

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

This material has been reproduced and communicated to you by or on behalf of the University of New England pursuant to Part VB of the *Copyright Act 1968* (**the Act**).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further reproduction or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

Reproduced by permission of Sage Publications (www.sagepub.co.uk), Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi, from Jaan Valsiner (ed.), *Culture and Psychology*.

Wierzbicka, Anna. 1998. "Angst". *Culture and Psychology* 4(2): 161-188.

ANGST

Anna Wierzbicka

Australian National University

ABSTRACT

The author examines the meaning, and the cultural history, of the German word Angst (roughly a cross between 'anxiety' and 'fear' but with a touch of mystery or existential insecurity), which is much more common, and culturally more salient, than the word Furcht (roughly, 'fear'). She shows that from a German point of view "Angst" seems a far more "basic" emotion than "fear", and she investigates the possible roots of the concept of 'Angst' in Luther's language, Luther's inner struggles, and Luther's theology. The author seeks to demonstrate that by studying the semantic system of a language in a rigorous way and in a coherent methodological framework, one can both reveal and document the cultural underpinnings of emotions — even the most elusive and unfathomable ones such as Angst.

Key words: cultural psychology, "basic emotions", social construction of emotions, linguistic construction of reality, German culture.

1. Introduction: emotions, words, and cultures.

More than half a century ago Edward Sapir (1949(1921):27) wrote:

Languages differ widely in the nature of their vocabularies. Distinctions which seem inevitable to us may be utterly ignored in languages which reflect an entirely different type of culture, while these in turn insist on distinctions which are all but unintelligible to us.

Such differences of vocabulary go far beyond the natures of cultural objects such as arrow point, coat of armor, or gunboat. They apply just as well to the mental world. (27).

The field of emotions well illustrates the trap involved in the attempt to reach for human universals on the basis of one's native language alone. A typical scenario (where "P" stands for "psychologist" and "L" for "linguist") runs as follows:

P: Fear and anger are universal human emotions.

L: Fear and anger are English words, which don't have equivalents in all other languages. Why should these English words — rather than some words from language X, for which English has no equivalents — capture correctly some emotional universals?

P: It doesn't matter whether other languages have words for fear and anger or not. Let's not deify words! I am talking about emotions, not about words.

L: Yes, but in talking about these emotions you are using culture-specific English words, and thus you are introducing an Anglo perspective on emotions into your discussion.

P: I don't think so. I am sure that people in those other cultures also experience fear and anger, even if they don't have words for them.

L: Maybe they do experience fear and anger, but their categorization of emotions is different from that reflected in the English lexicon. Why should the English taxonomy of emotions be a better guide to emotional universals than that embodied in some other language?

P: Let's not exaggerate the importance of language.

Unfortunately, by refusing to pay attention to words, and to semantic differences

between words from different languages, scholars who take this position end up doing precisely what they wished to avoid, that is, "deifying" some words from their own native language and reifying concepts which are often concepts encapsulated in them — culture-specific. Thus, unwittingly, they illustrate once again how powerful the grip of our native language on our thinking habits can be.

Languages of course are heterogeneous (to a varying degree) and lack fixed contours, but this doesn't mean that they are total fictions, and it is in a clash with another language that the distinctness of a language (as a separate identity) reveals itself, and what applies to languages applies also to cultures.

The term culture is used by different writers in different senses, and before anything is affirmed about "cultures" it is good to clarify in what sense one is using this term. For my part, I find particularly fruitful the definition proposed by Clifford Geertz (1973): "(...) the culture concept to which I adhere (...) denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (89).

Language — and in particular, vocabulary — is the best evidence of the reality of "culture," in the sense of a historically transmitted system of "conceptions" and "attitudes." Of course, culture is, in principle, heterogeneous and changeable, but so is language.

It is an illusion to think that we will better understand cultures if we reject Sapir's fundamental insight that "vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people." On the contrary. We will better understand cultures if we try to build on this insight and to learn to study vocabulary more deeply, more rigorously, and in a broader theoretical perspective.

