# frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression represent a profound intersection of postcolonial theory and psychological analysis that has influenced contemporary understandings of both social domination and individual identity. This article explores Fanon's seminal contributions to the psychology of oppression, focusing on how colonialism and systemic subjugation affect the mental health and self-perception of the oppressed. By examining Fanon's key works, such as "Black Skin, White Masks" and "The Wretched of the Earth," we uncover the mechanisms through which psychological trauma is inflicted and internalized. The discussion also highlights Fanon's analysis of violence as a cathartic response to oppression, as well as the role of liberation in psychological recovery. This comprehensive overview will clarify the complex dynamics between power, identity, and resistance inherent in Fanon's thought. The article is structured to provide a detailed table of contents, offering readers a clear roadmap to navigate this critical subject.

- Frantz Fanon's Background and Intellectual Context
- The Psychological Impact of Colonial Oppression
- Mechanisms of Internalized Oppression
- Violence and Liberation in Fanon's Theory
- Legacy and Contemporary Relevance of Fanon's Psychology

# Frantz Fanon's Background and Intellectual Context

Frantz Fanon was a Martinican psychiatrist, philosopher, and revolutionary thinker whose work emerged during the tumultuous era of decolonization in the mid-20th century. His intellectual pursuits combined psychoanalysis, existentialism, and Marxist theory to critically examine the colonial condition. Fanon's professional experience as a psychiatrist treating patients affected by colonial rule deeply informed his psychological insights into oppression. His writings addressed not only the political and economic dimensions of colonialism but also the profound psychological wounds inflicted on colonized peoples. Understanding Fanon's background is essential to grasping the nuances of his analysis of the psychology of oppression, which remains influential in postcolonial studies and critical psychology.

# The Psychological Impact of Colonial Oppression

Colonial oppression exerts a devastating effect on the psyche of the colonized, a central theme in Fanon's work. He argued that colonialism is not merely a political or economic system but a psychological phenomenon that distorts identity and self-worth. The colonized subject often experiences

alienation, inferiority complexes, and fragmented self-identity due to the pervasive denigration by the colonial power. Fanon emphasized how the colonial environment imposes a dual consciousness where the oppressed simultaneously internalize the colonizer's negative perceptions and struggle to affirm their own humanity.

#### Alienation and Identity Crisis

One of the primary psychological consequences of oppression described by Fanon is alienation. The colonized individual feels estranged from their cultural roots and community, leading to a crisis of identity. This alienation manifests as a disconnection from one's heritage and an imposed adoption of the colonizer's values and language. Fanon noted that this results in psychological disorientation and a longing to be recognized as equal, which is persistently denied under colonial rule.

### Inferiority Complex and Self-Perception

Fanon explored how systemic racism and discrimination foster an inferiority complex among oppressed populations. The constant exposure to racial prejudice and social exclusion undermines self-confidence and self-esteem. This internalized inferiority is compounded by cultural imperialism, which valorizes the colonizer's culture while devaluing indigenous traditions. Fanon's analysis reveals how this psychological subjugation perpetuates the colonial order by weakening resistance from within.

### Mechanisms of Internalized Oppression

Internalized oppression represents a critical aspect of Fanon's psychological framework, describing how colonized individuals absorb and reproduce the oppressive narratives imposed by their colonizers. This process manifests in various behavioral and cognitive patterns that maintain the power imbalance. Fanon identified several mechanisms through which internalized oppression operates, contributing to the perpetuation of colonial domination.

### Language and Cultural Domination

Language serves as a powerful tool of control in colonial contexts, according to Fanon. The imposition of the colonizer's language erodes indigenous languages and cultural expressions, leading to cultural alienation. Mastery of the colonizer's language becomes a double-edged sword: it is necessary for social mobility but also a reminder of subjugation. This linguistic domination reinforces the psychological hierarchy between colonizer and colonized.

