

LOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF BERNARD BOLZANO'S THEODICY

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Abstract. Bolzano's theodicy is a very good example of Platonism in the philosophy of religion. Above all, Bolzano believes that there obtains an ideal realm of truths in themselves and mathematical objects, which are independent of God. Therefore, we are allowed to conclude that God is only a contractor; true, more powerful than Plato's demiurge because He created substances (and matter) and sustains them in existence, but God must follow a project which is independent of Him. Since the world is determined, by the program and God follows the program, then in fact the program is a god, or better, there is no God (at least in the sense of the classical Christian tradition). Bolzano's project is not related to God's essence, since it is external to God, and is not made by God. Thus, Bolzano's theodicy is also the absolute opposite of the Cartesian theodicy. God in the Cartesian theodicy can change all rules, all scientific laws and, in consequence, He can create any world He wants. Bolzano's God cannot change anything and cannot create a different world than the world determined by the project, a world different than the one He has created. The responsibility of Bolzano's God for the evil in the world is limited by the project of the world.

I. Introduction¹

Bernard Bolzano is mainly known as a mathematician and a philosopher of logic; in his *Logical Investigations* Edmund Husserl pointed out Bolzano's contribution to the fight against psychologism (Husserl 1970, vol. I, p. 73).²

¹ I am deeply indebted to dr Elżbieta Łukasiewicz for her illuminating remarks to the present paper.

² One should mention Husserl's conception of truth because it is very similar to Bolzano's own view. „What is true is absolutely, intrinsically true: truth is one and the same, whether men or non-men, angels or gods apprehend and judge it. Logical laws speak of truth

However, in his time, Bolzano was known mainly as a philosopher of religion and a theologian. He was head of the department for philosophy of religion at Prague University, and the most popular works of Bolzano were dedicated to the problems of moral theology.³ Bolzano's treatise on the immortality of the soul, *Athanasia oder Gründe für die Unstreblichkeit der Seele*, is of special importance among his theological achievements. The work in question had two editions during Bolzano's life. The problem of evil was never the main issue in his theological considerations, but it is possible to reconstruct the main assumptions of Bolzano's theodicy by taking into account his works concerning logic, metaphysics and moral theology. One should even say that understanding Bolzano's logic and metaphysics is the very condition for grasping the rules of his theodicy. The aim of this paper is to provide just such a reconstruction.

II. Truths in themselves⁴

Extremely important for Bolzano's theodicy is his metaphysical doctrine of truths in themselves (*Sätze an sich*) and falsehoods in themselves. Bolzano elaborated the doctrine in question because he wanted to make logic a firm and objective science. Let us regard truths and falsehoods in themselves as propositional logical entities (or propositions). We are entitled to do this since truths can be expressed, by means of sentences (and a proposition is the meaning of a sentence). Thus, a truth in itself is a true proposition and a falsehood in itself is a false proposition (Morscher, Simons 1982,

in this ideal unity, set over against the real multiplicity of races, individuals and experiences, and it is of this ideal unity that we all speak when we are not confused by relativism" (Husserl 1970, vol. I, p. 140). Bolzano himself says that truths in themselves are not posited by anyone, not even by the divine understanding. It is not the case that something is true because God recognizes it as such; on the contrary, God recognizes something being of a certain nature because it is so. Thus, for example, God does not exist because he thinks he does, rather, because there is a God, this God thinks of himself as existing (Bolzano 1972, p. 34).

³ One of the first thinkers to appreciate Bolzano's philosophy of logic and philosophy of mind was Kazimierz Twardowski in his habilitation *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen* (1894). Twardowski not only mentioned Bolzano's ideas but also discussed them, e.g. the concept of objectless presentation, and he might have been inspired by some of Bolzano's ideas. The absolutist conception of truth, is, perhaps, one of the best examples of the Bolzanization of the Polish philosophical thought (Betti 2006, p. 55).

⁴ Artur Rojczczak (2005) discusses the problem of the bearers of logical values and Bolzano's position in a very detailed way.

p. 205). The peculiar ontological position of propositions in themselves is determined by the fact that they are independent of any judging subject. The independence of propositions consists in the fact that neither their contents, nor their being and logical values depend on a judging subject. They are not produced by judgments (acts of judging) but they are only discovered in them. The process of getting to know truths in themselves consists in the acts of judging whose contents are identical with the contents of the relevant propositions (Bolzano 1972, p. 35).

Propositions are composed of ideas in themselves; e.g. proposition „ $2+2=4$ ” is composed of the idea of 2 and the idea of 4, and these ideas have their extensions.⁵ The constituents of propositions are ideas of all types of objects; not only mathematical objects, but also empirical objects (leaves, trees, humans etc.), and theological objects like God, angels and so on.⁶ Logical entities (ideas and propositions) are not real, i.e., they do not exist in space and time because they are not able to act upon each other and upon other entities. But, if logical entities are unreal, then they do not exist, and, hence, they are not created by God (the logic of this situation is that non-existent entities cannot be created by God: had they ever been created by God, they would exist). Since they do not exist, they are independent of God. The independence of propositions (and ideas) with respect to God can be described with the aid of the following conjunction:

- (1) Even if there were no God, propositions would obtain
and
- (2) It is the case that God thinks that p is true because p is true, and it is not the case that p is true because God thinks that p is true.⁷

Since propositions are not nothing, they can be grasped and thought of by subjects of different types. Bolzano's realism concerning logical entities is not the same as Plato's realism because according to the Platonic view ideas exist and are real, whereas Bolzano claims that they are not real and do not exist.⁸

⁵ In our example the number 2 belongs to the extension of the idea 2.

⁶ Thus, the idea of God would be a constituent of the proposition „God is omniscient”. However, such a point of view leads to the consequence that the idea of God is ontologically independent of God himself, since propositions, and hence, their constituents, are independent of God.

⁷ Of course, it is true that if God thinks that p is true, p cannot be false, since God is omniscient and epistemically perfect, but God does not make p true by thinking that p is true.

⁸ However, Bolzano regarded himself as a follower of Plato.