2. 'Angst' as a peculiarly German concept

"Angst" is a peculiarly German concept. The fact that this word has been borrowed and is used in English for a different range of situations, highlights the sui generis meaning of the German Angst. Consider for example the following sentence from an English novel:

...community was replaced by the fleeting, passing contacts of city life; people came into the university, and disappeared; psychiatric

social workers were appointed, to lead them through the recesses of their angst. (Bradbury 1975:64)

As this example illustrates, angst in English suggests an existential condition which seems to have to do with a long-term state of deep-seated anxiety and alienation rather than with what is normally called fear. The German word closest to the English fear is not Angst but Furcht; and it is noteworthy that it was not Furcht but Angst, with its very distinct semantics and its great salience in German culture, that was felt to be needed as a useful loanword.

As is often the case with loanwords, however, the English word angst does not mean exactly the same as its German source, but reflects those aspects of the meaning of the German Angst which are particularly striking from an Anglo point of view: its indeterminacy and its "existential nature". In German, one can speak of "Existenzangst" (cf. e.g. Jaeger 1971:26) or of the "existentielle Angst" (cf. e.g. Nuss 1993:189) and "existenzielle Ängste" (plural; see e.g. Langenscheidt's Grosswörterbuch 1993:308). In English, the loan word angst seems to have absorbed the meaning of these collocations, and seems to refer inherently to an "existential Angst" ("existentielle Angst") rather than to Angst as such. English angst reflects the links between the German Angst in general and existential insecurities and concerns — links extensively explored by German philosophers, and in particular, by Martin Heidegger.

Let us begin by comparing the use of Angst and Furcht. First of all, in German speech, Angst, in contrast to Furcht, is a very common word. According to a frequency dictionary of spoken German (Ruoff, 1981), Angst occurs 52 times in a corpus of half a million running words, whereas the verb (sich) fürchten occurs only 4 times, and the noun Furcht does not occur at all.

The main semantic difference between Angst and Furcht has undoubtedly to do with the basic "indeterminacy" of Angst, reflected in the fact that one can say Ich habe Angst, 'I have Angst', without having to specify the reasons for that Angst, whereas one cannot normally say Ich fürchte mich (roughly 'I am afraid') without specifying what one is afraid of. In English the sentence "I am afraid", without a complement, is not

unacceptable, but it sounds elliptical, and it invites the question "What are you afraid of?" But the German sentence Ich habe Angst does not sound elliptical at all, rather like the English sentence I am depressed. Of course a person's depression has some reasons, but the sentence I am depressed is perfectly self-contained semantically, without any further expansion.

Angst, one can say, is a "state", like depression, and the compound word Angstzustand, 'a state of Angst', is commonly listed in German dictionaries. Fear, on the other hand (or being afraid), is not a "state", it is either a feeling, or a disposition to a feeling, linked with a thought about someone or something.

According to Bernard Nuss (1993:193) a state of "Angst" was wide-spread in Germany in the seventies: "It was an epoch when millions of Germans would say simply "Ich habe Angst", without even trying to specify the nature and cause of this Angst."

The key elements suggested by Nuss' (1993) analysis of Angst have to do with the unknown (das Unbekannte) and with the ubiquity and inescapability of (undefined and obscure) danger. Using the metalanguage of universal semantic primitives¹, we could represent these elements in the form of the following prototypical thoughts:

I don't know what will happen

bad things can always happen to me

The key elements in Heidegger's (1953) theory of Angst are the "Unbestimmtheit" of the Bedrohung" (that is, the "indeterminacy" of the "potential dangers"), and the independence of the state of "Angst" of anything that may actually happen: it is not the thought of any specific events (real or potential) which causes the state of "Angst", but the very nature of the human condition, the very fact of human existence "in the world".

