition'[6].

In this respect, as far as Ukraine is concerned, some relevant elements can be named. Very selectively only so much in catchwords: Time and again it is pointed out that part of the cultural imprints in Ukraine is the experience of having been forced to live under 'foreign rule' which characterized life in not inconsiderable phases of history up to the Russian dominated Soviet decades in the 20th century,[7] still vividly present in the people's memory – an experience which all in all can be perceived as rather complicated and partially contradictory, that is to say as in some way a 'non-Ukrainian' imprint though not simply without Ukrainian involvement.[8] And all this has also left lasting traces in the history of Christians and of the churches – they are in a certain way an essential component of the Ukrainian 'cultural imprint' -, and it continues to have its effects in still today's quite complex relationship of the Christian churches.[9] As another quite influential part in more recent Ukrainian life history – though not simply comparable with the first one e.g. in its temporal dimension, however not less partially contradictory – may be considered the experience of what can be called 'liberation processes' since 1991, in particular the so-called 'Orange Revolution' (2004)[10] followed by the 'Maidan Revolution of Dignity' (2013/14)[11].

A *third* contextual element of tolerance is the presence or absence of an active *civil society*. This foremost since precisely in communities and societies that are actively shaped by civic initiatives and civil society institutions the social life as well as the public discourse are remarkably influenced and even characterized by the experience of and the dealing with multifold and diverse views, opinions, convictions, etc., and also with

6 The term 'countries in transition' (or in 'transformation') often refers to processes of economic development (usually compared so so-called developing countries, and especially directed to 'free market economy'). However, in the context of this essay 'transition' is meant in a broader sense, which (especially with respect also to Eastern Europa) would include processes of profound change in almost all socially relevant areas like politics, legal system, social services, economy, media, education, religion, culture etc.

7 A concise, informative overview on this is provided by: Kappeler 2009; cf. Kappeler 2015.

8 Further on this, stressing important differentiations: Schnell 2014: especially 13–15.

9 For more see: Turij 2012.

10 See a kind of analysis as well as an eyewitness-report by Mayzar 2005.

11 Shveda/Park 2016: especially 86–88.

acknowledgment of others in their difference. This again can be illustrated in regard to Ukraine, not only by recalling the fact that civil society, which in parts of the country had some favourable environment in Ukraine's history, did practically disappear or not exist during Soviet times, but even the more by looking at the emergence of important parts of organized civil society since then[12]. Examples of the latter are respective initiatives that inter alia inspired the before mentioned 'revolutions', and furthermore civically oriented institutions in the areas of social- and health-care, of education, and in the cultural sector.[13] Not to forget, that an emerging civil society is not only providing a setting for tolerance formation, it also provides a quite concrete demand for lived tolerance. Particularly in view of significant regional specificities as well as of cultural, linguistic, religious and even ethnic plurality and diversity,[14] accompanied by almost irreconcilable differences due to one-sided or biased interpretation of history – all of which as a matter of fact for decades was to quite some extent hidden or covered up by ideologically forced 'unity' – according to experts Ukrainians were and still are facing a double challenge of fostering tolerance. One is the citizens' part, individually as well as in social groups or entities, to build up civil society with its various approaches and competing values and orientations, and to engage in it – what *per se* requires tolerance, and what precisely in this regard turned out to become a serious learning process e.g. in creating mutual respect between groups originating from the Western or Eastern part of the country. On the other hand, the society at large and in particular the state are challenged to provide the legal and political framework for civil society as an important source for practising tolerance, which would include not accepting it just

12 Cf. Ghosh 2014: especially 2–6 (with particular mentioning of historic roots of civil society in parts of the country on 6). -

13 Examples for this are, in part originating from a Christian background: Ukrainian Social Academy (USA), with its special program 'Social Innovation Management' (https://social-academy.com.ua/en/ – last access: 07–02–2020); Certificate program of the Institute of Leadership and Management (for Non-for-profit organisations, NGO's etc.), run by the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) – http://international.ucu.edu.ua/students/international-students/non-degree-programs/ (last access: 07–02–2020); Dzherelo Children's Rehabilitation Centre in Lviv – https://www.uuarc.org/our-programs/aid-to-orphans-orphanages/dzherelo-children-s-rehabilitation-centre/ (last access: 07–06–2020); also the series 'Ecumenical Social Week', e.g. on "Dignity, Service, Solidarity. Towards renewed country" (2017) – http://www.esweek.org.ua/en/ecumenical-social-week/10-esw (last access: 07–28–2020).

14 For more see the essay: Portnov 2014.

as a kind of necessary evil but guaranteeing and at best even fostering it for the sake of peaceful and respectful living together and thus of a vital, open, and participative democratic society and its institutions.

As shortly mentioned already, religion has its own role in framing tolerance. This applies actually to all societies; it applies particularly to Ukraine too, obviously already because of the given religious situation.[15] That's why it is useful to take a closer look at this dimension of the issue, generally and with only a few clues regarding Ukraine.

II. Approaches: Christian interpretation and encouragement of tolerance

In view of the specific importance of tolerance for respectful and peaceful shaping of living together as well as of understanding and dialogue among cultures, religions and peoples also the contribution of those institutions is crucial which are able and willing to engage in socio-ethical orientation. This applies inter alia to Christian Churches whose mission and ministry essentially include a commitment to human dignity, justice, and peace. That's why the Churches are supposed to participate in respective discourses and, moreover, to embark upon the provision of ethical principles and norms for moral consideration, decision, and action. In a similar way this applies to theology, too, – in this case to Christian social sciences which deal systematically with issues of Christian social thought.