Another reason why Bolzano defends the independence of propositions in relation to God is the divine perfection. If propositions had been created by God, then false propositions would have been created by God as well. However, God, as a perfect being, cannot create false propositions, and false propositions cannot exist in His mind. God can think about false propositions and He knows all of them as omniscient (just by knowing all truths He knows each negation of each true proposition) but false propositions cannot exist in God. Since they cannot exist in God, and are not created by Him, they must be external and independent of God, and the same concerns true propositions.⁹ Bolzano's view on propositions is as strong as

⁹ One can pose the question whether the assertion of the proposition „Falsehood is not created by God and it does not exist in God's mind” entails the assertion of the proposition „The truth is not created by God and does not exist in God's mind”. The view of classic Christian thinkers such as Augustine or Thomas Aquinas is that false propositions are not created by God and do not exist in God, but true propositions do exist in God. Augustinians think that the bearers of falsehood are not entities existing in God's mind, they are not ideal entities but are rather atemporal possibilities. These possibilities have only a potential existence, which is far less perfect than the atemporal actuality of ideal true propositions. They in this way lay stress on the metaphysical and axiological superiority of truth in relation to falsehood. The superiority in question gets its additional support from the fact that ideal true propositions are thoughts of God, and false propositions are not. I think that the justification of Bolzano's view rests on the belief that there is no difference between the objectivity of true propositions and the objectivity of false propositions. In other words: if proposition p is true, then it is objectively true (it is true independent of any subject or any fact), and if proposition p is false, then it is objectively false. Thus, the objectivity of truth and the objectivity of falsehood is the same. It has in both cases the same meaning. Bolzano can explain the objectivity of truth and falsehood by making the assumption that objective logical values have the same ontological status, and Bolzano's propositions (in themselves) are the foundations in question. Husserl later on adopted the way chosen by Bolzano and claimed that the bearers of logical values are ideal meanings (*ideale Bedeutungen*). The second possible reason why Bolzano ascribed the same ontological position to true and false propositions could be that propositions are meanings of both true and false sentences. The invariability of meaning is a guarantee of logic, as the universal science, and it makes possible inter-subjective communication. Since false propositions are objective and they are the invariable meanings of relevant sentences (although they are external in relation to God), then, we can infer, true propositions as entities external in relation to God will be objective and invariable as well. Perhaps, one can say even more: the fact that propositions are independent of God, i.e., of a certain special subject, guarantees the objectivity of logical values (which was strongly preferred by Bolzano). Thus, Bolzano's reasoning may have been completely different than the Augustinian reasoning. If the truth is independent of a perfect and omnipotent cognitive subject, then it must be independent (objective) with respect to any possible subject. In other words; since even God cannot change truth into falsehood and falsehood into truth, then nobody and nothing can do this.

Plato's and differs significantly from the conceptions of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, because the latter were convinced that true propositions are contents of God's mind and thus exist in a certain way in God (as His thoughts).

A proposition is true if and only if it predicates of an object, denoted by its logical subject, a property that really is a property of the referent of the subject. A proposition is false if and only if it predicates of an object, denoted by its logical subject, a property that is not a property of the referent of the subject (Bolzano 1972, p. 35). The basic form of propositions is the form „*A* has *b*”.¹⁰ Thus, it seems that Bolzano's definition of truth can be regarded as a strong version of the Aristotelian definition of truth¹¹ – the obtaining of a certain state of affairs is the truth-condition of a given proposition.¹²

However, one can still question whether Bolzano's conception of truth really is the Aristotelian one. Aristotle said clearly in chapter 12 of the *Categories*: „And whereas the true statement is in no way the cause of the actual thing's existence, the actual thing does seem in some way the cause of the statement's being true: it is because the actual thing exists or does not that the statement is called true or false”. At first glance Aristotle's last statement is fully coherent with Bolzano's concept of proposition. Propositions are not real entities, they are not substances, and, hence they have no causal power. But Aristotle's idea is that a fact makes a given proposition true, or, in terms of the contemporary ontology of truth, a fact is the truth-maker of a proposition, and not conversely: it is not the case that a true proposition is a „fact-maker”. I think it is compatible with Aristotelian realism to say that there would obtain some states of affairs even if there existed no true propositions (if there would be no cognitive subject able to produce any true proposition). Bolzano's view is just the opposite since he claims that even if there were no God, true propositions would obtain.¹³ If

¹⁰ The existential proposition „*A* exists” is also reducible to the possessive form „*A* has *b*”, where '*b*' stands for the existence of the object *A*, and it means „*A* has existence”.

¹¹ The strong version of the definition of truth is the version saying that a true proposition is a combination of a subject and a predicate, and the relation of truth-making consists in a certain type of correspondence between a proposition and the reality which the proposition is about.

¹² The object that a true proposition is about does not have to exist in order for the proposition to be true. This concerns mathematical objects, which, as logical objects, are non-existent entities. Bolzano's example „A truth is not something that exists” certainly does not refer to something that exists, and yet it is a truth. (Bolzano 1972, p. 34)

¹³ Bolzano also expressed the independence of propositions with respect to God by saying, „Thus we say that God is necessary, *because* (my italics) the proposition God is actual is a purely conceptual truth” (Bolzano 1972, p. 255).

we take Bolzano's last conditional as being true, we can infer that even if there were no states of affairs (facts), there would still be true propositions. Let us explain the situation: if there is no God, then there are no states of affairs created by God. Hence, there are no states of affairs at all, since propositions are not identical with states of affairs (propositions cannot be states of affairs because the constituents of states of affairs are substances, i.e., real entities, but propositions are not real) and propositions have no creative power, i.e. they cannot create anything. Thus, it is not a fact which is the truth-maker of a proposition. Yet, it would be too strong to say that it is a proposition which makes a given fact. Let us suppose, following Bolzano, that God exists and that He is unable to create any true or false proposition, and, suppose, contrary to Bolzano, that there are no true propositions and no false propositions. Could Bolzano's God create any states of affairs? The answer is: no. He could create no state of affairs because the content of each state of affairs is determined by a true proposition.¹⁴ Thus, even if God wanted to create anything He could not do it. God could not create the state of affairs that God exists. If He would have been able to create the fact that God exists, it would mean that God created Himself but God is uncreated. However, all the rest being equal, if Bolzano's God exists and the realm of propositions obtains (in the last section of this paper we call the realm of propositions, the „program”), then Bolzano's God can create facts, if He wants to. It follows that true propositions are partial fact-makers, or, that true propositions are the necessary condition for the obtaining of the relevant states of affairs. The sufficient condition is the conjunction: God's creative power and God's will. My conclusion concerning Bolzano's theory of truth would be that his definition of truth is Aristo-

