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The theory and historical development of expletives
RUB, June 10th, 2022

Another adverbial expletive in German?



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1. Introduction

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b. *Kommt Karl, so gehe ich.*
comes Karl so go I
'If Karl comes, (then) I'll go.'
(Eisenberg 1986: 355)

also cf. e.g. Redder (1987), Pasch et al. (2003: 2061), d'Avis (2004), Götz (2018)

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c. *Ich steh so eher auf KUNST.*
I stand so rather on art
'I prefer ART.'
(adapted from: Wiese 2011: 1004)

- d. *Ich habe Schneider gelernt. Doch Schneider verdienen
I have tailor learnt but tailors earn
nichts, und **so** habe ich es wieder aufgegeben.
nothing and so have I it again abandoned
'I learnt to be a tailor. But tailors earn very little money, so I gave it up.'*
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e. ***SO**, jetzt stellen wir das mal eben zur Seite.
so now set we that PRT PRT to-the side
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(Imo 2012: 54)

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f. *Wer war **so** auf der Party?
who was so at the party*
'Who attended the party?'
(Roguska 2007: 155)

In this talk:

(2) **Context:**

Viele Arztserien präsentieren ihren Zuschauern gut aussehende, dynamische Ärzte, die mit rührenden Patientengesprächen und spektakulären Not-Operationen eine Glanzleistung nach der anderen vollbringen. Doch die Wirklichkeit in den Krankenhäusern und Praxen sieht ganz anders aus. Allerdings scheint sich mancher Fan des ruppigen Dr. House oder der hübschen Dr. Grey dieser Tatsache nicht bewusst zu sein.

‘Most medical series present good-looking, dynamic doctors lining up great achievements between touching dialogues and spectacular emergency operations. But things are not like that in real hospitals and medical practices. Many of grouchy Dr. House’s or pretty Dr. Grey’s fans do not seem to be aware of that.’

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Sentence:

So ergab eine aktuelle Untersuchung ... Folgendes: Bei einem eigenen Klinikaufenthalt
so found a recent study following in a one’s hospitalization
stellen Vielseher von Arztserien zu hohe Ansprüche an ihre Ärzte.
put „much-watchers“ of doctor-series too high expectations on their doctors

‘When hospitalized, frequent watchers of medical series have too high expectations of their doctors.’

(welt.de, Feb. 24th, 2009)

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PROPOSAL

- ‘this’ so is **not a regular adverb** and does not fall into any of the categories shown above
- it behaves like (is?) an **expletive** in Present-Day German
- it is a **grammaticalized** element with a modal-adverbial origin

2. Distributional properties

- This element is stylistically marked
- It typically occurs in scientific and journalistic prose (conceptual scripturality in Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985, 1994) sense)
- It does not seem to be productively used in spontaneous / colloquial speech

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CORPUS STUDY: spoken usage

- DGD, *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch*
https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de/dgd/pragdb.dgd_extern.welcome
- first 100 transcripts in the subcorpus „*Deutsch heute*“
- all occurrences of the lexical item „*so*“
(tot: 13,700 occurrences)
- average of 137 occurrences of *so* in each transcript
- standard-oriented language corpus
- **0 OCCURRENCES**



2. Distributional properties



CORPUS STUDY: written language

- DeReKo (*Das Deutsche Referenzkorpus*)
(<https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2-web/>)
- subcorpora: *Welt Online* (news portal) and *Wikipedia* (scientific texts)
- all occurrences of the lexical item „so“
- first 10,000 results in each corpus

	<i>Welt Online</i>	<i>Wikipedia</i>
Tot. clauses in the corpus	10,000	10,000
Tot. target-so in the corpus	1305 (13.05%)	2475 (24.75%)
target-so / so (independent element)	1305/3759 (34.72%)	2475/3808 (64.99%)
target-so / so (independent <i>Vorfeld</i> element)	1305/2134 (61.15%)	2475/3785 (65.39%)

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(3) Context:

Für viele Tiere ist Arsen ein essentielles Spurenelement.
'Arsenic is an essential trace element for many animals.'

Sentence:

So zeigen Hühner oder Ratten bei arsenfreier Ernährung deutliche Wachstumsstörungen.
so show chickens or rats with arsenic-free food clear growth-disorders
'Chickens or rats, for instance, show marked growth disorders in arsenic-free diets.'
(Wikipedia, "Arsen")

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(4) ***Und so** zeigen Hühner ... bei arsenfreier Ernährung deutliche Wachstumsstörungen.

(5) ***Nur/auch/... so** zeigen Hühner ... bei arsenfreier Ernährung deutliche Wachstumsstörungen.