The following does not intend to go into how or to what extent the idea and the concept of tolerance has been addressed and treated in the history of Christianity and particularly of the church(es) – be it with firm support, with an attitude of reluctance, or at times with scepticism or rejection[16]. Rather, by reference to a few mainly contemporary texts, documents and statements, which make tolerance a subject of discussion – not necessarily in an explicit conceptual sense, but in its content –, from Christian approaches exemplarily a little light should be shed on respective interpretation of and commitment to core values of society, to social preferences and to social structures which underlie what is meant by tolerance and which ultimately make it possible. To be more precise, what tolerance is all about is being mirrored in the three documents selected

15 Enlightening aspects in this context are discussend by: Arjakovsky 2009.

16 Cf. with regard to some key aspects in this context Hilpert 2001: especially 95–101. – As an overview, focused on insights from history of (occidental) history of theology is presented by: Stöve 2002. For more details regarding tolerance and intolerance in history of Christianity see: Angenendt 2007: especially 232–370.

here in the context of different approaches and accentuations of Christian social thought, mainly by dealing with features of living together, by reflecting on central value orientations of a humane society, and by contemplating the framework of international, intercultural, and interreligious exchange and dialogue: specifically, in a more comprehensive perspective on 'integral human development' (1), then in regard to 'truth', as a subject anyway closely linked to tolerance (2), and finally in the context of a broader statement concerning a 'Christian social ethos' (3) – each of them providing fundamental approaches that are supplemented by Christian interpretations. Since the thematic accents of these different approaches do not reveal their connection to the topic of tolerance at first glance, it makes sense to let the respective texts themselves speak in more detail.

1. As a first example of Christian interpretation of tolerance can serve ‚*Caritas in veritate*'[17], an encyclical by Pope Benedict XVI. In this document the interaction between different cultures, systems and religions is considered as one focal point especially in an overall and global perspective of human development. Although the concept of tolerance is not specifically mentioned, this encyclical, as in a way an elementary text, illustrates essential aspects of the topic of tolerance by referring to the foundations of Catholic social teaching. The introduction provides an important key to this text by saying: "charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law […] is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine" – and it "is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)."[18] More precisely, "this doctrine is a service to charity, but its locus is truth"[19]; hence, "'*Caritas in veritate*' is the principle around which the Church's social doctrine turns"[20], and at the same time "is a great challenge for the Church in a world that is becoming progressively and pervasively globalized"[21], particularly for the Church's social mission that is committed to 'truly' "integral human development"[22].

17 CiV.
18 Ibid. 2. – In a similar way one can distinguish (the 'personal', the micro-social', and the 'macro-social') areas of impact of 'intolerance', cf. Häring/Salvodi 1998: 20–26.
19 CiV 5.
20 Ibid. 6.
21 Ibid. 9.
22 Ibid. 9. – Cf. also, mainly in a global perspective, no. 23 and no. 78.

This principle approach – bound to the dedication to "love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace"[23] – has a number of quite far-reaching implications for the concept and design of social and political frameworks, that affect essential elements of what tolerance aims at and what it constitutes, but at the same time of what makes tolerance also necessary: (a) *A rationale of Christian anthropology*, inspired not least also from biblical grounds,[24] which "has the particular characteristic of asserting and justifying the unconditional value of the human person" as well as human 'dignity'; thus development cannot be called really humane "if it does not involve the whole man and every man"[25] and if it is not aimed at "authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity"[26]; consequently "the equality between men and […] giving stability to their civic coexistence"[27] are (reasonably) required, as is (theologically) "the establishment of authentic fraternity"[28] – this according to "the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity."[29] (b) *A socio-ethical concept of a social order* that underlines the significance of the democratic character of state and society, shaped by human rights and particularly by "freedom"[30] as well as by "true social justice" and "solidarity"[31], moreover by "the right to religious freedom"[32] including the "the right to profess one's religion in public"[33], and, not least, by "cultivating openness to life"[34]; consequently, this concept comprises (also) "safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families", particularly since "every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance"[35]; the economic area does not remain unaffected

23 Ibid. 79.
24 Cf. ibid. 45: "On this subject the Church's social doctrine can make a specific contribution, since it is based on man's creation "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27), a datum which gives rise to the inviolable dignity of the human person and the transcendent value of natural moral norms."
25 Ibid. 18.
26 Ibid. 36.
27 Ibid. 19.
28 Ibid. 20.
29 Ibid. 34.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid. 25; cf. also no. 38.
32 Ibid. 29.
33 Ibid. 56.
34 Ibid. 28, cf. also no. 44 and no. 75.
35 Ibid. 62.

by all this – e.g. in view of "destructive" effects when one-sided concepts lead "to economic, social and political systems that trample upon personal and social freedom"[36], and especially given dangerous developments like "systemic increase of social inequality" from which "not only does social cohesion suffer, thereby placing democracy at risk, but so too does the economy, through the progressive erosion of 'social capital': the network of relationships of trust, dependability, and respect for rules, all of which are indispensable for any form of civil coexistence."[37] (c) *The guarantee of the citizens' participation*, particularly by means of 'civil society' activities,[38] which have a special role (also in regard to economy) since they precisely represent in their own way gratuitousness, solidarity and trustful equal co-operation between people with different perspectives and experiences, and also personal responsibility;[39] this confirms, as in other areas, that "the principle of the *centrality of the human person*"[40], which is complemented by interdisciplinary, hence also theological "*deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation*"[41], remains crucial for any development and therefore is essential in all sectors and at all levels of individual and societal life, specifically in view of globalization: "Underneath the more visible process humanity itself is becoming increasingly interconnected; it is made up of individuals and peoples to whom this process should offer benefits and development, as they assume their respective responsibilities, singly and collectively"[42] – the latter, together with solidarity, being a fundamental element of subsidiarity as part of respectful, participative design of society.[43]

