

The Money Trap: Do I Need To Be A Slave To Money?

(Applying the Scientific Method to the Question of Freedom)

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

- John 8:32

I have to be honest. This article is not really intended for older people. They may read it. They may understand it and see the sense in it. They may even take some action as a result of it. But frankly I think that would be the exception rather than the rule. For the most part older people are, in my experience, too full of ingrained prejudices and preconceptions by which they have lived their lives and perhaps too on which they have based their identities to face bravely the psychological challenge contained herein. They may also feel bound physically in ways that the young are much less inclined to feel.

I do not mean to deride older people, nor do I mean to suggest any kind of disrespect for them. After all, our elders have a depth of experience in many things that younger people cannot possibly understand, but only guess at, until we reach a comparable age and begin to confirm their insights. Furthermore our elders are often among those who really care for us, and that too should not be undervalued. Even just the experience of the passage of Time tends to put things in a sounder perspective than a younger man can ever possibly be aware of without the guidance of a caring elder, especially if his youthful passions have been aroused. That said, what we are about to discuss is, sadly, not usually something our elders can help us with because very few of them have ever taken a truly objective approach to understanding their place in the world as it really is. They have simply obeyed the world. And probably they will advise you to do the same. In any case, as far as they themselves are concerned, the time for alternative action has probably passed. And sound, objective thought without corresponding action has little value. The best the old can do is pass the message on (presuming they can understand it) to the young; and therefore it is the young man whom I will particularly address in what follows.

Let's begin.

We are going to ask a question. It is a very important question. It is so important that we are not going to be satisfied with a mere verbal discussion. That alone will not answer the question. In order to answer it properly, we are going to have to conduct what might be termed a “life-experiment”. Therefore in this article we will seek only to set down the parameters by which said experiment may be conducted successfully. We can do no more with mere words. Because actually the question we are going to seek to answer is probably the most important question you will ever ask. I do not exaggerate, indeed the whole question of your freedom and conversely also your slavery depends on it. Which also explains, by the way, why you never, ever go near this question in your so-called schools and universities. But that's another story.....

Wait a minute!

Slavery?!, I hear you exclaim. What do you mean, “slavery”? This is a free country, right? Well, let's go into that a bit, shall we? What *is* slavery? What do we mean by it? Probably we have images in our minds of toilsome labour under the stoney-eyed supervision of a cruel whip-yielding task-master, or perhaps he is toting a gun and wearing a uniform, or he is a white man exploiting the labour of some poor unfortunate stolen from Africa. These are the images we have imbibed from the sources of information that are given to us, surely, but we do not want to be too impressed by mere images. We need to get to the substance of the word. What essentially characterises slavery? Perhaps we could sum it up in four short words: “Do it or else”. If these are the conditions under

which we work then we are slaves, are we not? For what else is the whip-yielding task master in our image of slavery but the personification of this attitude: do it or else? That's what he is, isn't he? That's what he represents. Now ask yourself this: "or else *what?*" Well that's simple, do it or else you will be hurt in some way. By the whip, or the gun, certainly, as in the classic and stereotypical images of slavery, but are there also less *obvious* ways?

Consider: is it any different, fundamentally, to the threat of a whip or a gun, if it is the threat of the withdrawal of some reward you perceive to be the means of getting what you need or even what you want? Like when you work for money, for instance. It amounts to the same thing doesn't it? Or perhaps you think that the key difference between what you do for money and slavery is your ability to choose your task master and to leave your job at will, if you don't like it. Well, that may work in theory, but actually in practice, more often than not, accumulated income backed debt, psychological inertia and job insecurity make such escape routes seem much less viable when push comes to shove in the world of monetary employment. But even if you do manage to leave a particularly oppressive situation the question is leave and go *where?* Will the next task master really be any different essentially? Maybe, a little bit. Maybe, enough to make it bearable for now, but will it really be any less a form of slavery or simply a more bearable one?

Which brings us to the question we are going to investigate below, which is related. It is such an important question because it is the one on or to which just about everyone bases or gives their *entire* lives. Depending on how a man answers it, that is to say, what he believes to be the truth about it, consciously or unconsciously, will be the way his whole life is defined, often very early on and even unto death. As such I am going to refer to this question below simply as "the Question".