(6) ***So nämlich** zeigen Hühner ... bei arsenfreier Ernährung deutliche Wachstumsstörungen.

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- It can ONLY appear in the prefield (i.e. only in main clauses): any other position forces an interpretation as one of the other so items illustrated above:

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(= modal-adverbial or similar interpretation)

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- **exemplificative** / **explanatory** function which requires background information (no out-of-the-blue utterance), but *so* does not seem to bear any identifiable semantic content:

- (8) ***So** zeigen **z.B.** Hühner ... bei arsenfreier Ernährung deutliche Wachstumsstörungen.*
so show e.g. chickens with arsenic-free food clear growth-disorders

‘Chickens or rats, for instance, show marked growth disorders in arsenic-free diets.’

- (9) ***Z.B.** zeigen (***so**) Hühner ... bei arsenfreier Ernährung deutliche Wachstumsstörungen.*
e.g. show so chickens with arsenic-free food clear growth-disorders

DISTRIBUTION:

- (- genre-specific)
- non-omissible (where present)
- part of the computation
- not endowed with an independent lexical-semantic content

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(10) Context:

Die außerordentliche Bekanntheit der Legendengestalt Alexander hielt auch in der Frühen Neuzeit an.

‘Alexander the Great’s extraordinary fame continued in the early modern period.’

Sentence:

So *schrieb der Chronist Johannes Aventinus, es sei „kein Herr ...*
so wrote the chronicle Johannes Aventin it is no man
so bekannt“ wie Alexander.

so well-known as Alexander

‘The chronicler Johannes Aventin, for instance, wrote that “no man” was “as well-known” as Alexander.’

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3. Referential properties

- so as a deictic adverb that takes up the reference of the whole assertion made in the previous sentence?

→ Why, then, should it be an immovable element?

(11) demonstrative-pronominal anaphor

Das ist die Wahrheit, das schwöre ich / ich schwöre das!

this is the truth that swear I I swear that

‘This is the truth, I swear!’

(version with middle-field *das*: *Die Traumfänger II*, p. 109)

(12) adverbial anaphor

Für die CDU Sachsen-Anhalt ist der Abschuss von Wölfen das drängende Thema

for the CDU Sachsen-Anhalt is the shooting of wolves the urgent topic

in den Sondierungsgesprächen. Da kann man nur staunen / Man kann da nur staunen.

in the exploratory-talks there can one only marvel one can there only marvel

‘For the CDU in Sachsen-Anhalt, the shooting of wolves is an urgent issue to discuss during the exploratory negotiations. This is astonishing.’

(version with middle-field *da*: *Twitter*, 2017)

3. Referential properties

- The clause introduced by “this” so can contain an explicit expression resuming the entire context preceding the clause it introduces. This excludes that it might be so that does this job in the relevant structure:

(13) Context:

Möglich wäre, dass sich für diese Form der Interpretationen eine Art von Basiserzählung finden ließe ... Als Beispiel dafür könnte unter Umständen das einflussreiche Konzept des so genannten „soziologischen Rechtsextremismus“ von Wilhelm Heitmeyer gelten ...

‘It cannot be ruled out that some core-story might be found for this interpretative form ... Under specific circumstances, the prolific notion of Wilhelm Heitmeyer’s so-called “sociological right-wing extremism” could be an example of it.’

Sentence:

So kann **in Bezug darauf** gesagt werden: „Die Thesen Wilhelm Heitmeyers ...
so can in relation to-this said be the theses Wilhelm Heitmeyer’s
prägen weiterhin die Diskussion über pädagogische Gegenstrategien.“
shape further the discussion about pedagogical counter-strategies

‘With respect to this, it can be said: “Wilhelm Heitmeyer’s theses continue to shape the discussion around pedagogical counter-strategies.”’

(Stefan Dierbach (2014), *Jung – rechts – unpolitisch?* [pedagogical text])

4. Another adverbial expletive?

- “This” *so* is an adverbial expletive (so_{expl}), but it is different from Engl. *there* / Germ. *da*.
- Question of the interpretation and/or discourse function of *so* (cf. e.g. Sabel 2000, Hartmann 2008, Biberauer & van der Wal 2014, Hinterhölzl 2019 for other adverbial expletives).

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(14) **Context:**

‘Alfred Hitchcock allowed actors who shared his ideas freedoms that other actors did not enjoy.’