Finally, since *the facilitating and promotion of intercultural dialogue* has its own weight in regard to the framework of tolerance, it is interesting how this topic is being addressed. According to the encyclical such dialogue on various levels is arising from respect and, "if it is to be effective, has to set out from a deep-seated knowledge of the specific identity of the various dialogue partners". It thus should serve avoiding "that cultural groups coexist side by side, but remain separate, with no authentic dialogue and therefore with no true integration."[44] Despite insisting on the necessity

36 Ibid. 34.
37 Ibid. 32.
38 Cf. ibid. 24.
39 Cf. ibid. 38.
40 Ibid. 47.
41 Ibid. 53.
42 Ibid. 42.
43 Cf. more in-depth reflection on this ibid. 57 and 58.
44 Ibid. 26; cf. e.g. ibid. 53 and no. 59.

of "adequate discernment" the encyclical stresses not only, that also other than Christian "cultures and religions teach brotherhood and peace and are therefore of enormous importance to integral human development."[45] Yet beyond this (in regard to actors in development cooperation) it points at the necessity of taking "into account of their own or others' cultural identity, or the human values that shape it"[46]; and moreover it reflects on "dialogue between faith and reason" as "the most appropriate framework for promoting *fraternal collaboration between believers and non-believers* in their shared commitment to working for justice and the peace of the human family."[47] Apparently, this way of addressing intercultural dialogue fits with the encyclical's basic view on human development, according to which the "theme of development can be identified with the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built in solidarity on the basis of the fundamental values of justice and peace."[48] Concerning this view, like in other areas, a lot "depends on the underlying system of morality."[49] In this respect, as can be taken from the above, important references for the contribution of Catholic social teaching as outlined also in this encyclical are the so-called 'social principles' of personality, solidarity and subsidiarity,[50] altogether oriented towards the common good.[51] This is what actually forms the inspiring background of the (insofar specific) interpretation of central determinants of tolerance as well as of the accompanying encouragement to shape individual action as well as social conditions accordingly.

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45 Ibid. 55.

46 Ibid. 59.

47 Ibid. 57; the encyclical refers in this context particularly to: GS 12. – Regarding the sources of dialogue, the encyclical underlines the importance of the 'universal moral law': "This universal moral law provides a sound basis for all cultural, religious and political dialogue, and it ensures that the multi-faceted pluralism of cultural diversity does not detach itself from the common quest for truth, goodness and God." (CiV 59).

48 Ibid. 54. – Cf. also EiE: Focussed on a view of global cooperation in a European perspective, which itself is supposed to become "a new model of unity in diversity, as a community of reconciled nations" (no. 109), this exhortation is claiming Europe to "become *an active partner in promoting and implementing a globalization 'in' solidarity*. This must be accompanied, as a pre-condition, by a kind of *globalization 'of' solidarity* and of the related values of equity, justice and freedom" (no. 112).

49 Ibid. 45 (with regard to economic ethics).

50 In addition, in the context of solidarity and subsidiarity, 'sustainability' could be mentioned too – cf. ibid. 48, 50.

51 Cf. ibid. 7.

2. Another example of a Christian approach to dealing with matters concerning tolerance is the document headlined *"Longing for the Truth That Makes Us Free"*[52]. It can be called in a way a special document, since it was prepared within the Ukrainian context and signed by a number of Christians from different Churches and denominations – "faithful of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, the Association of Missionary Churches of Evangelical Christians of Ukraine, and the Council of Independent Evangelical Churches of Ukraine"[53]; the first signatory is Myroslav Marynovych, a former political prisoner, currently President of the Institute of Religion and Society at the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv. This document, which continuously clearly mirrors Eastern spirituality foremost in the way of combining analytical with theological and especially biblical reflection, raises a lot of issues and concerns regarding the given situation in Ukraine. However, tolerance related topics are intensively taken up too – not surprisingly in view of the inherent, though rather complicated relation of tolerance and 'truth'[54].

Right at the beginning, the authors stress their intention to "seek consensus across Ukraine."[55] Here already the importance of reflection on truth, contrasted by "deception, hatred and violence", becomes obvious. This precisely in regard to dealing seriously with views on truth as a central moment of tolerance – the more since the Slavic concept of 'truth' means, "in addition to *veritas*, also 'law'", and consequently 'post-truth' as one of the signatures of our times "is synonymous with 'lawlessness', 'post-law' and 'post-justice'."[56] Beyond that, it is stressed that for Christians

52 Longing for the Truth That Makes Us Free, 04–16–2020, Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU) (2020): http://oou.org.ua/2020/04/16/longing-for-the-truth-that-makes-us-free/ (last access: 07–10–2020).

53 Ibid. Introduction.

54 It's interesting to note the 'headline' of quite basic considerations concerning this issue by Mensching 1955: especially 18, 127–138.- By no means coincidentally ‚truth' in the Ukrainian context is also closely related to issues of religious persecution, cf. Persecuted for the Truth 2017 (cf. ibid. 5). – Cf. also EiE, with a broader ecumenical perspective: Since these "witnesses, and particularly those who suffered martyrdom […] came from different religious traditions, they also shine forth as a sign of hope for the journey of ecumenism" (Ibid. 13).

55 Longing for the Truth That Makes Us Free, 04–16–2020, Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU) (2020): http://oou.org.ua/2020/04/16/longing-for-the-truth-that-makes-us-free/ (last access: 07–10–2020).

56 Ibid. Chapter I, 2nd paragraph: The state of the world we live in. – Regarding socio-ethical aspects of 'post-truth' see also: Buch 2019.