Ok, so what *is* the Question. We'll put it more succinctly later on when we understand better our terms, but for now we will put it this way: is it possible to get all that we need without serving money? Yes or no? Simple. That is the Question. Or at least, one way of putting it.

Let's be clear about this. We are not asking if we can get all that we need without the *use* of money, that is to say, without using money to get all or part of what we need. That is another question entirely. We are concerned here only with the question of whether *service* to money is necessary. By service we mean doing things in return for money, or as it is sometimes called, "remuneration" or sometimes "compensation" or sometimes again "consideration". *Quid pro quo* in other words. In fact let's broaden the question a bit because I do not mean to imply that some kind of bartering or money-substitute system amounts to a "yes" to the Question.

For example, many of the more highly organised so-called "volunteer" or "charity" occupations fall into the money-substitute category. Clearly it is no trouble at all to a would-be slave master if we are simply prepared to offer our services in exchange for relatively little, in the form of some money-substitute like food and shelter for instance, or some other material "benefit", or perhaps the most compelling money-substitute and supplement of all: the satisfaction of some misguided desire for affirmation, acceptance, approval or justification of existence; with attendant rewards and favours of course. After all, what is money really to those who serve it, but a material symbol of these things, coupled with an exchange facility?

Though some may find this difficult to accept (and we will not go into it in detail here), it is in fact our *compliance and conformity* that is coveted above all by those at the higher echelons of the world's command chains. Such entities use various ways and means (now increasingly ineffective) of shaping social policy and norms, and are certainly not above indulging, manipulating and exploiting our psychological frailties and idolatries, in order to secure said compliance and conformity at the lowest possible price. The fact that the price may be non-monetary is of as little perceived consequence to these unseen controllers as the nature of the activities in which we are

employed often is, as long as there is in it somewhere, an invisible string attached (so to speak), however long, that can be tugged just so, if and when necessary. Little wonder then that these activities are often so essentially meaningless, irrelevant, useless, meretricious or even destructive, notwithstanding any grandiose pretensions to the contrary.

Therefore, let's reformulate the Question as such: is it possible to get what one needs without *selling one's soul*? We will define "soul" for the purposes of the present discussion as that which animates and determines the activities of one's body and mind. Such activity might be, for example, one's labour, one's services, or the use of one's skills, one's intelligence, one's know-how, one's creativity and so on. Or alternatively we could define "soul" as the sum and substance of all that one has to give of oneself. By "selling" we mean accepting anything in exchange for one's soul, be it money or money-substitute. We should probably also make it clear at the outset that a life of crime could only be lived by a man who has decided that the answer to the Question is in the negative, since what he does, he does largely, if not entirely, for money or some other form of compensation. Let's also eliminate welfare from the government as a way of concluding 'yes' to the Question. Welfare is never unconditional, except perhaps to pensioners.

Now, unlike the criminal or the welfare recipient, I do not want to guess. I want to know. So I am not going to talk here about going out into the wilderness, building a cabin and growing my own beans, which I've never done by the way. It sounds interesting, I grant you, but that's not the point. Nor do I want to imagine myself at the very top of the money tree giving orders to all and taking orders from no-one (if such a position were available to mere mortals, which it isn't). Nor do I want to simply assume automatically and thoughtlessly that my present money oriented paradigm (as the case may be), based as it is on the consensus of just about everyone that service to money is inevitable, necessarily amounts somehow to a valid answer to the Question. Numbers do not add up to validity. Nor does convenience. The whole world could tell me with the utmost sincerity that Melbourne is in Alaska, but that wouldn't make it true. The whole world could tell me further that I am a very bad person for not believing, like everybody else, that Melbourne is in Alaska, but that wouldn't make it true either. And it is equally important to understand, but perhaps not as obvious to those unaccustomed to logic and objective thought, that the fact that everybody tells me that Melbourne is in Australia does not make it true either. So I'm not saying that the answer to the Question will *not* be compatible with any of the life choices or ambitions I have described above or any other we could imagine. It *could* be. That's precisely the point. I am not satisfied with mere imagination or assumption. I do not want to guess. I do not want to presuppose anything about the answer to the Question, yes or no, and where that might lead. I want to *know*.