¹⁴ But what about theological propositions, that is propositions about God Himself? Do they determine God? Let us take the proposition „God exists”. Certainly, Bolzano would not agree that God exists because the proposition „God exists” is true. According to Bolzano, God is an unconditioned substance, and, therefore, the truth of a proposition cannot be any condition of His existence or His nature. It is possible to assume that there is no God, but it is not possible to make His existence dependent upon anything. Thus, God would be the only substance which is not determined by any true proposition. However, Bolzano, as already mentioned, states: „Thus we say that God is necessary, *because* the proposition God is actual is a purely conceptual truth”. It seems that Bolzano's views are not consistent. To make his position coherent one should either assume that God is „programmed” by the theological propositions or, that these propositions are true because of God, who makes them true. If the latter part of the alternative is true, then the view held by Bolzano is an Aristotelian realism, and our argument in favor of Bolzano's Neo-Kantism fails.

telian in form, but that his ontology of truth is not. Perhaps, Bolzano's ontology of truth is just Neo-Kantian and, hence, Platonic, or, conversely: it is Platonic and, hence Neo-Kantian.¹⁵

If we try to summarize Bolzano's doctrine on the relation between truth and God, the following example may be helpful. The proposition, „God is omniscient” is true not because God thinks that He has the property of omniscience, rather He thinks that He has the property of omniscience because He has this property, and God has this property because the proposition „God is omniscient” is true.

One can divide propositions with regard to their objects or their relevant type of epistemic access. According to the first criterion of division, one can distinguish mathematical propositions, physical propositions (the laws of nature), theological propositions, and moral propositions (the list, of course, is not complete). There are, according to the second criterion of division, *a priori* propositions (God is omniscient) and *a posteriori* propositions (The number of blossoms that were on a certain tree last spring is *n* (Bolzano 1972, p. 32). In order to grasp the truth of a given *a posteriori* proposition, it is sufficient to experience, in a proper sequence, mental acts, whose contents are ideas in themselves, which, in turn, are constituents of the relevant propositions. For example, in order to know the truth of the proposition, „*a* has *b*” it suffices to perform the mental act of *a*, which corresponds correctly with the mental act of *b*. Thus, Bolzano does not speak about the need for a direct access to the things that propositions are about. He only stresses that experiences must have an adequate structure in order for a proposition to be true. Therefore, we are allowed to conclude that Bolzano defends a very strong Platonic ontology of truth and an anti-realistic epistemology of truth.

It follows from his theory of truths in themselves, and it is the most important consequence of the logic of truth for the Bolzanian theodicy, that

¹⁵Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz says in his article on „A semantical version of the problem of transcendental idealism” about Cohen's and Rickert's philosophy, that, according to transcendental idealism, the real world is only a correlate of propositions, i.e., the ideal meanings of sentences (Ajdukiewicz 1978). And the Neo-Kantian philosophy seems to be very closely related to the Platonic metaphysics of ideas. There are authors who stress that Bolzano's philosophy is not Kantian at all (Bolzano himself regarded his philosophy as anti-Kantian), and it preserves the Aristotelian concept of truth (Woleński 2005, p. 95). My point is that the Aristotelian formula of truth rephrased by Bolzano masked his Platonic (or the Neo-Kantian) ontology of propositions.

the laws of nature and the moral laws are independent of God; even if there were no God, the laws of nature and the moral laws would be the same, not to mention logic and mathematics.¹⁶ In other words, God could not have created a world different than the world, which He created, since He had to follow the matrix of truths in themselves.¹⁷

III. The ontology of substance

The concept of substance plays a crucial role in the description of the structure and nature of the universe.¹⁸ The world contains, according to Bolzano, substances and adherences (processes, states and properties).¹⁹ A sub-

¹⁶ I think that, in fact, the world is not only determined by fundamental *a priori* and necessary laws (such as the law of progress or the moral law) but, generally, by the truths in themselves. If true propositions are independent of God, then all true propositions are independent of God. Suppose that the proposition (*): „The number of hairs on Peter’s head is n ” is true. If (*) is true, then even God cannot change this fact. He cannot cause the number of hairs on Peter’s head to be $n+1$. Of course, one can say that it was God who caused that the number of hairs on Peter’s head was n (at the moment T_1), and it is God who caused that the number of hairs on Peter’s head was $n+1$ at the moment of time T_2 . Thus, in both cases it is God who is the most powerful agent acting in the world. However, I understand the situation as follows: if proposition (*) is eternally true (so (*) was true before Peter started to exist), then, God could not cause the number of hairs on Peter’s head at the moment T_1 to be not n . The number of hairs on Peter’s head must be n , if (*) is true. Thus, even if it was God who caused Peter to have n hairs on his head at the moment T_1 , God could not change the number of Peter’s hairs at the moment T_1 . God is the most powerful agent acting in the world in the sense that He can do far more things than anything else, but He must always follow the program, concerning what the world should be like, contained in the set of all true propositions (not only *a priori* universal laws).

¹⁷As Drozdek observed, the word „creation” has in Bolzano’s system a different sense than in the orthodox conceptions of natural theology because the universe is „not really created” but it only depends on God’s existence; yet God himself is not its author (Drozdek 1998, p. 281).

¹⁸ One should stress that propositions are not substances and they are not any part of the world (and, let us repeat that they are not any part of God).

¹⁹ Bolzano speaking about the metaphysics of the world states: „Alles, was *ist*, d.h. in Wirklichkeit besthet, in dieser Wirklichkeit entweder für immer oder auch nur für eine gewisse Zeit besthet, gehört zu einer von folgenden zwei Arten: Es ist und besthet entweder an etwas anderem, als *Beschaffenheit* desselben, oder es ist nicht ein blosse Beschaffenheit an etwas anderem, sondern besthet, wie man zu sagen pflegt, *für sich*. Beispiele des ersten geben uns *Farbe, Geruch, Gewicht* eines Körpers; denn alle diese Dinge sind etwas Wirkliches, das gleichwohl nicht für sich, sondern nur an etwas anderem, hier nämlich an dem Körper, und zwar als seine Beschaffenheit desselben besteht. Als Beispiel des zweiten ist die *Materie*,

stance, in the wide sense, is a subject of properties. In this sense both a human body, and a flower, are substances because one may ascribe some properties to them. However, a more precise analysis, made by Bolzano, demonstrated that such a wide concept of substance is not adequate because we often ascribe properties to objects which are complex, and which are not substances (which start to exist and after a period of time cease to exist). A substance, in the strict sense, is a simple object (it has no spatial and temporal parts), which is eternal, able to act upon its environment and to perceive (Bolzano 1851, §§ 50, p. 64).²⁰ Bolzano tries to prove in *Athanasia* that the human soul is a simple object and that it is a substance. Bolzano argues that if the human soul is simple, then it is impossible for it to cease to exist, or, in other words, the existence of the human soul has no end in time. But even, if the human soul has no end in time, then it is still possible – Bolzano observes – for someone to argue that it started to exist at a certain moment of time.