"truth is a living relationship, treating others as themselves, not merely an 'idea' – because an 'idea' all too quickly becomes an ideology."[57] Therefore, being aware that 'lawlessness' actually "destroys the essence and institutional foundations of our society" and also that "lying and hatred are an impetus to violence, and together, they constantly push humanity into the abyss[58], particularly Christians, while longing for truth, have to prevent themselves from backwords thinking, since this "often translates into a rejection of change, innovation, and modernity"[59]. Aligned with this, the Christian response has also clearly to avoid turning "away from the principles of democracy" and of becoming "trapped in fundamentalism"[60] as well.

Regarding Ukraine, the document provides the authors' view on the foundations of the concept of politics in neighbouring Russia, part of which from Ukrainian experience – with reference to other observers – is identified as 'hatred'. In a general perspective this leads to a rather principle statement, again by firstly illustrating the opposite of tolerance: "Hatred inevitably causes aggression"[61], whereas, positively put, an appropriate 'faithful' non-ideological approach comes into view – namely "where the four principles of a just society are upheld: respect for human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good."[62] Here the document, by referring to the 'social principles' of Christian social thought too, rightly points at the overall 'purpose' and intention also of tolerant co-existence, e.g. by stressing "a sincere belief in dialogue"[63], thus interpreting its true rationale and at the same time underscoring its significance. Finally, the document becomes rather concrete by underlining a Christian way of

57 Longing for the Truth That Makes Us Free, 04–16–2020, Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU) (2020): http://oou.org.ua/2020/04/16/longing-for-the-truth-that-makes-us-free/ (last access: 07–10–2020), Chapter I, 1st paragraph: Ontological foundations of truth.

58 Ibid. Chapter I, 2nd paragraph: The state of the world we live in. – In another context the document says: "As applied to society, Jesus' most important message is a warning against violence, falsehood, and hatred." (Ibid. Chapter IV, 2nd paragraph: How can we win the struggle against the industry of lies?).

59 Ibid. Chapter I, 2nd paragraph: The state of the world we live in.

60 Ibid. Chapter III, 1st paragraph: The "ownership of truth" trap.

61 Ibid. Chapter II, 3rd paragraph: Ukraine's experience: a clear confrontations between truth and error.

62 Ibid. Chapter III, 1st paragraph: The "ownership of truth" trap.

63 Ibid. Chapter III, 2nd paragraph: The "political correctness" or "dialogue at any price" trap. – Consequently, a real dialogue of this kind is "not at the expense of truth" (ibid.).

fighting "a world full of malice, unrighteousness and injustice" and its protagonists: definitely not "through counter-hatred", instead "Christians should preach a peace based on truth and justice".[64] – While emphasizing the special reference to the 'social principles' as well as peace and dialogue as basic elements of social interaction, this document illustrates from a Christian perspective the wider context of what tolerance (and intolerance) is about, and how this kind of interpretation can inspire and encourage commitment to human dignity, peace and justice.

3. The third text chosen here again has its own background: *"For the Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church"*[65], published by the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate[66]. This quite extended document addresses a wide range of socio-ethical topics; the authors call it a 'document' on the social ethos, but "with the caution and the humble acknowledgment that it is in many respects quite inadequate as a comprehensive statement of the social ethos of the Church."[67] The reference to this document in the present context will focus on a few select parts that are specifically related to questions and topics associated with tolerance.

In its introduction the document recalls the basic Christian approach, according to which "through communion with God as Trinity, human beings are also called into loving communion with their neighbors and the whole cosmos"[68], and consequently "our spiritual lives, therefore, cannot fail also to be social lives. Our piety cannot fail also to be an ethos."[69] Linked to this approach are a number of consequences which are no less

64 Ibid. Chapter II, 3rd paragraph: The "security" and "peace" trap. – In line with the 'spiritual' shaping of this document, it concludes (what actually is a statement) with a call for 'spiritual mobilization' in order to oppose what would endanger humane development of society: "Falsehood and deception are a global and systemic phenomenon, pervasive and seemingly invincible." (Ibid. Conclusion).

65 For the Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church (2020), https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos (last access: 07–11–2020).

66 The origin is reported more precisely by ‚Nachrichtendienst Östliche Kirchen (NÖK)': "This document was composed by a special commission of Orthodox scholars appointed by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (who ranks as first-among-equals among the hierarchs that comprise the Orthodox Church) and blessed for publication by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate." – Nachrichtendienst Östliche Kirchen (2020), https://noek.info/publikationen (last access: 07–11–20).

67 For the Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church (2020), https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos (last access: 07–11–2020), § 79.

68 Ibid. § 2; cf. also § 62.

69 Ibid. § 3.

fundamental and at the same time directly affect basic orientations of social life in which tolerance has its place or to which tolerance should contribute. Just to mention some of these consequences:

(a) Though from a theological point of view "all forms of human government […] fall short" of God's Kingdom[70], Orthodox Christians living in countries shaped by "civil order, freedom, human rights, and democracy […] should […] actively support them, and work for the preservation and extension of democratic institutions and customs within the legal, cultural, and economic frameworks of their respective societies."[71] (b) Any 'sentiment' "for one's own culture" is acceptable only "so long as it is […] allied to a willingness to recognize the beauty and nobility of other cultures, and to welcome exchanges between and fruitful intermixtures of all cultures." This includes, that "any form of nationalism" as well as any violence resulting from it or from other one-sided views etc.[72], are clearly rejected, even as 'contradictory to the Gospel' – which, according to the document "must [...] be emphasized at the present moment, on account of the unexpected recrudescence in much of the developed world of the most insidious ideologies of identity, including belligerent forms of nationalism and blasphemous philosophies of race."[73] (c) In addition, faithful as well as the Church as a whole should "not fear" but "promote" and value the richness of plural society, they "should rejoice in the dynamic confluence of human cultures in the modern world […] and take it as a blessing that all human cultures, in all their variety and beauty, are coming more and more to occupy the same civic and political spaces."[74] (d) Finally, in a way complementary to this promotion of pluralism the document claims, conversely, respect and non-discrimination of religion within those democratic societies, which would exclude religion being "relegated to the private

70 Ibid. § 9.

71 Ibid. § 10. Cf. also § 12: "Orthodox Christians must recognize that a language of common social accord, one that insists upon the inviolability of human dignity and freedom, is needed for the preservation and promotion of a just society".