So how am I going to find out?

Well, to do the next bit we need to understand something about the difference between correlation and causation and also some other basics of logic and scientific methodology.

What are correlation and causation? Don't be put off by these words, it's really quite simple. Correlation means two things occurring together. Causation refers to two (or more) things, one of which *causes* the other(s). The important thing to understand is that correlation does not necessarily mean causation. For instance, an example often given for correlation is birds on power lines. Birds and power lines are often observed together. Does this mean that birds caused the power failure last night? Well, not necessarily. There is correlation, but not necessarily causation.

What does this have to do with the Question? Well, everything. Think about it. We often observe people serving money or acting in some other way conditionally in order to get what they think they need. They say: "I will do this for you, if you give me what I need or what I want, or the means by which I can get it." So there is correlation. That is beyond doubt. But what about

causation? In other words, is the satisfaction of our needs actually *caused* by such conditional activity or is there merely a correlation between the two, albeit a correlation that we ourselves set up, participate and conspire in? We'll come back to this a little later. First let's familiarise ourselves with some of the basics of scientific methodology. (Note: this may seem like a wayward digression, but stay with me and you'll see how all this links back to the Question in the end.)

Consider a man who is ill. He goes to the doctor and is given a pill to take before he goes to bed at night. In the morning he feels better. There is correlation certainly but does the fact that the man feels better in the morning prove a causal link between the pill and his recovery? No it does not. *Because we do not know if he would have felt better anyway the next day even if he had not taken the pill.* Which is not to say that we can conclude that there is no causal link. There could be. But how are we going to actually find out?

Well, let's suppose that the same man returns to the doctor some time later with the same illness. Suppose you are the doctor. Given that you want to be sure about the efficacy of the pill you gave him last time what will you do this time? How will you test the hypothesis that the pill works? Easy. *Don't* give him the pill this time, and see how he feels in the morning. If he is still ill then chances are the pill was what did the trick last time, but if he is better then it is likely that there was some other factor that led to the man's recovery (a good night's rest for instance) and the pill was only serving to provide a misleading correlation.

Now consider one more scenario, if you will. Let's suppose the doctor is pleased to conclude that his pill has worked. After all, the patient got well by next morning when he took the pill, and didn't get well by next morning when he didn't take the pill. The doctor thinks he may be onto something. But what if the patient now throws a spanner into the works and tells him that actually he forgot to mention that the first time he was ill, when he took the pill, he also took three other pills, all different, and all recommended for the same illness by various health practitioners other than our good doctor? What is the doctor to do now?

Well the first thing he must do is to scrap his previous conclusion. It may yet be the right conclusion, but he cannot come to that conclusion based on his experiment with the patient because the focus of the experiment was compromised by the addition of other possible causes into the experimental field. In other words, it could have been *any* of the four pills that the patient took that brought about his recovery.

So what is the doctor to do now? Well, he could begin all over again, this time making sure that the patient takes *only* his pill on the first occasion, and then if successful, takes nothing at all on another occasion, the second test being to ensure that the result would not have ensued anyway, in the absence of *any* pills. But there is another way the doctor could do it which would enable him to make use of the first result when the patient took all four pills. He could simply make sure that all conditions for the patient the second time around are the same except for the pill he wishes to test for causality, and *only* except for that. In other words the next time the patient has the illness the doctor could ask him to take all of the pills he took the last time, *except for* the pill he is testing. Then, if next morning the patient does not feel better the doctor might conclude that the pill was a probable causal factor to his feeling well the first time.

Now let's get a little technical for a moment.