However, some thinkers would argue, that if the existence of something has a beginning in time, then it will have an end in time, and thus that the very simplicity of the soul can not be a guarantee of its eternal existence.²¹ In order to avoid such objections, Bolzano argues that each substance, the human soul included, has no beginning in time. On the contrary, it is co-eternal with God, although created by God. Thus, God is the cause of the world but, the divine existence does not precede the existence of the world. Let us note that in Bolzano's view, there are two theories of causality: according to the first one, a cause precedes an effect, while, according to the second one, a cause is concurrent with an effect. In Bolzano's opinion, the first case, however, concerns only a partial cause. As far as the relation between God and the world is concerned, the second model of causality is

aus welcher der Körper zusammengesetzt ist; denn diese Materie ist etwas Wirkliches, welches an keinem andern Wirklichen als seine Baschaffenheit desselben, sonder schon für sich selbst besteht. Die Wirklichkeiten der ersten Art phlegen die Weltweisen mit einem lateinischen Wort auch *Adhärenzen*, jene der letzten aber *Substanzen* zu nennen." (Bolzano 1976, pp. 234-235).

²⁰ A substance is sometimes called by Bolzano simply an, 'atom', and interactions between atoms consist in their attracting each other (Bolzano 1851, §§ 50, 54, p. 64). If we do not perceive a substance by our sense organs it does not mean that it does not exist in space (or time) but only that our present ability to perceive substances is too weak. Also, Bolzano says clearly that there are no identical atoms or substances in the world (Bolzano 1851, §50).

²¹ See Gregory of Nyssa „On the making of Man”, in *Patrologia Graeca* [212], ed. by J.P. Migne.

more adequate. Bolzano's reasoning goes as follows: if God had existed earlier than the world, then God could not have been the complete and only cause of the world, but there would have had to be another cause which would have determined a growth of the divine creative power, and only then would it have been possible to create the world. But Bolzano poses the question: where might such a cause come from, if there existed nothing except God, and if it had not existed in God himself, because in that case there would have been no time of the world's nonexistence. The problem can be solved if one assumes that God was „always” able to create the world (substances), and, hence, one is allowed to claim that the world, although created by God, is coeternal with Him (Bolzano 1976, pp. 249-250).

Thus, the conjunction of both theses (that the world has no end in time and that the world has no beginning in time) provides, according to Bolzano, a sufficient justification of his statement that the (human) soul (like other substances) has no beginning and no end in time.

The next claim of Bolzano's metaphysics of relevance to his theodicy is the claim that there is an infinite number of substances in the world. The reason why there is an infinite number of substances in the world is that space is infinitely divisible. If the number of substances were finite, then some places in space would be empty. Since any body is a cohesive composition of substances (with no empty spaces) and bodies exist, one can infer that it is an infinite composition of substances or atoms. A human body is composed of an infinite number of substances and each of them has a certain ability to perceive and to act on another substance.

There are two kinds of substances: an unconditioned and uncreated substance: God and conditioned substances created by God: atoms (Bolzano 1851, §57).²² A substance is unconditioned if its existence does not depend on the existence of any other substance or substances, and a substance is conditioned if its existence depends on the existence of another substance or substances. Thus, it is clear that for Bolzano God is a substance, but it is not clear what kind of substance He is. In particular, it is not evident whether God belongs to the set of all substances, or surpasses all conditioned substances and is not a member of the set of all eternal substances.²³

²² Thus, the human, for example, is not a substance but solely a composition of different atoms.

²³ We cannot analyze this interesting question here. Bolzano stressed that each substance exists in space and time, except God, although God is omnipresent (Bolzano 1834, vol. I, p. 203; vol. III, pp. 159-160). For Thomas Aquinas' followers it is impossible to

Another division of substances can be made with regard to their powers, which may be described in terms of the ability to perceive and to act upon other substances. Bolzano claims that substances ruling over other substances are of spiritual nature (souls), and substances lacking such ability, are of a material nature (bodies). According to this view, a human being is composed of an infinite number of substances, only one of which (the human soul) is able to act upon the infinite number of substances which make up the parts of a human body. The difference between a soul and a body lies not, as it was for Descartes, in the different natures or powers of soul and body, but in the degree of their power (Bolzano 1851, §55). Thus, speaking of a distinction between souls and bodies is conventional, since each substance has the ability to perceive and to act upon another substance, as well as to gain control over other substances. From this point of view, it is permissible to speak about each substance as having a soul. Bolzano himself makes this point clear, by saying that each organ of a human body has its own soul.²⁴ In other words, a human soul is a substance, which has control over an infinite number of substances making up a human body (Bolzano 1976, p. 260).²⁵

There are (in all the universe) four universal laws under which each substance (except God himself) falls: the law of continuity, the law of perfection, the moral law, and the law of sufficient reason. The law of continuity says that there are no abrupt changes in the universe, and Bolzano's statement that „in God's creation there is nothing at all that is lifeless through and through” can be taken as an exemplification of this view (the so called

speak about God in terms of substance, because a substance is, according to them, an entity possessing accidental properties and God has no accidental properties, and, hence, He is not a substance. This, however, is not a challenge to Bolzano's view since he assumes a different definition of substance: not each substance has to possess accidental properties. God has some properties such as omniscience or omnipotence but they are essential properties and not accidental. And it is of course true, that created substances have not only accidental properties, but they also have some essential properties: they are simple, eternal, able to act upon other substances.

²⁴ Plants have „a certain degree of perception” and after a period of time, even from water there arise organic creatures that then turn back into an inorganic mass (Bolzano 1976, pp. 265-267).