### Psychological Mimicry and Masking

Fanon described the tendency of oppressed individuals to mimic the colonizer's behaviors, values, and appearance as a strategy to gain acceptance or reduce discrimination. This mimicry often involves adopting a 'mask' that obscures authentic identity, resulting in internal conflict and

psychological distress. The phenomenon of masking reveals the deep impact of colonial power on the formation of selfhood within oppressed communities.

#### Social and Psychological Effects of Racism

Systemic racism embedded in colonial structures produces enduring psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, and a fragmented sense of self. Fanon highlighted how daily experiences of racial discrimination exacerbate feelings of powerlessness and social invisibility. These psychological scars hinder the development of collective consciousness necessary for effective resistance.

# Violence and Liberation in Fanon's Theory

Fanon's analysis of violence as a response to oppression remains one of his most provocative contributions to the psychology of liberation. He conceptualized violence not merely as physical confrontation but as a cathartic and transformative act that can restore dignity and agency to the oppressed.

#### The Role of Violence in Psychological Liberation

Fanon argued that colonial violence dehumanizes the oppressed, making violent resistance a necessary means of reclaiming humanity. The act of violence disrupts the colonial status quo and initiates a psychological breaking of chains that bind the oppressed to feelings of inferiority. This process facilitates the reconstruction of a liberated identity free from colonial domination.

# Critiques and Debates on Fanon's Advocacy of Violence

While Fanon's endorsement of violence has been influential, it has also sparked significant debate. Critics question the ethical implications and long-term consequences of violent resistance. Nevertheless, Fanon's psychological framing of violence as a tool for reclaiming subjectivity offers a nuanced understanding beyond simplistic interpretations of revolutionary violence.

# Nonviolent Alternatives and Psychological Resistance

Though Fanon prioritized violence in his analysis, his work also implicitly acknowledges other forms of psychological resistance, such as cultural reclamation and intellectual empowerment. These nonviolent strategies contribute to the decolonization of the mind and the restoration of selfworth among oppressed populations.

### Legacy and Contemporary Relevance of Fanon's

### Psychology

The enduring legacy of Frantz Fanon and the psychology of oppression is evident in contemporary scholarship across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. His insights continue to inform understandings of systemic racism, postcolonial identity, and social justice movements around the world.

# Influence on Postcolonial Theory and Critical Psychology

Fanon's interdisciplinary approach has shaped the trajectory of postcolonial theory by emphasizing the psychological dimensions of colonialism and resistance. His work laid the foundation for critical psychology perspectives that examine how social power structures impact mental health and identity formation.

#### Application in Modern Social Movements

Many contemporary social justice movements draw upon Fanon's analysis to articulate the psychological effects of oppression and the necessity of systemic change. His emphasis on mental emancipation complements political activism aimed at dismantling structural inequalities.

# Continuing Challenges in Addressing Psychological Oppression

Despite advances in awareness, the psychological consequences of oppression remain pervasive globally. Fanon's work encourages ongoing efforts to address internalized oppression and promote healing through cultural affirmation, education, and empowerment initiatives.

- Colonial trauma affects identity and mental health profoundly.
- Internalized oppression sustains systemic dominance through psychological means.
- Violence is framed as both a physical and psychological tool of liberation.
- Fanon's theory informs contemporary discussions on racism and decolonization.
- Healing from oppression requires multifaceted strategies including cultural revival and psychological empowerment.

### Frequently Asked Questions

# Who was Frantz Fanon and why is he significant in the study of oppression?

Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist, philosopher, and revolutionary writer from Martinique whose works critically examine the psychological effects of colonialism and oppression on both the oppressed and the oppressor. He is significant because he provided a foundational analysis of how colonial domination impacts identity, mental health, and liberation struggles.

# What is the main focus of Frantz Fanon's work on the psychology of oppression?

Fanon's work primarily focuses on how colonial oppression damages the self-esteem and identity of colonized people, creating a sense of inferiority and internalized racism. He explores the psychological trauma caused by systemic racism and the dynamics of violence in the struggle for liberation.

# How does Frantz Fanon describe the impact of colonialism on the colonized individual's psychology?

Fanon describes colonialism as a dehumanizing force that fractures the colonized individual's sense of self, leading to feelings of inferiority, alienation, and psychological conflict. He argues that the colonized person internalizes the oppressive values of the colonizer, which affects their mental health and social identity.