If we wanted to translate Heidegger's ideas into the language of universal semantic primitives we could say, once again, that the underlying hidden thought on which "Angst" is based is this: 'bad things can always happen to me'. It is not the thought of some particular "bad things" which causes "Angst" but the deep-rooted sense that "bad things can always happen to me" (for they are inherent to "being-in-the-world"). What

these things are is unknown and unknowable ("unbestimmt"). Heidegger's notion that the human existential condition consists in a "Un-zuhause-sein", a 'not-being-at-home', can be loosely paraphrased by saying that the world is not a safe place and not a predictable, familiar place. This again can be reduced to the two semantic components suggested above.

Of course Heidegger's philosophical speculations were aimed at the "phenomenon of Angst" rather than at the German word Angst as such. It seems clear, however, that in his analysis Heidegger was guided, to some extent, by the meaning of the German word Angst, and by the German lexical distinction between Angst and Furcht.

But to what extent do Heidegger's (and other German thinkers') speculations about "Angst" reflect the meaning of the German word Angst as it is used in everyday speech?

3. "Angst" in the language of psychology

Before we turn to the use of the German word Angst in everyday language, we should note that this word plays an important role in the language of psychology, and that German psychologists speak routinely about Angstneurose and Angstpsychose, using the word Angst in a sense very close to that attributed to it by Heidegger. As noted, for example, by the Duden dictionary (1972:188), "in der Fachsprache der Psychologie wird öfter zwischen "Angst" als unbegründet, nicht objektbezogen, und "Furcht" als objektbezogen differenziert" ('in the specialist language of psychology, a distinction is often drawn between "Angst" as something that has no reason and no object, and Furcht as something which does have an object').

In psychology, the distinction between Angst and Furcht (and also Schreck 'fright') was first introduced, and given a great deal of attention, by Freud, who clearly believed, however, that it was grounded in ordinary language:

I think 'Angst' relates to the state and disregards the object, while Furcht draws attention precisely to the object. It seems that Schreck (...) lays emphasis (...) on the effect produced by a danger which is not met by any preparedness for anxiety [Angst]. We might say,

therefore, that a person protects himself from fright by anxiety [Angst]. (Freud 1963[1917]:395).

According to Duden (1972), however, the distinction between "Angst" and "Furcht" drawn by psychologists is not drawn by the ordinary language: "in der Allgemeinsprache ist die Differenzierung nicht üblich" ('in ordinary language there is no such differentiation').

But does this mean that in ordinary German there is no semantic difference between Angst and Furcht at all? And if there IS a difference, is this difference quite unrelated to the distinctions drawn in the writings of Heidegger and in the technical language of psychology? Both these propositions seem inherently unlikely.

It is also noteworthy that the word Angst (but not Furcht) appears in countless titles of popular books belonging to the self-help genre, such as the following ones:

1. Eugen Bisser, 1986, Überwindung der Lebensangst. Wege zu einem befreienden Gottesbild. Erlösung von existentiellen Grundängsten.

('Overcoming the angst of life. Ways to a liberating image of God'). (Don Bosco Verlag).

2. Jürgen Schutz, ed. 1995. Angst: Urgefühl. ('Angst: a primeval feeling'). München: dtv.

3. Gerhard Stöcher, 1996. Angst, lass nach! Wieder Lust am Leben finden. Umfangreicher Ratgeber bei allen Angstzuständen.

(Angst, let go! How to find joy in life again. A comprehensive guide for all states of Angst'). (Pettloch Verlag).

It would be difficult to maintain that titles of such books, aimed at the general reader, are totally divorced from the understanding of Angst in ordinary language. The fact that in everyday language, too, people can talk of "existential" Angst or "metaphysical" Angst confirms the close links between the technical and the everyday sense of the word. In fact, careful examination of linguistic evidence shows that in everyday speech Angst and Furcht do not have the same range of use (although their ranges overlap), and that the differences

between their respective ranges are indeed related to the distinction drawn by Heidegger and by the technical language of psychologists. Let us review here some of these differences.

4. Angst in everyday language

In this section, I will summarize, in the form of 10 points, the linguistic evidence for the everyday concept of 'Angst' as outlined in this paper.

1. As mentioned earlier, the expression Angst haben 'to have Angst', is often used without any complements.

Außerdem hatte ich grauenhafte Angst. Ich konnte mich im Augenblick überhaupt nicht zusammennehmen...