²⁵ A substance starts to be a human soul at the moment of conception, and the assigning to it of a human body, and ceases to be a human soul at the moment of death. After death a substance is still a soul but definitely not a human soul. It is only a former human soul. It is possible that before conception (a substance which will become a human soul) is not a soul at all and it is, for example, a part of a body of another soul.

„inorganic form of life” is still a form of life, but this life is imperceptible to us (Bolzano 1976, pp. 266-267). The law of perfection (the law of progress) says that each change occurring in each of the infinite number of substances contributes or can contribute to a growth of power in each of them. The only exception to this rule is God, whose actual perfection has no limits (Bolzano 1976, p. 325).

The moral law provides the concepts of moral good and evil; a morally wrong action is an action that does not lead to universal goodness.²⁶ The law of sufficient reason claims that each event, everything that happens, has its own reason (one may say that everything has its own cause).

Thus, the universe, according to Bolzano, is a Heraklitean stream of continuous changes for which there always exists a relevant cause, and those changes serve as a contribution to the development and perfection of the infinite number of existing individuals, and to that of the universe as a whole as well. However, since substances exist without a beginning and end in time, the process of growing in perfection lasts forever.²⁷ It seems that it is impossible to imagine a better world than the Bolzanian world. Such a conception of the world, of course, has important consequences for theodicy, and, in particular, for such concepts as freedom, death and eternal life.

²⁶ It is worthy of note that in Bolzano’s ethics the moral law has a broader scope of validity than the gospel truth of love because it concerns not only humans but also animals (Bolzano 1834, vol. I, p. 236; vol. IV, p. 216).

²⁷ „In unseren Augen ist Gottes Schöpfung ein Inbegriff von Wesen, der keine Grenzen kennt, wie keine Grenzen im Raume, so auch keine der Zeit nach. Eine unendliche Menge von Wesen erstreckt sich nicht bloss durch einen nirgends begrenzten und nirgends leer gelassenen Raum hin, sondern selbst jeden nur endlichen Teil dieses Raumes erfüllt eine unendliche Menge von Wesen; und diese Wesen alle, ja jedes einzelne einfache Teilchen derselben, sind etwas Lebendes, sind Substanzen, welche mit einem gewissem Grade von Vorstellung und Empfindungskraft begabt sind, die eine Art von Glückseligkeit geniessen können und in der Tat geniessen. Auch sind sie nicht etwa seit gestern da, diese Wesen, auch nicht seit tausend mal tausend Jahren erst da, sondern sind durch Gottes Willen da von Ewigkeit her und werden fort dauern durch Gottes Willen in alle Ewigkeit. Sie sind und dauern nicht bloss, sondern sie wirken und wachsen und werden vollkommener, sie steigen von Stufe zu Stufe unaufhörlich höher hinan. Nie gab es eine Zeit, da irgendeines dieser Wesen erst anfing zu sein und zu wachsen, sondern zu jeder bestimmten Zeit hatte jedes derselben eine unendliche Menge von Stufen bereits zurückgelegt; eine unendliche Menge von anderen und höheren liegt noch vor ihm, und es wird in Zukunft die eine nach der anderen allmählich erklommen werden” (Bolzano 1976, pp. 277-278).

IV. The conception of freedom

Bolzano clearly subscribes to the psychological determinism, according to which a free action is an action always determined or caused by a certain mental state (a necessary condition of freedom). The reason for a free action is internal to an agent, although not always cognitively accessible. The freedom of an action lies in the fact that an agent's action is determined by his own mental states and will. Such a view is a direct consequence of the law of sufficient reason (Bolzano 1976, p. 302). Bolzano's understanding of freedom is, in principle, identical with Leibniz' theory of freedom. Bolzano, like Leibniz, rejected the view, according to which, freedom is a „neutral equilibrium”. The theory of „neutral equilibrium” claims that a free will is able (in the same degree) to perform an action *A* and to perform another action non-*A*. Bolzano, however, makes clear that his position is very close to ethical intellectualism, since an act of will is free if its causes are rational motives, and, as we know, in the domain of moral actions, such motives are dictated by the moral law (sufficient condition of freedom). Thus, decisions dictated by individual profits, which are incompatible with the universal good, are not free in Bolzano's sense.²⁸ It follows from this, that God himself (in his will and actions), is determined by the moral law (the moral truths in themselves). God cannot (it is a consequence of his holiness, goodness and moral perfection) choose actions that are not morally the best, and the morally best actions are determined by truths in themselves, which are independent of God.

V. Moral evil and natural evil (death)

One of the consequences of such an understanding of freedom is a specific concept of evil, and moral evil, in particular. Moral evil, as observed above, occurs if the reason motivating the will is not identical in content with the moral law, and if the goal to be realized by the act of will is individual profit and not the universal good. In such cases, there arise social conflicts, wars and suffering. Moral evil, however, is not a result of the pure wicked-

²⁸ Thus, freedom is subject to the moral law, and the moral law says that universal goodness is the highest aim of a morally good action. Therefore, morality is more important for human happiness than freedom (Bolzano 1834, vol. I, p. 48).

ness or malice of certain creatures, rather, its ground lies in the incompetence of the will and the ignorance of reason. The incompetence of the will rests on a weakness of the will, which is not able (cannot, and, hence, does not want) to follow the moral law, and the ignorance of reason manifests itself in the inability to grasp that the foundations of the will's decisions are not coherent with the moral truths. These flaws of (human) will and reason are natural for creatures who, while they participate in the universal progress, are still (infinitely) far from maximal perfection. It seems to me that Bolzano's theory is not completely clear in all details. He holds that disease, death and suffering, and all facts caused by these events, are the direct consequence of original sin, and that humans, as terrestrial creatures, are not immortal (immortality is predicated only of souls themselves), but the first humans in Paradise were as a matter of fact immortal. Adam and Eve lost their immortality because of original sin (Bolzano 1834, vol. I, p. 25). It seems that the Augustinian idea of the Fall, and the deprivation of a paradisiacal perfection, is not coherent with the Bolzanian law of progress.