# What role does violence play in Fanon's theory of psychological liberation?

Fanon views violence as a cathartic and necessary means for the oppressed to reclaim their humanity and psychological freedom. He argues that violent uprising against colonial powers helps dismantle the internalized oppression and restores the colonized individual's sense of agency and self-worth.

# How does Frantz Fanon's work relate to modern discussions on systemic racism and mental health?

Fanon's insights into the psychological damage caused by systemic oppression remain relevant in contemporary discussions on racism and mental health. His analysis helps explain how structural inequalities contribute to ongoing trauma, identity crises, and mental health disparities among marginalized communities.

# Can Fanon's psychological theories of oppression be applied beyond colonial contexts?

Yes, Fanon's theories extend beyond colonial contexts to analyze various forms of systemic oppression, including racism, classism, and other social inequalities. His work provides a framework for understanding how power dynamics affect psychological well-being and the processes of resistance and healing in oppressed populations.

#### Additional Resources

- 1. Black Skin, White Masks
- Frantz Fanon's seminal work explores the psychological effects of colonialism on Black identity. He delves into the internalized racism and alienation experienced by colonized people, analyzing how oppression shapes self-perception. The book is a foundational text in postcolonial studies and critical psychology.
- 2. The Wretched of the Earth
- In this influential book, Fanon examines the dehumanizing impact of colonialism and the violence inherent in the struggle for liberation. He discusses the psychological trauma endured by the oppressed and the transformative potential of revolutionary action. It remains a critical text for understanding the nexus of psychology, politics, and liberation.
- 3. Colonialism and Its Psychopathology
  This collection of essays and lectures by Fanon addresses the mental health consequences of colonial domination. It highlights how systemic oppression leads to psychological distress and disorders among colonized populations. The book offers insight into the intersection of colonial history and clinical psychology.
- 4. Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression by Lewis R. Gordon Gordon provides an in-depth analysis of Fanon's contributions to understanding the psychology of colonized individuals. The book explores themes of identity, resistance, and liberation through a psychological lens, expanding on Fanon's original ideas. It's a valuable resource for scholars of psychology, philosophy, and postcolonial studies.
- 5. Decolonizing Psychology: Fanon's Legacy in Mental Health
  This volume discusses how Fanon's work challenges Western psychological
  paradigms and advocates for culturally sensitive approaches to mental health.
  It emphasizes the importance of recognizing historical and structural
  oppression in psychological practice. The book bridges Fanon's theories with
  contemporary mental health discourse.
- 6. The Psychology of Oppression: Fanon's Influence on Critical Theory
  This book traces the impact of Fanon's psychological insights on critical
  theory and social justice movements. It examines how oppression shapes
  consciousness and behavior, drawing from Fanon's analysis of colonialism. The
  author connects Fanon's work to broader discussions on power, identity, and
  resistance.
- 7. Mind in the Shadows: Frantz Fanon and the Trauma of Colonization Focusing on trauma theory, this book explores how Fanon articulated the psychological wounds inflicted by colonial violence. It addresses the long-term effects of oppression on mental health and collective memory. The text integrates Fanon's ideas with modern trauma studies.
- 8. Psychopolitics and Liberation: Fanon's Vision of Freedom
  This work investigates the relationship between psychological liberation and political emancipation in Fanon's thought. It explores how mental decolonization is essential for achieving true freedom from oppression. The book is a critical examination of Fanon's interdisciplinary approach.
- 9. Voices of the Oppressed: Fanon and the Dynamics of Psychological Resistance
  The book highlights how Fanon conceptualized resistance not only as political

action but also as a psychological process. It discusses the empowerment of the oppressed through reclaiming identity and agency. The text offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between psychology and social change.