'In addition I had a terrible Angst. I simply couldn't pull myself together.'

Both the adjective grauenhafte ('terrible') and the following sentence indicate that the speaker is focussing on her inner state, and not on any thought about some particular danger. On the other hand, the noun Furcht or the verb sich fürchten are normally not used in this way. One can say "Ich habe Furcht vor dem Tod" ('I'm afraid of death') but hardly "Ich habe Furcht" or "Ich fürchte mich". With the non-reflexive verb fürchten an object is grammatically obligatory; with the reflexive verb sich fürchten an object is not obligatory in the same sense, but if this verb is used without an object the grounds for the feeling are usually made clear by an adverbial phrase or clause, as in the following sentence from Langenscheidt's (1993) dictionary: "Das Kind fürchtet sich im Dunkeln." ('The child is afraid in the dark.')

It is also noteworthy that sentences with Angst are more acceptable than those with Furcht (or sich fürchten) in situations where the cause of the feeling is explicitly presented as unknown:

Ich hatte Angst (?fürchtete mich), ich wusste nicht wovor und warum.

'I had Angst, I didn't know why or of what.'

Furthermore, Angst is often described as a subconscious feeling of which the

experiencer himself (herself) is not even aware, as in the following sentence:

Wie der Tod nicht aufhört zu existieren wenn wir nicht an ihn denken, so auch nicht die Angst. (Fritz Riemann, a motto in Schütz 1995).

'Just as death does not cease to exist when we don't think about it, neither does Angst.'

2. The noun Angst is often used in the plural, and German dictionaries list expressions such as in tausend Ängsten schweben and cite many sentences with the plural form Ängste, both old and recent. For example:

...unter welchen Ängsten litt ein Mensch, der vor sich behauptete, keine Angst zu haben (Mechel, Duden 1993).

'From what fears a man suffered who claimed that he had no fear.'

Ihre Ängste vor einer verstrahlten ... Umwelt sind eklatant (Wiener 1, 1989, 44, in Duden 1993).

'Their fears (Ängste) of a radioactively contaminated environment are striking.'

The fact that Angst is frequently used in the plural and that people speak about "a thousand Ängste" supports the view that Angst focusses on a more general state of "Bedrohtsein" (existential threat) rather than on any specific danger. By contrast, Fürcht is normally not used in the plural at all.

3. The dative construction "mir ist angst" suggests that the concept of 'Angst' focusses on the subjective state of the experiencer rather than on the someone or something linked with that state (cf. e.g. "mir ist kalt", 'I'm cold', "mir ist übel" 'I feel sick').

4. The compound nouns Angstzustand/Angstzustände (a state of Angst) and Angstgefühl/Angstgefühle ('a feeling/feelings of Angst') suggest that Angst is a state which can be considered independently of its external target. (There are corresponding compounds with Furcht.)

5. The common adjective angstvoll (roughly, 'nervous/anxious') and the adverb ängstlich ('nervously'), which describe a psychological state without reference to its cause or to the

accompanying thought, point in the same direction.

6. It is also interesting to compare the two symmetrical adjectives furchtlos ('fearless') and angstfrei ('angstfrei'): the first implies that one does not betray "Furcht" (roughly: fear) in external situations in which other people could be expected to do so, whereas the second implies that one is, roughly speaking, free of anxieties, and does not refer to any external situations at all. It hardly needs to be added that *angstlos and *furchtfrei do not exist at all.

7. The imagery of Angst, often presenting it as "sitting inside" a person (e.g. jemandem sitzt die Angst im Nacken, see e.g. Duden 1972:188) is consistent with the view of Angst as an enduring internal state, not necessarily linked with any conscious thoughts about particular targets.