In Bolzano's view death is not an evil we should fear.²⁹ According to the Bolzanian metaphysics, we (our souls) exist without any beginning in time and never cease to exist, and the event which we call 'death' is solely an inevitable opportunity to enter a new level of the universe, a new world where we gain more perfection in all aspects of our existence; more moral, intellectual, physical and social virtues (Bolzano 1976, p. 287). Bolzano says, in a very clear way, that we have already died many times before our present terrestrial existence (in fact we have lived through an infinite number of deaths), and an infinite number of deaths is awaiting us. Thus, we will die infinitely many times after our terrestrial death (Bolzano 1976, p. 311). Not only will our death on earth open a door to a new and better world, but it will liberate us from the inconvenience of our present lives, it will liberate us from weak and stubborn bodies.³⁰ Death is also important

²⁹ There are three possible views concerning the axiological value of death. Death can be something bad, neutral or good. If death is evaluated as an evil, then it can be justified in the theodicy of „a greater good”. Death is an evil which contributes to some greater goods, which overcome this evil. But one may say that death is good because it enables us to enter a higher level of perfection, and it seems to me that it is Bolzano's own view. Bolzano writes that „muss dieser Tod für unsere menschliche Seele nur Gewinn sein!” (Bolzano 1976, p. 287).

³⁰ One should add here that a soul is always related to a certain body. Our death on earth will liberate us from a body that is heavy and vulnerable, but we still preserve a subtle body (a part of our human earthly body) (Bolzano 1976, p. 287). A constant connection of a soul with a body is important for Bolzano, because each soul always exists in space and time,

because it will enable us to meet other creatures, more perfect than we are (for example those who live on other planets), and it will enable us to meet our predecessors, and our loved ones. All those beings will take care of us and will love us, and therefore, we will become members of a big eschatological community (Bolzano 1976, p. 322). Nonetheless, a new life in a better world will also end with our death, but after death in a new world we will continue to improve and enter another higher level of the universe (Bolzano 1976, p. 287).

Bolzano's theory of reincarnation, or, perhaps better, his theory of trans-world migration leads to some obvious and natural questions like, for example, the question why we do not remember anything from our previous lives. Bolzano's answer is simple, though unsatisfactory. He says, that we do not remember anything because our psychological powers make us able to lead an active, conscious life on earth only. Thus, only now in our present life can we remember the events we experience (Bolzano 1976, p. 296). It is a strange solution because, as already mentioned, we have existed for an infinite time and we have been developing constantly. Therefore, it seems rather probable that we could have achieved a conscious life earlier than in the present life on earth. Bolzano's possible answer to the last objection would be that each substance takes part in a cosmic process of development, but each substance makes different steps. One of them develops slowly and another faster. Those substances, which develop slowly, do not remember anything from their previous lives, and those, which make a faster progress do remember something (but we still need some evidence supporting such a *dictum*).

Thus, death considered from Bolzano's point of view (that is from the point of view of endless trans-world migration) affords us an infinite progress in all aspects of our existence. Hence, death is no evil, but is something good.³¹ The fear of death is bad and not death itself. Death would be the greatest evil only if it were the end of our existence. But, fortunately, as

and the main disposition of each soul is a disposition to act. It is not possible for a soul to act if it does not have any body. However, it is not completely clear whether a former human soul will eternally have a body composed of substances that were parts of a human body on earth. Perhaps a former human soul will change its body completely, so that its new body will have no parts of a human body (Krause 2002, pp. 288-292).

³¹ It must be stressed that although Bolzano speaks about a form of reincarnation, his theodicy is not based on the punishment of evildoing in previous lives, because the substances, which are our souls become aware of their actions and can be responsible for their deeds on earth only.

Bolzano tries to demonstrate, this is not the case. In our next life, it is Bolzano's belief, we will be aware of the real nature of death, and, therefore, the fear of death will cease to exist. Each death is good; death which comes late, as well as death which comes too early. The world in which we live is organized in such a way that each creature exists in the circumstances that in the best possible manner serve its growth. If someone dies too early, then it means either that they do not have anything more to learn on earth because they know all that other creatures must still learn, or they will make up for everything in future lives. Those who live longer should not complain either, because they have had enough time to learn, and the eternal life awaits them. In other words, each death comes in good time or even in the best possible time.³²

VI. The Problem of Hell

Having depicted these crucial metaphysical assumptions it is easy to present the main thought of Bolzano's theodicy. This is the idea that each evil, each suffering, in the universe serves only one purpose, i.e., the development of each substance in all aspects of its existence (Bolzano 1834, vol. IV, p. 122). The world we live in is the best of all possible worlds, in the sense that it is not possible to find better opportunities for the development of each substance on the present level of its growth, but, of course, it is not the best world, since after death we will enter a better world than the world we live in now. However, from such a point of view, the sheer concept of the best of all possible worlds is not coherent and logically. In each new world we will be more perfect and happy, and our perfection and happiness will contribute to the growth of universal goodness and happiness.

The law of progress, Bolzano maintains, concerns each substance („Gesetz des Fortschreitens für alle geschaffenen Wesen ohne Ausnahme

³² „Auf jeder Stufe des Dasains, also auch auf derjenigen, die man durch die Geburt zum Menschen betritt müssen wir bei weitem mehr Wesen treffen, die diese Stufe nur wie im Fluge berühren und alsbald weiterreichen, als solche, die auf ihr ausdauern und die Vorteile, welche sie darbieten kann, erschöpfen. Wir haben, die Sache – aus diesem Gesichtspunkt betrachtet – gar keine Ursache, das Schicksal der frühzeitig Sterbenden zu beklagen, sondern nur Ursache, die Fülle des Reichtums und der Allmacht Gotes zu bewundern, dem es ein leichtes ist, ihnen dasjenige, was ihnen hier entgeht, in anderen Gegenden seiner Schöpfung überschwenglich einzubringen!“ (Bolzano 1976, pp. 280-281).