Sentence:

So durfte Joseph Cotten seine Garderobe für Im Schatten des Zweifels selbst aussuchen
so could Joseph Cotten his wardrobe for im Schatten des Zweifels himself choose
und Marlene Dietrich in Die rote Lola sogar dem Kameramann Anweisungen geben.
and Marlene Dietrich in die rote Lola even the cameraman instructions give
‘Joseph Cotton was allowed to choose his clothes for Shadow of a doubt and Marlene
Dietrich to give instructions to the cameraman.’

(adapted from: *Wikipedia*, “Alfred Hitchcock”)

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(14) Context:

‘Alfred Hitchcock allowed actors who shared his ideas freedoms that other actors did not enjoy.’

Sentence:

So durfte Joseph Cotten seine Garderobe für Im Schatten des Zweifels *selbst aussuchen* und Marlene Dietrich in *Die rote Lola* sogar dem Kameramann Anweisungen geben.

‘Joseph Cotton was allowed to choose his clothes for Shadow of a doubt and Marlene Dietrich to give instructions to the cameraman.’

- It is not so_{expl} itself that is “explicative”, but rather the sentence that it introduces.
- *So* is inserted in Spec,CP in order “compress” the content of a new-information utterance relevant to the explanation/exemplification of the previous context into the middle field ‘as a block’ (preferred strategy).

(15) [*Joseph Cotton*]_i durfte t_i seine Garderobe ... *selbst aussuchen* ...

→ also OK, but not the optimal structure in this context

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‘Alfred Hitchcock allowed actors who shared his ideas freedoms that other actors did not enjoy.’

Sentence:

- a. [CP [C [TP/VP *Joseph Cotten seine Garderobe selbst aussuchen dürfen*]]
- b. [CP [C **durfte** [TP/VP *Joseph Cotten seine Garderobe selbst aussuchen **dürfen***]]
- c. [CP **so**_{expl} [C **durfte** [TP/VP *Joseph Cotten seine Garderobe selbst aussuchen*]]



EPP(-like) feature

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- c. [CP **so**_{expl} [C **durfte** [TP/VP *Joseph Cotten seine Garderobe selbst aussuchen*]]



EPP(-like) feature

- Since the compression of the all-new information into the middle field would otherwise result in a structure where Spec,CP is empty: merger of *so*_{expl} into Spec,CP!
- Satisfaction of the/an EPP(-like) feature in C

4. Another adverbial expletive?

- Anchoring function (cf. Hinterhölzl (2019: 222 ff.) for *there / da*)
- “Presentational expletives flag up a forthcoming informationally new **element**” (Biberauer & van der Wal (2016: 2))
- *So*_{expl} signals the presence of a forthcoming informationally new **situation**

(15) Context: ‘Expletives are generally claimed to be non-referential.’

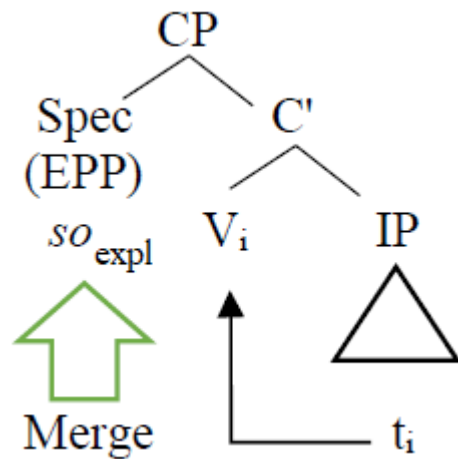
- a. *There* is, however, a new study by Smith (2022) showing that ... [referent]
- b. *So* zeigt eine neue Studie von Smith (2022), dass ... [situation]
so shows a new study by Smith (2002) that
‘A new study by Smith (2022), for instance, shows that ...’

5. The origin of so_{expl}

- The fact that so_{expl} is primarily situation-related is intimately correlated to its form.
- The position of this element does not result from movement in Present-Day German. It is inserted directly into the left-peripheral specifier in which it appears (Spec,CP/FinP).
- proposal: **Genesis: $so_{mod} \rightarrow so_{expl}$ (reanalysis of so_{mod} due to frequency of the pattern)**