# Frantz Fanon And The Psychology Of Oppression

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**frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression** Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, 2004-06-14 This is a biography of Frantz Fanon. It presents an absorbing and careful ac count of several impressive themes. First is the review and assessment of Fanon's life. Second is a theory of psychology, by the author, which will aug ment and prove useful to theorists and practitioners who focus on Third World people. And lastly there is a broad and systematic integration of many areas of scholarship including philosophy, anthropology, political science, history, so ciology, mythology, public health, and economics. Bulhan's writing is lucid, creative, and persuasive. It demonstrates that all these scholarly areas must be handled with erudition in order to build a baseline for understanding both Fanon and the psychology of oppression. Readers of Fanon will be familiar with the psychology of oppression which he presented so forcefully. How life events and experiences led to the formula tion of this psychology is the chief emphasis of the author. Yet the book also gives scintillating clinical proof that Fanon made many other significant con tributions to his field. He was an outstanding and dedicated physician as well as a philosopher and political activist.

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: Frantz Fanon's Psychotherapeutic Approaches to Clinical Work Lou Turner, Helen Neville, 2019-12-06 Recognizing Frantz Fanon's remarkable legacy to applied mental health and therapeutic practices which decolonize, humanize, and empower marginalized populations, this text serves as a timely call for research, education, and clinical work to establish and further develop Fanonian approaches and practices. As the first collection to focus on contemporary clinical applications of Fanon's research and practice, this volume adopts a transnational lens through which to capture the global reach of Fanon's work. Contributors from Africa, Australia, Europe, and North America offer nuanced insight into historical and theoretical methods, clinical case studies, and community-based innovations to place Fanon's research and practice in context. Organized into four key areas, including the Historical Significance of Fanon's Clinical Work; Theory and Fanonian Praxis; Psychotherapeutic and Community Applications; and Action Research, each section of the book reflects an impressive diversity of

practices around the world, and considers the role of political and socioeconomic context, structures of gender oppression, racial identities, and their intersection within those practices. A unique manifesto to the ground-breaking and immensely relevant work of Frantz Fanon, this book will be of great interest to graduate and post graduate students, researchers, academics and professionals in counselling psychology, mental health research, and psychotherapy.

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology Giovanni Stanghellini, Matthew Broome, Anthony Vincent Fernandez, Paolo Fusar-Poli, Andrea Raballo, René Rosfort, 2019-07-04 The field of phenomenological psychopathology (PP) is concerned with exploring and describing the individual experience of those suffering from mental disorders. Whilst there is often an understandable emphasis within psychiatry on diagnosis and treatment, the subjective experience of the individual is frequently overlooked. Yet a patient's own account of how their illness affects their thoughts, values, consciousness, and sense of self, can provide important insights into their condition - insights that can complement the more empirical findings from studies of brain function or behaviour. The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology is the first ever comprehensive review of the field. It considers the history of PP, its methodology, key concepts, and includes a section exploring individual experiences within schizophrenia, depression, borderline personality disorder, OCD, and phobia. In addition it includes chapters on some of the leading figures throughout the history of this field. Bringing together chapters from a global team of leading academics, researchers and practitioners, the book will be valuable for those within the fields of psychiatry, clinical psychology, and philosophy.

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frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: African Americans and HIV/AIDS Donna Hubbard McCree, PhD, MPH, RPh, Kenneth Terrill Jones, MSW, Ann O'Leary, PhD, 2010-09-14 Among U. S. racial and ethnic minority populations, African American communities are the most disproportionately impacted and affected by HIV/AIDS (CDC, 2009; CDC, 2008). The chapters in this

volume seek to explore factors that contribute to this disparity as well as methods for intervening and positively impacting the e- demic in the U. S. The book is divided into two sections. The first section includes chapters that explore specific contextual and structural factors related to HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention in African Americans. The second section is composed of chapters that address the latest in intervention strategies, including best-evidence and promising-evidence based behavioral interventions, program evaluation, cost effectiveness analyses and HIV testing and counseling. As background for the book, the Introduction provides a summary of the context and importance of other infectious disease rates, (i. e. , sexually transmitted diseases [STDs] and tubercu- sis), to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in African Americans and a brief introductory discussion on the major contextual factors related to the acquisition and transmission of STDs/HIV. Contextual Chapters Johnson & Dean author the first chapter in this section, which discusses the history and epidemiology of HIV/AIDS among African Americans. Specifically, this ch- ter provides a definition for and description of the US surveillance systems used to track HIV/AIDS and presents data on HIV or AIDS cases diagnosed between 2002 and 2006 and reported to CDC as of June 30, 2007.