The methodology described above for testing causality is a general one in science. Basically what the good doctor is doing is establishing what is known in scientific jargon as an "experimental control". An experimental control is simply a kind of baseline or background set of conditions that remain identical in the experimental field in which the effect of both the presence and absence of

the hypothetical causal factor (HCF) is tested. Variables in the experimental field that are not duplicated in both sets of tests are called “confounding variables”. So, for example, in the scenario above of the doctor and his patient the confounding variables were the pills that the patient had taken in addition to the hypothetical causal factor, that is, the pill the doctor wished to test. These had to be either removed from the experimental field or kept constant in both sets of tests, for presence and absence of the HCF, before a causal relationship with the doctor's pill could be confirmed. Such variables might be termed *objective* variables and are relatively easy to deal with. Greater difficulty arises when the confounding variables are *subjective* ones, that is to say, ones that arise in the subjective reporting itself, of the tested field.

This is often the case when a part of the field being tested is a person and the way he actually *feels*, such as in medicinal experiments, for example. A well known and accepted confounding variable in medicinal experiments is what is known as the “placebo” effect. This is the ability people sometimes have to make themselves feel better, even unto changing their actual physical conditions, based on their faith in something, in this case a misrepresented sugar pill (called a “placebo”). The problem of course with the kind of power derived from belief in a lie is that it can only last as long as the lie is maintained and not exposed, after which the power turns back into the fabled pumpkin at midnight, so to speak. When the belief is based in something true on the other hand, it follows there is not this limitation to faith based recoveries from illness, but actually this is a whole other discussion and we won't go into it here. Suffice to say that the placebo effect is well recognised in science and medicine where the general approach to dealing with it (when testing for the purely objective effect of a drug) is to establish first in as big and as accurately representative a sample as possible (the control group) a placebo “baseline” by which to compare all other results. So for instance if it is established that on average 20% of patients experience a placebo effect then results indicative of causation for the HCF need to be substantially in excess of that to be considered significant. Other psychological effects on the reporting of tested subjects may not, however, be so easy to identify or deal with and there are several approaches to offsetting their impact on experimental results. The method used for the placebo effect, as described above, is known as “standardisation”, but there are also other ways. For example, sometimes changes to the design of the experiment have to be considered.

Now let's see if we can apply all this to the Question. It may be helpful to remind ourselves at this point what the Question is, viz. is it possible to get all that we need without exchanging our souls for it? (Keeping in mind that service to money is a form of soul exchange, as per our definition of “soul” above.)

Let's call the experiment by which we aim to arrive at an answer to the Question, the Experiment.

Before we go further I should preface what follows with this: the Experiment as we have defined it herein is, doubt it not for even a moment, the most important experiment you will ever undertake. In fact it is so important that it is no exaggeration to say that the man who never performs this experiment properly and never arrives thus at an answer to the Question has entirely wasted his life no matter what else he thinks he achieves, attains or acquires and no matter how much this fickle world tells him he is “successful”, “honourable”, “heroic” or “great”. He will *in fact* be a failure, which sooner or later he will realize (though he may decide to keep the knowledge to himself), often when he is old, but if not by then, then soon afterwards. Nevertheless while there is life there is hope, and strictly speaking, it is never too late to start again; to *think* again.....

Enough said. Let us proceed.

Let's begin by rephrasing the Question in such a way that makes it suitable for application of

experimentation and scientific methodology, viz. is there a causal relationship between selling one's soul and getting what one needs? Remember that we are not going to be swayed by mere appearance. There is certainly correlation. There is correlation because we have constructed society that way. It's called Trade. For example, one man uses money, or something else perceived to be of value to a seller, to buy from another man his services, services which may include the supply of goods. The buyer may then use his purchase to meet a need, either immediately or some time later. So, yes, there is correlation, but is there also causation?

Here is yet another way of looking at the Question. Consider "Necessity". By Necessity I mean that which we need. It is changing all the time isn't it? Every moment it is changing. What I need right now is not what I needed last night. What I need tomorrow will not be what I needed today or next week at noon. It is always changing; always in flux. Now consider "Availability". By Availability I mean that which is available to us. That too is also changing continually. What is available to me now is not what was available to me a few hours ago, what is available to me tomorrow may not be what is available to me today. Again, always in flux, always changing. So Necessity and Availability have this in common. They share this common property, that they are always changing, always in flux. Now let's put the the Question this way: *Could Necessity and Availability be the same thing?* That is to say, could it be that they not only have the property of flux and change in common, but have *all* things in common, being thus *the same thing?*; only seeming to be different phenomena, but in fact identical. Yes or No? How are we going to find out? No assumptions or flights of the imagination or mere impressions of images drawn from the virtual world of the mass media, general consensus or pop culture; that will not do. We accept only actual facts, logic, sound experimentation and observation. Let's apply our method.