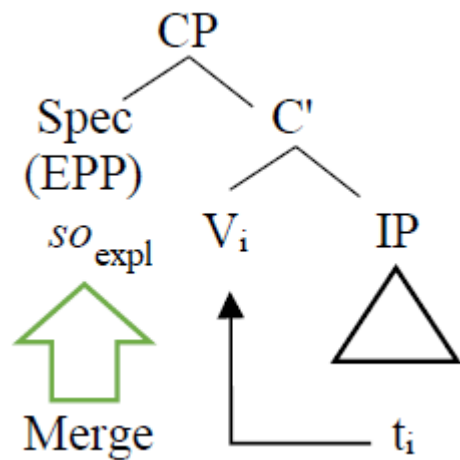
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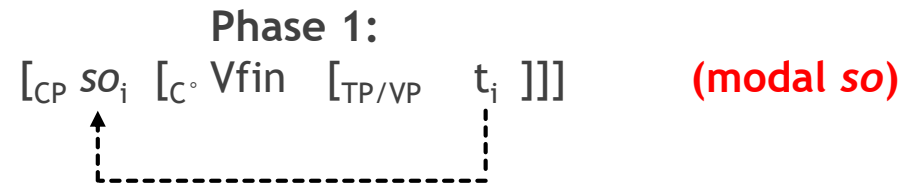


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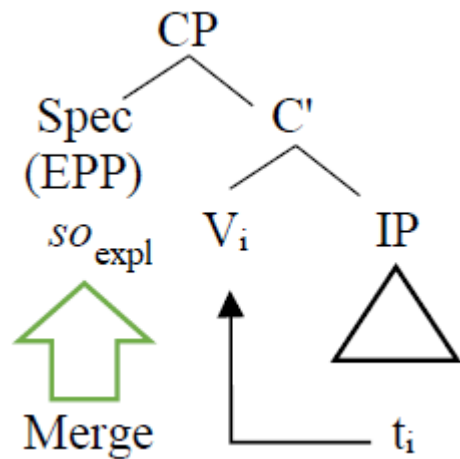


Development

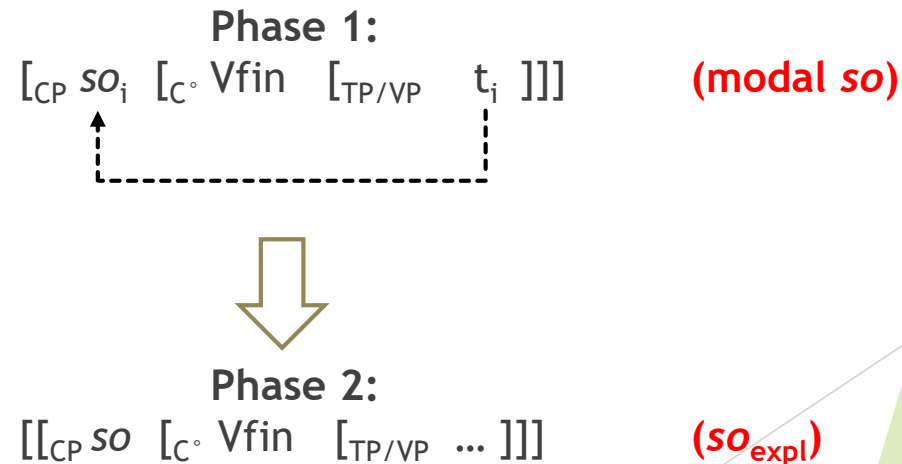


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Development



5. The origin of so_{expl}

- Potentially ambiguous contexts that may have contributed to the grammaticalization of so_{expl} are extensively attested also in Present-Day German.
- **rebus sic stantibus-interpretation** → so_{expl}

(16) Context:

Fortlaufende Messungen erlauben sowohl Rückschlüsse bezüglich Höhe und zeitlichen Antritts der Konzentrationsmaxima als auch bezüglich der Ausscheidungszeiten.

‘Continuous measurements allow insights both into height and appearance of concentration maxima and into (the corresponding) expulsion times.’

Sentence:

So konnte festgestellt werden, daß die Werte bei Penicillin G höher
so could determined be that the values with Penicillin G higher
liegen als bei Penicillin V.
lie than with Penicillin V

‘**This way**_(so=modal) // **for instance**_(so=expl), it could be established that the values with Penicillin G are higher than with Penicillin V.’

5. The origin of so_{expl}

▪ DIACHRONIC STUDY:

- so_{mod} and so_{expl} have the same (debated) etymological origin (DWDS).
- Expectedly, the diachronic data reveal that they have not emerged simultaneously in the grammar / lexicon of German.
- A study of the distribution and function(s) of so in the four major existing corpora of Historical German:

Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch for Old High German (750-1050) (via ANNIS)
(lemma="so" & pos="ADV" & pos="VXFIN" & #1_i_#2 & #1.#3) **[588 sentences]**

Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch for Middle High German (1050-1350) (via ANNIS)
(lemma="sô" & pos="AVD" & pos="VXFIN" & #1_i_#2 & #1.#3) **[7163 sentences]**