8. The verb derived from Angst, sich ängstigen, refers clearly to a persistent state of inner turmoil (anxiety), rather than to a feeling linked with a particular thought. In this respect sich ängstigen can be compared to the English expression to be anxious rather than to the verb to fear or the expression to be afraid of. The clear difference in meaning between the verbs sich ängstigen and sich fürchten helps to see better the less obvious difference between the nouns Angst and Furcht: sich ängstigen implies that one can find no peace, (because of an inner turmoil), whereas sich fürchten has no such implications and refers simply to a feeling caused by a thought. The WDG (Wörterbuch der Deutschen Gegenwartssprache) dictionary of German cites, for example, the sentence: "ein böser Traum hat mich beängstigt", ('a bad dream has brought Angst over me'). The sentence does not mean that the speaker is thinking about a dream and fears something because of this, but rather, that the dream itself has brought with it a certain mood and has set off a troubled inner state.

9. The word Angsttraum cited by many German dictionaries points in the same direction: it describes a certain type of dream, identifiable in terms of, roughly speaking, its mood, and not its content. Duden's (1972:139) dictionary defines an Angsttraum as a "mit Ängsten verbundener Traum", 'a dream linked with Ängste (plural)'. The dictionary mentions the word Alptraum 'nightmare' in this connection, but an Alptraum has a

describable content (so much so that a real-life situation can be called, figuratively, an "Alptraum"), whereas an Angsttraum is quite vague (hence the plural Ängste in Duden's definition): it is an "atmospheric" kind of dream rather than a dream with a clear structure of events or thoughts.

10. The word Angst is more acceptable than Furcht in contexts where it is not clear at all what kinds of danger are being considered. For example, in the situation of anxiety (and related feelings) before an exam a sentence with the phrase Angst haben is much more acceptable than one with the verb sich fürchten (the noun Furcht is not acceptable in this context at all). If, however, the word Prüfung 'exam' is replaced with the word Hund 'dog' both Angst haben and sich fürchten are perfectly acceptable:

- (a) Er hatte Angst vor dem Hund/der Prüfung.
'He had Angst of the dog/before the exam'.
- (b) Er fürchtete sich vor dem Hund/?der Prüfung.
'He was afraid of the dog/exam'.

Presumably, the reason is that in the case of a dog the nature of the danger is quite clear (one doesn't want to be bitten), whereas in the case of an exam, one doesn't know what will happen, and the situation is stressful even if one is not expecting to fail.

11. In situations in which the phrase I'm afraid can be used in English with reference to a known fact, in German only ich fürchte can be used, not ich habe Angst:

- (a) I'm afraid that's true.
- (b) Ich fürchte das stimmt.
- (c) *Ich habe Angst das stimmt.

5. Defining Angst

What, then, is the meaning of the word Angst? Is the definition suggested by Heidegger's speculations, or by the psychologists' use of the term, acceptable for the everyday use of the word, or does it need to be somehow modified, and if so, how?

My own conclusion is that while the meaning of Angst in everyday language is not identical with that of the Angst of psychologists and philosophers, the core components are the same, and that basically the distinction between Angst and Furcht

drawn by Heidegger applies to everyday language too. In support of this conclusion, I will first propose two explications and then discuss the differences between them as well as some apparent counterexamples. To facilitate the comparison, I have put the distinguishing part of the two explications in capital letters.

Angst (e.g. X hatte Angst vor dem Hund/vor der Prüfung, 'he feared the dog/exam')

SOMETIMES A PERSON THINKS SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN

MANY BAD THINGS can happen to me

I don't want these things to happen

I don't know what I can do

BECAUSE OF THIS, this person feels something bad FOR SOME TIME

person X felt like this

Furcht (e.g. X fürchtete sich vor dem Hund/*vor der Prüfung, 'he feared the dog/*exam')

person X thought something like this ABOUT SOMETHING:

something bad can happen to me BECAUSE OF THIS

I don't want this

I don't know what I can do

WHEN X thought this, X felt something bad

If we now compare the explications of Angst and Furcht, we will note the following differences.

First, Angst is defined via a prototypical scenario, and no thoughts are attributed to the experiencer: when one has Angst one feels LIKE a person does who thinks certain thoughts, and one doesn't necessarily think these thoughts oneself. This explains why one can feel Angst without knowing why one feels Angst. But one cannot feel Furcht without knowing what is the object of that Furcht, and so the explication of Furcht does attribute certain thoughts to the experiencer.