72 Cf. ibid. § 47: "The Church rejects all violence — including defensive acts — that are prompted by hate, racism, revenge, selfishness, economic exploitation, nationalism, or personal glory."

73 Ibid. § 11. – The document underlines this by also pointing at problems existing within some communities in this regard: "And yet, sadly, the rise of new forms of political and nationalist extremism has even resulted in the infiltration of various Orthodox communities by individuals committed to race-theory. The Orthodox Church condemns their views without qualification, and calls them to a complete repentance and penitential reconciliation with the body of Christ." (ibid.).

74 Ibid. § 12; cf. also § 81 and 82.

sphere entirely" – this not least since "ethical convictions do not evolve in conceptual vacuums, and religious adherence is an inseparable part of how a great many communities and individuals come to have any notions at all of the common good, moral community, and social responsibility."[75] That's why the Church also is ready to involve itself in "cooperation with political and civil authorities and organs of state in advancing the common good and pursuing works of charity"[76], and to "struggle against injustice" – which, in view of respective involvement, altogether should also "serve to remind Christians that this commitment to the common good […] is the true essence of a democratic political order."[77] Obviously this argumentation from an Orthodox point of view reminds in some respects of what was exemplified before about the explanations of the Catholic social doctrine regarding integral human development.

With regard to more specific themes that are closely related to tolerance, a number of very basic, but nevertheless quite concrete statements can be found in this document. This applies especially to the positioning of Orthodox Christians within plural or diverse realities in society. For instance, by general reference to a fundamental theological view – i.e., "Orthodox Christians must remember that all human beings are living and irreplaceable icons of God"[78] – the document shows itself clearly worded with respect to the significance of human rights, wherein the reason given is particularly noteworthy: "Orthodox Christians should support the language of human rights, […] because it preserves a sense of the inviolable uniqueness of every person, and of the priority of human goods over national interests, while providing a legal and ethical grammar upon which all parties can, as a rule, arrive at certain basic agreements."[79] Not only the terms used here, but also the addressed topics correspond to important arguments and views that can currently be found in the general social-ethical discussion about tolerance too. The further reasoning presented in this text seems even more accentuated, stressing that it "is a language

75 Ibid. § 13; cf. also and more in detail ibid. § 64, and, from a more general perspective, in the concluding part § 80. – Concerning 'displacing religion from the public space' cf. Legutke 2014: especially 295–300.

76 For the Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church (2020), https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos (last access: 07–11–2020), § 14.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid. § 12.

79 Ibid. – For further explanation, esp. concerning Christian roots of today's language of human rights, see also § 61; for concretisation of 'human rights', quite a number of them closely related to tolerance, see: Ibid. § 63.

intended to heal divisions in those political communities in which persons of widely differing beliefs must coexist. It allows for a general practice and ethos of honoring each person's infinite and inherent dignity"[80]. Though also here the term tolerance is not used, its content and meaning is well grasped by mentioning clearly its relation to violence respectively peace: "For Orthodox Christians, the way of peace, of dialogue and diplomacy, of forgiveness and reconciliation is always preferable to the use of violence […]. The highest expression of Christian holiness in response to violence is perhaps found in those who strive every day to create understanding and respect among persons, to prevent conflict, to reunite those who are divided, to seek to create economic and social mechanisms for alleviating the problems that often lead to violence, and to welcome and care for those who are marginalized and suffering."[81]

On the whole, it is worthwhile to notice that all three documents referred to here, though born out of different backgrounds and influenced by various Christian traditions, apparently provide to quite some extent similar approaches to the topical area of tolerance, despite their respective characteristics and a certain degree of variation in clarity. They thus are a source of encouragement to shape social and political conditions at all levels in such a way that what tolerance means can be made possible and concretely realised. They contribute to its interpretation as well, which not surprisingly broadly corresponds to general ethical arguments, and at the same time they show its specific religious inspiration as well. This is not least due to hermeneutic and epistemological foundations of Christian social thought and specifically of Christian Social Sciences – foundations, to which for instance within Catholic social teaching explicitly is made reference: "Open to the truth, from whichever branch of knowledge it comes, the Church's social doctrine receives it, assembles into a unity the fragments in which it is often found, and mediates it within the constantly changing life-patterns of the society of peoples and nations"[82]; a rather

80 Ibid. § 12. – Though this essay's focus is on the general outline of how the topical area of tolerance is addressed, it should be mentioned that this document from Orthodox social teaching applies basic insights in person's dignity (and hence the demand for respectful integration or for non-discrimination, and to fight intolerance and its environment) also to very specific issues like protection of vulnerable children (Ibid. § 16), sexual orientation (Ibid. § 19), relation of women and men (Ibid. § 29), the elderly (ibid. § 30), the poor and disadvantaged (Ibid. §§ 33, 34, 37), racism (Ibid. § 41), violence/peace (Ibid. §§ 43–25).