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: The Postcolonial Unconscious Neil Lazarus, 2011-06-30 The Postcolonial Unconscious is a major attempt to reconstruct the whole field of postcolonial studies. In this magisterial and, at times, polemical study, Neil Lazarus argues that the key critical concepts that form the very foundation of the field need to be re-assessed and questioned. Drawing on a vast range of literary sources, Lazarus investigates works and authors from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Arab world, South, Southeast and East Asia, to reconsider them from a postcolonial perspective. Alongside this, he offers bold new readings of some of the most influential figures in the field: Fredric Jameson, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon. A tour de force of postcolonial studies, this book will set the agenda for the future, probing how the field has come to develop in the directions it has and why and how it can grow further.

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: Fanon's Dialectic of Experience Ato Sekyi-Otu, 2009-06-30 With the flowering of postcolonialism, we return to Frantz Fanon, a leading theorist of the struggle against colonialism. In this thorough reinterpretation of Fanon's texts, Ato Sekyi-Otu ensures that we return to him fully aware of the unsuspected formal complexity and substantive richness of his work. A Caribbean psychiatrist trained in France after World War II and an eloquent observer of the effects of French colonialism on its subjects from Algeria to Indochina, Fanon was a controversial figure--advocating national liberation and resistance to colonial power in his bestsellers, Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth. But the controversies attending his life--and death, which some ascribed to the CIA--are small in comparison to those surrounding his work. Where admirers and detractors alike have seen his ideas as an incoherent mixture of Existentialism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, Sekyi-Otu restores order to Fanon's oeuvre by reading it as one dramatic dialectical narrative. Fanon's Dialectic of Experience invites us to see Fanon as a dramatist enacting a movement of experience--the drama of social agents in the colonial context and its aftermath--in a manner idiosyncratically patterned on the narrative structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. By recognizing the centrality of experience to Fanon's work, Sekyi-Otu allows us to comprehend this much misunderstood figure within the tradition of political philosophy from Aristotle to Arendt. Reviews of this book: The goal of this often brilliant and always engaging book is to 'read Fanon's texts as though they formed one dramatic dialectical narrative'; the principal subject of this dramatic narrative, according to Sekyi-Otu, is 'political experience'. It is his deployment of a dialectical analysis of Fanon's 'dramatic personae' that permits Sekvi-Otu's fresh and insightful readings to take place. DD--Anthony C. Alessandrini, Minnesota Review Ato Sekyi-Otu departs from the postmodernist paradigm and ushers in an alternative hermeneutic that primarily considers Fanon's texts as forming 'one dramatic dialectical narrative,' that is a narrative whose complexity is correlative of the intricate configurations of African social experience during the post-independent era...[His] book is an invaluable contribution that offers broader scope for a new appreciation of Fanon's political thinking. DD--Marc Mve Bekale, Revue AFRAM Review [UK]

[I]mportant...The author succeeds in...revealing the complexity and nuanced character of Fanon's thought. DD--Choice Those who would dismiss or exult Fanon as the high priest of revolutionary violence will be chastened by this patient and completely convincing exposition of his work. Sekyi-Otu produces a reflexive, 'Gramscian' Fanon who, working as a 'detective of the politics of truth,' has produced insights that need to be taken over into the core of democratic political thought. DD--Paul Gilroy, University of London

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: What Fanon Said Lewis R. Gordon, 2015-04-01 Antiblack racism avows reason is white while emotion, and thus supposedly unreason, is black. Challenging academic adherence to this notion, Lewis R. Gordon offers a portrait of Martinican-turned-Algerian revolutionary psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon as an exemplar of "living thought" against forms of reason marked by colonialism and racism. Working from his own translations of the original French texts, Gordon critically engages everything in Fanon from dialectics, ethics, existentialism, and humanism to philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, and political theory as well as psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Gordon takes into account scholars from across the Global South to address controversies around Fanon's writings on gender and sexuality as well as political violence and the social underclass. In doing so, he confronts the replication of a colonial and racist geography of reason, allowing theorists from the Global South to emerge as interlocutors alongside northern ones in a move that exemplifies what, Gordon argues, Fanon represented in his plea to establish newer and healthier human relationships beyond colonial paradigms.