gilt") (Bolzano 1976, p. 268). But is such a position tenable, if Bolzano admits that spiritual substances endowed with will and consciousness (able to be responsible for their deeds) who will not want to grow will exist in hell? Bolzano very seriously considers a possibility that there will be substances of this type. However, he says very little about hell as such. In *Athanasia* he points out that hell is a divine device, with the aid of which God can influence the behavior of sentient beings so that they will be more inclined to act consistently with the moral law (Bolzano 1976, pp. 302-303). It seems that, for Bolzano, it is no problem that actions, forced by the menace of a severe punishment, lose – as Kant taught – their ethical character, because only free actions are morally valuable. Bolzano's doctrine concerning hell is not clear, since it is not said whether hell has solely a preventive character, or a retributive one, or both preventive and retributive. Perhaps the existence of hell (or at least the existence of the possibility of hell) is to be a kind of guarantee of freedom for those conscious creatures who do not want to grow infinitely? The law of continuity and the nature of substances (their essence is action) may suggest that hell will consist in the increasing depravation of reprobates. Let us repeat that there is no sufficient evidence in Bolzano's theory, to solve the problems concerning hell. One might ask whether the conception of hell as a separate world of infinite depravation (spiritual substances cannot lose their existence) is coherent with Bolzano's theodicy? First of all, and this is the main idea of the Bolzanian theodicy, each suffering serves moral growth, but sufferings in hell cannot serve any improvement, if hell is to be the final destiny of those who do not want to develop. Thus, if there is a hell, and it is as we have said above, then Bolzano's theodicy fails.³³ Bolzano says that sufferings in hell can contribute to the growth of the moral perfection of those who, terrified by the infernal fate of reprobates, will try to avoid hell and to grow in perfection (Bolzano 1834, vol. IV, p. 152). However, such a response is not consistent with the Bolzanian theodicy, since it says that *our own* sufferings will enable our *own* progress.³⁴ He also suggests that

³³ A. Drozdek presents a different position when he says on the basis of *Lehrbuch der Religionswissenschaft* that the violation of the rules of universal goodness is a mortal sin. Such sins deserved to be punished with eternal damnation. However, it does not mean that the law of progress has been violated because the damnation of some creatures is a warning for the rest, and, therefore, it contributes to the global goodness (Drozdek 1997, p. 149).

³⁴ One should still keep in mind that Bolzano often stresses the importance of individual happiness; even that religion is subject to human happiness. We are obliged to believe in God solely because our belief contributes to our happiness (Bolzano 1851a, p. 116).

a sinner would not be happy if he existed eternally in a close relation to God (Bolzano 1834, vol. IV, p. 184). But, the last point made by Bolzano means, in fact, that there are substances, which are not able to develop, and such a *dictum* clearly contradicts the universal law of progress.³⁵

One possible way to remove the inconsistency in question would be admitting that hellish sufferings will contribute to the moral development of reprobates. In such an event the theodicy may preserve its coherence, because the law of progress, the thesis concerning the function of sufferings, the divine respect for creatures' freedom or happiness, and the preventive role of hell can all be valid at the same time. Thus, if we postulate a liberal conception of hell, understood as the conception of a „second chance”, then it will be possible to restore the consistency of the Bolzanian theodicy.³⁶

VII. Bolzano and Leibniz

There is a view, rooted in Bolzano's own statements, that his theodicy is a theodicy of the best of all possible worlds, and, therefore, is very similar to the Leibnizian theodicy (Drozdek 1998, pp. 280-281).³⁷ Yet, it is worthy of note that there are considerable differences between Leibniz's and Bolzano's conceptions. I think that the differences in question concern the metaphysical assumptions of both theodicies, as well as their very essence. Bolzano's metaphysics embraces statements about the eternity of the universe and about a universal interaction of all substances in the world. Needles to

³⁵ If there are substances unable to develop, then they make an exception to the law, but we do not know how many substances break the law: one, two or, perhaps, infinitely many?

³⁶ Charles Seymour (2000) discusses in detail the conception of hell as a „second chance” given to the damned. See also my review of Seymour's book „Theodicy of Hell” (Łukasiewicz 2003, p. 357).

³⁷ As Drozdek puts it: „Each of these beings is ascending to perfection by having already passed through an infinity of stages and having an infinity of stages to pass in the future. This all happens through an interaction with other beings and is only possible because the world was created in such a way that this interaction can move each being upward whereby also the whole universe is being perfected. In this light, Bolzano, has no problem with agreeing with Leibniz' view that our world is the best possible. If some parts of the world can be considered far from perfection, then the world as a whole was created in such a way that it simply must become better, so that Bolzano's theodicy is defended on the grounds of a constant perfecting of the universe. [...] In this sense, the world is never best, because it steadily becomes better, it is, on the other hand, best, because of the built-in tendency to become better” (Drozdek 1998, pp. 280-81).

say, the Leibnizian monadology is completely incompatible with Bolzano's model of the universe.³⁸ The idea of trans-world migration of souls would also be absolutely strange for Leibniz; his theodicy of the best of all possible worlds is a theodicy of universal goodness, which is often understood in terms of esthetic values. Our present world is the best of all possible worlds because it is beautiful, and the final criterion of beauty is harmony, which is regarded as the best possible composition of all the parts of a given whole. The cosmic harmony assumes, or even needs, a contrast between parts of the universe (Łukasiewicz 2004, p. 86). Thus, evil can be regarded as a context for good states of affairs, which are thus more visible, and the contrast between good and evil contributes to the universal beauty of the whole universe. These esthetic and universal motifs are not so important in Bolzano's theory. For him this world is the best because each substance is involved in an infinite process of development, and the evil, which happens to it, serves *its own* individual perfection and happiness. Thus, the perfection of the whole is based here on a perfection of parts, while the Leibnizian view is quite the opposite: imperfection of parts should contribute to the perfection of the whole universe. It is in this context, perhaps, better understandable that Bolzano's theodicy is far more individualistic than Leibniz's, because it is a theodicy of each substance taken separately, and not as a part of a bigger, cosmic whole. Therefore, in my view, Bolzano's theodicy is a theodicy of *soul-making*.³⁹

There are also some crucial similarities between Bolzano's and Leibniz's views, since both conceptions introduce limits to divine omnipotence and creativity. In the case of Leibniz, God is in a certain sense obliged to create, or more correctly, to actualize the best possible world. The content of the best world is determined by eternal ideas (possibilities which have not been created by God; but which exist eternally in His mind as the content of the divine intellect). God cannot change anything; He is not able to make any improvements in this ideal universe of possibilities. In Bolzano's theory the divine creativity is limited not by the set of possibilities but by an infinite set of truths in themselves which are independent of God in the sense that they are external in relation to God, contrary to Leibniz' view.

³⁸ Bolzano himself stressed this fact and called Leibniz' idea of the pre-established harmony 'unfortunate' (Bolzano 1851 §52).

³⁹ Bolzano says in his *Lehrbuch der Religionswissenschaft* that all suffering in the world serves our own, always increasing, perfection and happiness (Bolzano 1834, vol. IV, p. 46). See also (Drozdek 1998, p. 281).