Firstly we need to establish the field of the Experiment. Which is ourselves and our lives. (Do you see now how serious we need to be to get to the answer of the Question? And why almost nobody ever answers it properly.) Next we need to identify the hypothetical causal factor (HCF). That would be the service to money, or more broadly and accurately, the selling of one's soul. The result we are looking for in the Experimental field is getting all that we need. Ok, so far so good. Now, how do we set up our experimental control? Simple – we must remove from the Experimental field the HCF, which means *we can neither accept nor give anything that would amount to an exchange of our souls for anything else*, at least until we have satisfied ourselves as to the true nature of the experimental control. Actually this will be the sum and substance of the Experiment since we do not need to make any further observations with the HCF introduced into the experimental control conditions. We have been doing this for thousands of years and we know what it looks like. We have accepted correlation.

What about confounding variables? Well, we need not concern ourselves too much with objective variables, that is, the conditions in the objective field of the experiment, because these will remain more or less constant in our control environment. Only the HCF will be removed. But what about subjective confounding variables? It is, after all, ourselves and our subjective appraisal of whether or not we are getting what we need that is being tested. Well, to some extent we can establish a kind of background noise baseline to our observations, the ups and down of our mental and physical experience, our tendency to feel grateful or deprived at different times and for different reasons, all that. In short we have to have a certain amount of self awareness and honesty if we are to make accurate observations about the actual effect, in terms of getting what we really need, of removing the HCF from our experience.

There are, however, two kinds of subjective variables that, if left unchecked, will render all observations in the Experimental field meaningless. As such, we will discuss them now in some detail.

The first critically confounding subjective variable is Desire. We need to know the difference between what we need and what we want. They are not the same thing, and depending how compulsive our habits are they can in fact be diametrically opposed. An alcoholic, for example, experiences his craving for alcohol as a need, but of course it isn't really a need. On the contrary, his actual *need* is to abstain from alcohol altogether, not to further indulge his self-destructive habit. The same could be said for a man addicted to smoking or womanising or drugs or over-eating. Such men would not be able to conduct the Experiment properly until they had purified themselves of their compulsiveness and removed the confounding effects of Desire. It is worth keeping in mind that the habits I have mentioned are really obvious forms of compulsive behaviour, while many other forms are not so obvious but nonetheless capable of confounding the Experiment. For example, the desire for acceptance and approval, or for affirmation of self image, are particularly compelling and common forms of psychological idolatry that can bind a man to a certain activity even in the absence of any other form of compensation. It stands to reason therefore that the man best equipped to achieve the clearest results from the Experiment is the one who through discipline, austerity, self-awareness and the grace of God has brought his desires into complete subjection.

The second critically confounding variable might be broadly referred to as psychological blocks and more specifically itemised as preconceptions, prejudice, psychological idolatry and self-deception. All of these must also be removed if the results of the Experiment are to be meaningful. To understand how these things can serve to confound our conclusions consider the following scenarios:

We set up our experimental control, that is, we resolve not to partake of any kind of trading of the activities of our bodies and/or minds, that is, the selling of our souls, so that we can observe what happens in terms of getting what we need. Now imagine that someone we know approaches us unexpectedly one day and offers us some money. Or alternatively we might ask someone for money. In order to maintain the integrity of the Experiment we may feel compelled to ask straightforwardly of the other what he requires from us in return for the money. (Presuming that the nature of the gift is not sufficiently implied tacitly.) If he gives some condition beyond what it takes to simply collect it, no matter how small or undemanding the condition, we are obliged to decline the offer. But if he says rather that the gift is an unconditional one, then given that we choose to accept the gift, we are equally obliged to do so exactly as he professes to give it – unconditionally. If we decline the unconditional offer then we may well be allowing some kind of non-objective psychological block to cloud the experimental field. Perhaps we think it inappropriate to accept things unconditionally, due to some kind of self image or psychological idol that is challenged or offended by such acceptance. Clearly, a man subject to such prejudices and idolatry cannot properly conduct the Experiment.