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how to integrate knowledge with action, how to collaborate with co-researchers in the field, and how to present the necessarily 'messy' components in a coherent fashion. The organization of the volume reflects the many different issues and levels of analysis represented. This volume is an essential resource for scholars and professionals engaged in social and political inquiry, organizational research and education.

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frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: Encyclopedia of Primary Prevention and Health Promotion Thomas P. Gullotta, Martin Bloom, 2003-01-31 Foundational topics such as history, ethics, and principles of primary prevention, as well as specific issues such as consultation, political issues, and financing. The second section addresses such topics as abuse, depression, eating disorders, HIV/AIDS, injuries, and religion and spirituality often dividing such topics into separate entries addressing childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

frantz fanon and the psychology of oppression: The Bloomsbury Guide to Philosophy of Disability Shelley Lynn Tremain, 2023-11-16 The Bloomsbury Guide to Philosophy of Disability is a revolutionary collection encompassing the most innovative and insurgent work in philosophy of disability. Edited and anthologized by disabled philosopher Shelley Lynn Tremain, this book challenges how disability has historically been represented and understood in philosophy: it critically undermines the detrimental assumptions that various subfields of philosophy produce; resists the institutionalized ableism of academia to which these assumptions contribute; and boldly articulates new anti-ableist, anti-sexist, anti-racist, queer, anti-capitalist, anti-carceral, and decolonial insights and perspectives that counter these assumptions. This rebellious and groundbreaking book's chapters-most of which have been written by disabled philosophers-are wide-ranging in scope and invite a broad readership. The chapters underscore the eugenic impetus at the heart of bioethics; talk back to the whiteness of work on philosophy and disability with which philosophy of disability is often conflated; and elaborate phenomenological, poststructuralist, and materialist approaches to a variety of phenomena. Topics addressed in the book include: ableism and speciesism; disability, race, and algorithms; race, disability, and reproductive technologies; disability and music; disabled and trans identities and emotions; the apparatus of addiction; and disability, race, and risk. With cutting-edge analyses and engaging prose, the authors of this guide contest the assumptions of Western disability studies through the lens of African philosophy of disability and the developing framework of crip Filipino philosophy; articulate the political and conceptual limits of common constructions of inclusion and accessibility; and foreground the practices of epistemic injustice that neurominoritized people routinely confront in philosophy and society more broadly. A crucial guide to oppositional thinking from an international, intersectional, and inclusive collection of philosophers, this book will advance the emerging field of philosophy of disability and serve as an antidote to the historical exclusion of disabled philosophers from the discipline and profession of philosophy. The Bloomsbury Guide to Philosophy of Disability is essential reading for faculty and students in philosophy, disability studies, political theory, Africana studies, Latinx studies, women's and gender studies, LGBTQ studies, and cultural studies, as well as activists, cultural workers, policymakers, and everyone else concerned with matters of social justice. Description of the book's cover: The book's title appears on two lines across the top of the cover which is a salmon tone. The names of the editor and the author of the foreword appear in white letters at the bottom of the book. The publisher's name is printed along the right side in white letters. At the centre, a vertical white rectangle is the background for a sculpture by fibre artist Judith Scott. The sculpture combines layers of shiny yarn in various colours including orange, pink, brown, and rust woven vertically on a large cylinder and horizontally around a smaller cylinder, as well as blue varn woven around a

protruding piece at the bottom of the sculpture. The sculpture seems to represent a body and head of a being sitting down, a being with one appendage, a fat person, or a little person.

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