81 Ibid. § 49 (in the context of war, capital punishment, and force – however, as basic statement it is in a way a true description of the sources of tolerance).

82 CiV 9.

similar statement can be found in Orthodox social thought (related to technology and science): "Perhaps the Church's first concern, in seeking to understand the rapid technological developments of late modernity, and in attempting to secure her role as a place of spiritual stability amid the incessant flux of scientific and social change, should be to strive to overcome any apparent antagonism between the world of faith and that of the sciences."[83] With respect to specific circumstances in which the problem and the challenge of tolerance in Ukrainian society seems to be embedded, not only the just mentioned recognizable similarity is quite significant, which is shown in the different forms of Christian social thought; even if some clarifications are probably expected regarding the mutual relationship between status and acceptance of the text within Orthodoxy, in view of the special situation of the Christian denominations it is not less important that such commonalities emerge particularly in the text on Orthodox social teaching too. This the more, since quite some fundamental principles of this teaching, especially in regard to dialogue, are applied also to "sustained dialogue with Christians of other communions"[84], and since this teaching – though in its own, and theologically specific way[85] – even reaches out "to religions different from ours"[86].

III. Prospects: practising tolerance, spurred by virtues

From the above it is clear that also Christian interpretation underlines the importance of the concept of tolerance as well as the demand for tolerance. In ethical terms indeed both dimensions matter, as do the individual and the institutional respectively social connotations of tolerance, in each case mutually interrelated.

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83 For the Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church (2020), https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos (last access: 07–11–2020), § 71.

84 For the Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church (2020), https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos (last access: 07–11–2020), § 51, cf. also § 54.

85 The specific theological context is explicitly mentioned: "[…] This indissoluble and inalienable relationship between the heavenly polity of the angelic powers and saints and the earthly life of the Church in the world provides the essential rationale underlying the ethical principles of the Gospel and the Church; for those principles are nothing less than a way of participation in the eternal ecstasy of worship that is alone able to fulfill created natures and elevate them to their divine destiny." (Ibid. § 79).

86 Ibid. § 54, cf. also § 55 and esp. § 59 (where the fundamental rules of dialogue are explicitly applied).

With regard to *practical implementation*, particularly in awareness of the complexity of tasks and challenges in this field, from what has been said so far about contexts and approaches it is obvious that development of tolerance is also, and not least, closely linked to the given political order, to the prevailing social climate, but also to personal attitudes – note, on principle of all and everybody, be it individual citizens, social actors, or political protagonists. Ultimately, tolerance is also an essentially ethical topic and, in view of its realization, also has moral significance; this at least, provided that tolerance is not only understood as a concept, but as a challenge to concrete action and to the corresponding organization of social and political life and the associated institutional conditions – in short: provided that, in addition to theoretical clarification, it is also about practiced tolerance. However, tolerance in its practical meaning in life is not just a matter of respective behaviour and action, it also includes efforts to lay foundations and to develop abilities that enable promotion for tolerance; it thus is in any case also a subject of education and formation. Especially from the point of view of the Christian Social Sciences the field of education is by no means insignificant for the humane development of society and for ethical orientation effective in it. Without questioning the importance of any part of the just mentioned complexity, and not underestimating particularly the role of institutions also in educational matters, this last section will concentrate just on addressing a few content-related prospects for the shaping of the social and moral environment that can be considered favourable for individual and societal dedication to tolerance, at best in its full meaning which would include proactive tolerance in terms of 'valuing' and 'appreciating' the 'diversity of opinions as expression and richness of a plural society'[87]. Hence it is about efforts of 'ethical formation' in terms of promoting basic orientation for the development of overall humane relationships at all levels, and especially of fostering viable prospects for practised tolerance.

From a socio-ethical point of view it seems particularly important to prepare and create an environment that can be seen as fertile ground for the rise of tolerance – here understood as a kind of attitude which would run like a thread through all areas of personal behaviour, social and political activity and institutional settings. If tolerance is considered in this sense, fundamental ethical virtues that require special attention can also come into view – namely such virtues that underlie in a way and also can spur sustainable commitment to tolerance in all areas of social

87 Cf. Vogt/Husmann 2019: 6.

and political life, regardless of whether and to what extent tolerance itself should be understood as a virtue[88]. Also against the background of the contexts and approaches discussed above, special importance should be attached at least to three virtues 'underlying' and 'inspiring' tolerance:

(a) *Openness for dialogue*: As a virtue, openness for dialogue concerns much more than communication skills. In essence, it does actually not mean a specific action, but rather an attitude, which is expressed by the term 'openness' – and therein lies its ethical significance as well as its effect on tolerance. This becomes even clearer when one considers the opposite of this attitude, namely phenomena such as intentional speechlessness, refusal to communicate or to respond to individuality of others, or even self-isolating extreme individualism (as a potential downside of 'pluralism')[89], all of which contain an element of inner disposition or basic attitude too, and which may occur on an individual, social and institutional level. In any case, the willingness to engage in dialogue contrasts also clearly with new forms of ideologization that can be observed in today's societies and in politics, which often basically deny complexity and ultimately proof to be intransigent and incapable of communication.