Alternatively, a man might accept an unconditional offer with his mouth, but understand tacitly with the “giver” that really “I owe you one”, so to speak, which means that he is deceiving himself about the nature of the gift he has received and is thus compromising the integrity of the Experiment, whether he is aware of it or not. This kind of misunderstanding happens a lot in the world and is the cause of much strife and unnecessary bondage. People say one thing to one another and mean something else entirely. Similarly a friend may say a gift is unconditional with his mouth, but in his heart expect your service in return; or to reply in kind. That's his problem, not yours. You can simply choose to overlook it and take him simply at his spoken word and the Experimental field remains thus uncompromised. On the other hand you may accept the gift unconditionally with your mouth, and even mean to do so really, but psychological habit compels you to become submissive to your friend until you feel you have paid what you can't help feeling is your debt to him. In this case the problem is yours and not your friend's and therefore must be sorted out by you before entering seriously into the field of the Experiment. In short, only a man who is determined that his 'Yes' be simply a 'Yes' and his 'No' simply a 'No', and who is further determined to accept the word

of others in exactly the same way regardless of any dissimulation they may be harbouring secretly within themselves, can conduct the Experiment meaningfully and successfully.

You may now understand why at the very beginning of this article I addressed myself so particularly to the young. You see, almost everyone thinks they already know the answer to the Question. Or perhaps they don't give it any thought, they simply obey. In any case almost everybody lives as if the answer to the Question is No. Now perhaps that is true and perhaps it is not, but they have no actual knowledge. It is at best a guess. And the problem is that once one begins down the path of service to money (and other forms of soul trading), it has a way of binding one to itself in ways, both physical and psychological, that make even the prospect of living any other way seem like the stuff of fantasy, or in any case undesirable, or too "risky". A self-reinforcing feedback loop ensues whereby belief in a certain answer to the Question brings about certain experiences which in turn seem to confirm the belief and so on. Therefore the time for conducting the Experiment is nearer the beginning of life when you are young and relatively independent and when you can perceive yourself as having little or nothing to lose; when your life, your mind and the way you perceive the world is still something of a blank slate, capable of receiving the new; not weighed down by the shackles of the old or psychologically crippling, conditioned assumptions about the consequence of choices outside the box.

Let's put the Question one final way. What if there is a law, a universal law, an irrefutable law that a man must get what he needs no matter what? And what if I spent my whole life a slave simply because I believed one middle man after another that insisted on getting between me and what I needed with a contract for my soul? My autonomy. Or perhaps it is I that insists on this state of affairs, which is worse. Or perhaps again this is only wishful thinking, the truth is I am a slave, and must always remain so until I die and perhaps beyond. But can I afford to go through my whole life not knowing the answer to the Question beyond guessing and wishing?

Once you have removed from your mind and body all those things that confound your ability to see things as they really are, you are ready to start making careful and objective observations in the real world. Such is the great Experiment. Obviously the longer you persevere at it the better your results will be; the more conclusive. But actually you will discover many things that go far beyond the scope of what you initially set out to find. For instance, you will also discover what living according to the knowledge you have acquired from conducting the Experiment actually *feels like*, and this is in itself a most significant revelation, because it will revolutionize everything within you. Your value system will be transformed by that feeling. As will it be further transformed by the experiences opened to you as a result of that transformed value system; extraordinary experiences that are closed to those whose world view is otherwise defined.

And at that time you will *know*. It won't be a mere guess, the yes of a dreamer or the no of a coward, you will *know*. And that knowledge will be the foundation on which you base your whole life; the foundation that gives it its very substance and quality; its value.

That knowledge will change everything.

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

- Mark 8: 36-37

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be

devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

- Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"

"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the pagans seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

- Matthew 6:26-33

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"Much of the literature on Hitler's Final Solution is worthless as scholarship. Indeed, the field of Holocaust studies is replete with nonsense if not sheer fraud."

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