Referenzkorpus Frühneuhochdeutsch for Early New High German (1350-1650) (via ANNIS)
(lemma="so" & pos="AVD" & pos="VXFIN" & #1_i_#2 & #1.#3) **[9660 sentences]**

Deutsches Textarchiv for (Early) New High German (approx. 1600-1900)
(manual extraction of all so -occurrences) **[ongoing, approximately 3500 sentences]**

5. The origin of *so*_{expl}

- *So*_{mod} is productive already in Old High German:

(17) a. PREDICATIVE USE

So *ist* *ther* *héilego* *géist*
so is the holy ghost
'The holy ghost is just so.'
(*Otfrid*, 25, 28)

b. CATAPHORIC USE

So *quidu* *ih* *íu:* *giueho* *ist* *in* *himile* ...
so speak I you joy is in heaven
'I say to you: "Joy is in heaven ..."'
Ita dico vobis
(*Tatian* 139: 96, 6)

5. The origin of *so_{expl}*

- Oldest non-ambiguous attestation of *so_{expl}* in this corpus: late Early New High German:

(18) Context:

Vnfer Gott im Himmel kan thun was Er wil/ im Himmel vnd auff Erden/ im Meer vnd in allen Tieffen ...

‘Our God in heaven can do whatever he wants, in heaven and on earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps.’

Sentence:

*So haben wir vns auch hiebey zuerinnern/ das wir in Gottes Wort
so have we REFL also at-this to-remind that we in God’s word
zweyerley Meer haben: Ein Angftmeer ... vnd ein Gnadenmeer.
two-types sea have a fear-sea and a mercy-sea*

‘We should remember that there are two types of sea in God’s word: a sea of fear and a sea of mercy.’

(Johann Arndt: *Vom wahren Christenthumb*, 168 (1610))

- From New High German onwards: productive

5. The origin of *so*_{expl}

(19) Context:

Es ist gut, selbst die uns unangenehme und in befondern Beziehungen zweckwidrige Dinge auch von dieser Seite zu betrachten.

‘It is helpful to consider, from this point of view, even things that we find disagreeable and contrapurposeful in particular respects.’

Sentence:

So könnte man z.B. sagen: das Ungeziefer, welches die Menschen in ihren
so could one e.g. say the vermin which the people in their
Kleidern, Haaren, oder Bettstellen plagt, ... sei ein Antrieb zur Reinlichkeit ...
clothes hair or beds plagues is an incentive to-the neatness

‘For example, we might say that the vermin that plague people in their clothes, hair, or beds are ... an incentive to keep clean.’

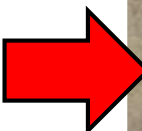
(Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, §67 [translation: W. Pluhar], 1790)

5. The origin of so_{expl}

zu zulassen/nur nicht zu viel. Krebse sind
gesund/aber Mustern/Schnecken / Mus-
scheln und dergleichen/machen ein schlei-
michtes faules Geblüt/daher fällt man-
cher in ein gefährlich langwieriges Stie-
ber/und solchen Lecker Mäulern geschieht
auch recht.

Das VII. Capitel.

Von Eyern.



Sind auch eine gute Studen-
ten Speis die weichen Eyer/
welche dem schwachen Magen
nicht viel zuthun machen und gute Nah-
rung geben. Ein weiches frisches Ey/
macht so viel Blut als es wäget. Un:

'Crabs are healthy, but snails, oysters and mussels make your blood slimy and rotten. Some people suffer from a dangerously prolonged fever after eating these foods - and it serves those gluttons right.'

SO find auch eine gute Studen-
ten Speis die weichen Eyer/
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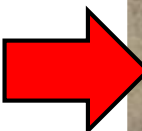
'Soft-boiled eggs are also healthy food for students: they do not disturb sensitive stomachs and provide good nourishment.'

5. The origin of *so*_{expl}

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'Soft-boiled eggs are also healthy food for students: they do not disturb sensitive stomachs and provide good nourishment.'

6. Conclusions

- so_{expl} seems to be compatible with a categorization as an expletive:
 - it is devoid of a lexical meaning
 - it occupies the prefield and is non-omissible
 - it only surfaces in main clauses
 - it is not (or non-canonically) deictic
- Suggestion: its functions (introducing an all-new utterance with an explanatory statement and anchoring the corresponding clause in the context) are *per se* not at odds with the class of expletives: so_{expl} is inserted in Spec,CP to satisfy the EPP principle
- Derivation: *What you (don't) see is what you (don't) get*:
 - no movement
 - base-generation site in Spec,CP
- Adverbial origin: $so_{\text{mod}} \rightarrow so_{\text{expl}}$

Thank you!



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