Real dialogue, which is based on the virtue meant here as a sustainable ability serving the moral good of humane living together and which necessarily belongs to practised tolerance as an important element in this, is concerned with the exchange of or confrontation with differing positions and views – and thus at the same time with the relationship to those who hold such different points of view. That's why such dialogue, like respective openness, involves two dimensions: dedicated exchange and, perhaps first and foremost, attentive listening. With regard to the latter, a remark (albeit in a different context) made by Byung-Chil Han, a Korean-German philosopher, can be rather enlightening: 'The time', he argues, 'in which there was still *the other*, is over', being replaced by what may be named 'terror of sameness'[90], emerging in a kind of 'formless mass'[91]; in contrast, according to Han in the 'future there may be a new profession, which would be called listener. Being paid for, the listener gives the other a

88 For instance Vogt/Husmann 2019: 3, call tolerance 'a key virtue of democracy', as well as a 'Christian virtue' (9); they also talk about tolerance as virtue in the plural – namely about 'passive tolerance' and 'proactive' tolerance as 'virtues of democratic behaviour' (ibid.).

89 For more see: Buch 2013.

90 Han 2018: 7.

91 Ibid.

hearing […]. Listening means a specific activity. '[92] And Han adds: 'No community can ever develop without […] listening."[93]

Phenomenologically it is obvious how much dialogue in the end aims at real encounter with others – a dimension whose additional religious and specifically theological connotation (which in regard to the 'neighbor' is also biblically well founded) is not to be overlooked. This also ties with what the above mentioned encyclical 'Caritas in veritate' says about the 'category of relation' in the context of truly human development – and that in the sense of a desideratum of profound theological reflection[94]. Moreover, 'openness for dialogue' is, in a certain sense, a rather 'demanding' virtue, because it can only serve as an ethical disposition if the action inspired by it concerns dialogue in all seriousness, that is, if it does not aim at levelling out differences or creating uniformity. Instead, serious dialogue implies preparedness and willingness for mutually respectful conversation about diverse views, attitudes, and beliefs, and it moreover requires even to cope with disputes and – in a proactive way – to creatively solve conflicts, still without neglecting underlying differences that may probably even remain unsolvable. Or, to put it positively, dialogue becomes a means of practised tolerance precisely when it respects the meaning, the value and the perspective of different arguments and positions – which however does not indicate whether and to what extent these arguments and positions are agreed or disagreed with.

It is important to notice that apparently the criteria of such dialogue apply also to the contribution of Christian social thought to discourses about just, respectful and altogether humane orientation of community life and of interrelation of societies and cultures[95]; this means more concretely, it is about participation in respective discourses by providing rational and communicable insights and arguments without neglecting one's

92 Ibid. 93.

93 Ibid. 98.

94 Cf. CiV 42. – See also: Buch 2016.

95 In a different context (although closely linked to the given topic), namely in regard to Christian studies and ecclesial universities, a very general and fundamental statement by Pope Francis can be found: One of the criteria of revival of these studies "is that of wide-ranging dialogue, […] as an intrinsic requirement for experiencing in community the joy of the Truth and appreciating more fully its meaning and practical implications" – which requires "a culture of encounter […] between all the authentic and vital cultures" and hence would include believers and non-believers; quote from: VG 4.— VG is meant as an 'adaptation' of the Apostolic Constitution Sapientia Christiana, by Pope John Paul II, April 15, 1979 (cf. VG 1), the statement on dialogue refers also to CiV 4.

own convictions and their specific religious motivation[96]. In the case of Ukraine, this can be clearly seen for example in the above-mentioned texts on tolerance requirements in view of the challenges and conflicts there. From an international point of view one enlightening illustration of this is the reference to 'dialogue' as made in the encyclical Laudato si: While critically refusing to simply follow "an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy" the encyclical stresses that "in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life."[97] This leads Pope Francis, by quoting his predecessor's statement with respect to peace, to suggest: "For new models of progress to arise, there is a need to change 'models of global development'"[98]. In regard to dealing with conflicts and to handling crises this would include a "politics" in its widest sense "which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach […]"[99].

(b) *Willingness to forgive*: This is probably a virtue particularly significant for engaging in and committing oneself to tolerance – next to other values and attitudes within which justice, and in a certain sense mercy too, are of special importance. Again, what is meant by this virtue can be further clarified if the opposite of this attitude is taken into consideration. Phenomena in contrast to 'willingness to forgive' are e.g. attitudes of exclusive fixation on historical burdens, insisting on accusations – in part linked to bondage to hopelessness of own failures –, and focussing on injustice committed and suffered as irreconcilable trenches, up to an attitude of retaliation.

Certainly, in view of the enormous burden and suffering caused by violence, wars and oppression which characterize not least the history of large parts of Europe and partly reach up to the present times, especially in Ukraine too, there may be plenty of reasons not to open up to the willingness to forgive. Indeed, especially against such a background, the willingness to reconcile remains a very great challenge – for individuals and for societies at large. In any case, the attitude of an inner readiness to forgive can be very conducive to real tolerance as an important element of respectful and just shaping of plural societies, of international cooperation and of the relationship between denominations and religions.

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96 Cf. Buch 2000.– See also in regard to significance of theology within ‚secular' ethics, and in particular to tolerance, Merks 2020: 350–354.

97 LS 189.

98 LS 194 – with reference to the Message for the 2010 World Day of Peace: Benedict XVI 2010 – Cf. also CiV 30 and particularly CiV 31.

99 LS 197.

Not surprisingly and for good reasons the Churches and the Christian Social Sciences are also dealing with the task and challenge of forgiveness, well-founded with regard to biblical references and at the same time integrated into a broader and fundamental *theological* context[100]. That's why respective documents refer to willingness to forgive in view of quite different areas, like ecumenical relations[101], peace and reconciliation[102], universal peace[103] etc. – all of which rely on attitudes and settings that enable real tolerance.