VIII. Bolzano and Hick

Since, as I suggested above, Bolzano's theodicy is a theodicy of *soul-making*, it may be useful to make a brief comparison between Bolzano's and J. Hick's theory, which is regarded as a very representative contemporary theodicy of soul-making.

Both theories share the assumption that the evil occurring in the universe should serve the development of sentient creatures, and that the initial state of all creatures was not a state of maximum perfection but rather a state of deep imperfection. The most important differences obtain with regard to the metaphysical premises upon which both theories are based. First of all, Hick does not make any assumptions concerning the preexistence of souls or the eternity of the universe and the „existence” of the ideal realm of logical and mathematical entities.⁴⁰ There is no law of infinite progress in his theory. Thus, according to Hick, we will not die infinitely many times; reincarnation is needed only until the achievement of maximum perfection. Therefore, it is reasonable to call Hick's conception of afterlife 'pre-eschatology'; the final unity with God will take place after sufficient preparation. In the case of Bolzano's theodicy, the afterlife is only a pre-eschatology, without eschatology or, if we may put it this way, eschatology comes down to pre-eschatology. In contradiction to Bolzano, Hick very clearly expresses the practical certitude of universal salvation (Hick 1977, p. 344). However, the very concept of hell is not, according to him, necessarily empty because the concept of hell can denote the purgatorial sufferings liberating sinners from evil. The important difference between Bolzano's and Hick's theories of evil is that in Hick's conception there is the problem of pointless evil (undeserved, intense suffering). A pointless evil does not serve any good state of affairs in the present world. In the theodicy of soul-making a pointless evil is an evil that does not contribute to the spiritual growth of humans but rather crushes personal dignity, or even contributes to the devaluation of a person. Hick sees the very fact of the existence of such an evil as a great and impenetrable mystery (Hick 1977, p. 340). Bolzano never mentioned the existence of pointless evil, which cannot be counterbalanced by some good states of affairs obtaining in the present world.

⁴⁰ According to Hick, it is a God who „preordained” our world and not a „program” as it is the case, at least in my view, in Bolzano's theory.

To clarify better the differences between these theodicies, I introduce the concept of 'eschatological theodicy'. This concept allows that there is a pointless and horrendous evil in the world, and that this evil cannot be counterbalanced by the good states of affairs obtaining in the world, but also that there will be some good states of affairs in another world (the world of our afterlife), which will overcome all pointless evils. I suggest that Hick's theodicy is eschatological and Bolzano's theodicy is not, because for Bolzano each evil in the world contributes somehow to the development of a substance, in the world in which the substance exists at a given moment. Also, Bolzano's theodicy is not eschatological since our present world is the best of all possible worlds (in the sense discussed above), and, hence, no evil is pointless in such a world (there cannot be pointless evil in the best of all possible worlds). Therefore, there is no need for an eschatological counterbalance of such an evil.

IX. Some problems of the theodicy of perfection

There are some objections that can be raised against a theodicy based on the notion of perfection.⁴¹ First, evil understood as a precondition of development does not have to be real. The omnipotent God could have created a world in which suffering and evil, as preconditions of growth, would be illusory, while growth would be real. Second, evil as a precondition of development could have been real, but the distribution and kinds of evil in the world have been different (Adams 1990, p. 20). Third, if evil is a precondition of spiritual growth, and growth shall take place after death without end, then it follows that evil will also exist in the afterlife, in other words, evil is eternal and irremovable. Fourth, the theodicy of soul-making seems to assume that the greater the progress to be made, the greater the evil required. This problem is clearly present in Hick's theory, according to which, undeserved and horrendous evils can be a device, with the aid of which God can arrange the environment so as to induce the disinterested and spontaneous reactions of sentient creatures. If one could explain and make rational and understandable each case of evil, then there would be no

⁴¹ I confine myself to mentioning some possible objections only, without trying to cope with them, because of the limited scope of the present paper. Some proposed answers and solutions can be found, for example, in (Howard-Snyder 1999).

disinterested help, mercy and love in the world, since all evil happening to creatures would be deserved and rational (Hick 1977, p. 334). Fifth, it is not completely clear whether perfection and the striving for it, conditioned by evil, is far more valuable than the peaceful happiness of creatures to whom at least some forms of evils never happen.

Conclusions

Bolzano's theodicy is a very good example of Platonism in the philosophy of religion.⁴² Bolzano holds such typically Platonic theses as the preexistence and eternity of souls (in this respect he also follows Origen and Irenaeus), their reincarnation (or as we suggested trans-world migration). Above all, he believes that there obtains an ideal realm of truths in themselves and mathematical objects, which are independent of God (let us call the realm in question „the project” or „the program of the world”).⁴³ Therefore, we are allowed to conclude that God is only a contractor; true, more powerful than Plato's demiurge because He created substances (and matter) and sustains them in existence, but God must follow a project which is independent of Him. Since the world is determined, by the program and God follows the program, then in fact the program is a god, or better, there is no God (at least in the sense of the classical Christian tradition). According to that tradition, the project of the world exists in God's mind. Thomas Aquinas teaches that even the ideas of individuals exist eternally in God's mind, and somehow express God's essence (Stróżewski 2005, p. 105). Bolzano's project is not related to God's essence, since it is external to God, and is not made by God. Thus, Bolzano's theodicy is also the absolute opposite of the Cartesian theodicy.⁴⁴ God in the Cartesian theodicy can change all rules, all scientific laws and, in consequence, He can create any

⁴² Perhaps, it should be added that Bolzano's view is a combination of Platonism and atomism since simple, eternal substances (atoms) play an important role in the universe. However, it should also be kept in mind that Bolzano's atoms eternally change, which is not true of the atoms of Democritus and Epicurus.

⁴³ The Bolzanian theodicy is a non-Christian theory because the Church has rejected the doctrine of reincarnation: the synod in Constantinople condemned this doctrine in 543 and the Council in 553 approved the condemnation from 543.

⁴⁴ Duns Scots may also be regarded as one of the most influential proponents of an unlimited divine omnipotence.

world He wants. Bolzano's God cannot change anything and cannot create a different world than the world determined by the project, a world different than the one He has created. However, the more omnipotent God is taken to be (as, for example, the Cartesian God), the more pressing becomes the question why there is so much horrific evil in the world. The responsibility of Bolzano's God for the evil in the world is limited by the project of the world.

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