(c) *Readiness for responsibility*: Not only phenomenological ethics reveals responsibility as indeed basic, in particular since it is part of the driving forces of moral motivation, practical judgment, decision and action[104]. Therefore, readiness for responsibility as a virtue is also fundamental for any commitment to tolerance and for lived tolerance as well. Efforts in ethical discourses and formation that aim at clarifying the meaning of this virtue and at inspiring to open up to it are of utmost importance for vital social and political life in democratic societies. This particularly since in practical terms this virtue includes at least two elements: the creation or sharpening of a good sense of responsibility *and* the willingness to assume concrete responsibility – the latter quite literally, in the given context by responding conscientiously to the challenge to care for essential ingredients of humane living together, of which tolerance is a remarkable one. The opposite phenomenon of readiness for responsibility is an attitude of avoiding or even refusing responsibility, which in the end can be called a vice, foremost with respect to active participation as one of the essential requirements of democratic life[105].

Evidently, this kind of readiness for responsibility is in some way closely linked with the so-called 'social principles' as reflected in Christian social thought. Quite remarkably, like a short summary of what this is all about, and how clearly it is embedded in theological anthropology, the encyclical

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100 Cf. e.g. Pr 18,12–14; Mt 18,21–35; Col 3, 12–13. – Cf. the short, yet nuanced overview on this matter: Vorländer 2000.

101 Cf. UUS, especially no. 2.

102 Cf. PDMP 1, 3, 6, 7 etc.– See also, referring to a specific document on forgiveness: Pękala 2018. Furthermore (containing in the annex the German version of the letters exchanged in 1965): Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz 1978.– See also, in a specific European approach: EiE 112: "peace […] can be ensured only by opening up new prospects of exchange, forgiveness and reconciliation between individuals, peoples and nations."

103 Cf. PT 171.

104 Cf. e.g. Hartmann 1963: especially 1–3, 810.

105 For more comprehensive reflection on this see: Buch 2008: especially 133–139.

'Pacem in terris' includes a paragraph entitled "An attitude of responsibility", which says: "Man's personal dignity requires besides that he enjoy freedom and be able to make up his own mind when he acts. In his association with his fellows, therefore, there is every reason why his recognition of rights, observance of duties, and many-sided collaboration with other men, should be primarily a matter of his own personal decision. Each man should act on his own initiative, conviction, and sense of responsibility, not under the constant pressure of external coercion or enticement. There is nothing human about a society that is welded together by force."[106] According to the principles of Christian social thought this attitude of responsibility can be understood as being deeply implanted in the human being as a person – in theological terms: created in the image of God, being called to co-responsibility for creation -, but as it can grow and flourish within a favourable societal climate it can also be ruined or even die due to hampering political and social contexts, like e.g. in societies that were deeply scarred by the so-called 'homo-sovieticus concept' as the predominant societal framework over decades. Concerning present times, the above mentioned document on 'truth', though from Ukrainian background, states rather generally in regard to the vast destroying effects of 'post-truth': "Consciousness as such is destroyed – and as a result, the personal and socio-political life of people is being destroyed as well."[107]

Finally, this reference to conscience, in the context of one's own shaping of life in all its dimensions, leads to the core of the ethical phenomenon in general. Responsibility and conscience are ethically closely linked to each other, as well as the latter to virtues in general, i.e. also to the virtues considered here, which as truly moral and at the same time social and democratic attitudes can strongly and permanently inspire practiced tolerance. Consequently, the development of such fundamental virtues in the sense of forward-looking prospects of tolerant coexistence, precisely because this is intended to serve social and political life as a whole, is by no means to be regarded as a matter of individual commitment alone. Rather, especially when it comes to the meaning of upbringing and education as envisaged here, this should be understood as a task and obligation of society as a whole – supported also by state framework

106 PT 34.

107 Longing for the Truth That Makes Us Free, 04–16–2020, Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU) (2020): http://oou.org.ua/2020/04/16/longing-for-the-truth-that-makes-us-free/ (last access: 07–10–2020), Chapter I, 2nd paragraph: The state of the world we live in.

conditions, at least in societies that are committed to tolerance and to value orientations that are associated with it.

Conclusion

After all, what has been said has confirmed this: Tolerance, in its different motivations and dimensions, generally concerns essential principles and requirements for a 'humane', fully inclusive and respectful social interaction in communities characterized by many disparities and varieties, as well as for a corresponding social and political order. In this sense, tolerance is a characteristic of a functioning plural society and a democratically constituted polity; it is also highly significant in shaping international and global cooperation. At the same time, it is linked to values, and it requires respective value options for any concretization. Their theoretical as well as ethical-practical reflection is, as became clear from the considerations on contexts, approaches and prospects, also the subject of Christian social thought and of the Churches' social teaching.

Taking into account the most enlightening distinction and relation of 'passive', 'active' and 'proactive' tolerance, from a Christian point of view an additional moment and in a way a step further would be to dedicatedly *promote tolerance and respective moral attitudes* – as an essential, in any case an unavoidable element of fostering integral human development of all and everybody, at all levels of social life and in any dimension of political dialogue and action. The contribution of Christian social thought, though presenting in the best 'critical', i.e. discerning way its own views by also referring to theological insights and sources, is not aiming at a kind of very own and entirely unique concept of tolerance. It is instead a contribution inspiring the opening up to an integrative view on the issue, which includes also 'faith-based' reflections as long as they claim and proof to be presented by means of rational, methodologically consistent, and hermeneutically competent argumentation. In doing so, Christian social thought as well as the Churches' social teaching are challenged to contribute to respective debates while clearly recognizing and addressing seriously the presence of diverse views, options, and convictions in plural societies and also within Christian communities. The insight common to the above-mentioned documents that this contribution does not only concern a service to society *ad extra*, but also includes a task of the faith-

ful's critical self-assurance *ad intra*, underlines as such the importance of tolerance as a theme of Christian social teaching.

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