Second, the phrase MANY BAD THINGS in the explication of Angst differs from its counterpart SOMETHING in the explication of Furcht. This, too, accounts for the greater indeterminacy of Angst and for a more generalized sense of threat (Bedrohtheit); it also accounts for the use of the plural Ängste. It will be noticed that the phrasing many bad things can happen, used in the explication of Angst proposed here, differs from the phrasing something bad can always happen used in the earlier discussion. This change has been introduced to cover the fact that while in its everyday sense, Angst is somewhat indeterminate ("undeutlich"), it is not quite as indeterminate as the philosopher's, or the psychologist's, "Angst". The word "always" implies an inescapable existential condition, the word "many" does not imply quite that, although it does go beyond the specificity of the singular ("something bad can happen to me").

Third, the subcomponent FOR SOME TIME in the explication of Angst accounts for its durative aspect, that is, for its "state-like" or "process-like" character.

Fourth, the explication of Angst includes the component I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN, which accounts for the far greater uncertainty of Angst and for the inappropriateness of the word Angst in contexts where little or no uncertainty is involved.

Fifth, the distinction between BECAUSE OF in the explication of Angst and WHEN in the explication of Furcht accounts for the fact that in the case of Angst, a feeling can endure much longer than any underlying thoughts whereas Furcht suggests a feeling coextensive in time with the thought.

In some contexts, when the feeling is linked with a specific thought, the difference between Angst and Furcht doesn't seem to matter much and native speakers may not be immediately aware of it. But there are many other contexts where the difference clearly does matter, and the linguistic facts discussed in this paper provide sufficient evidence for different conceptual structures.

The fact that Angst is a very common German word (whereas Furcht is not) shows that the conceptualization encoded in Angst is particularly salient in German culture. This is consistent with the special place given to "Angst" in German philosophy and psychology and also with the special importance attached to this concept both by

German writers (recall book titles such as Angst: Urgefühl, 'Angst: The Primeval Feeling') and by outsiders commenting on German culture in a comparative perspective.

6. The German Angst in a comparative perspective

If one looks at the concept of 'Angst' and its salience in German culture from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural point of view one can't help being baffled by it. Most, if not all, languages appear to have a "basic" emotion term linked with the thought "something bad can/will happen to me". For example English has the noun fear (and the adjective phrase to be afraid), French, the noun peur (and the verbal expression avoir peur), Italian, the noun paura (and the verbal expression avere paura), Spanish, the noun miedo (and the verbal expression tener miedo), Russian, the noun strax (and the verb bojat'sja), and so on.

In German, the noun closest in meaning to those listed above is Furcht, and the verb, sich fürchten. One might have expected, therefore, that these words would play a comparable role in German to that played by their closest semantic equivalents in the other languages mentioned. In fact, however, this is not the case.

German-English dictionaries usually link the German word Angst with the English word anxiety or with a multi-word gloss starting with the word anxiety (and in the English translations of Freud's works the word Angst is usually, though by no means always, rendered as anxiety; cf. Strachey 1962:116-17). On the other hand, Furcht is usually glossed with the word fear, or with a sequence of alternative glosses headed by fear. Conversely, the English word anxiety is normally glossed by English-German dictionaries with the word Angst, or with a series of glosses starting with Angst, whereas fear is glossed with the word Furcht, or with a series of glosses starting with Furcht. Similarly, dictionaries usually pair Angst not with peur, paura, miedo, or strax, but rather with angoisse, ansia, or trevoga, that is, with words closer in meaning to the English anxiety than to the English fear.

In a sense, then, one might say that the semantic distinction between Furcht and Angst drawn by the German lexicon is analogous to the distinctions drawn between fear and anxiety by English, between peur and angoisse by French, or between strax and

travoga in Russian.

For example, the eminent French historian Jean Delumeau (1978:15) draws what he calls a fundamental distinction ("la distinction fondamentale") between "peur" and "angoisse", (in the English version, "fear" and "anxiety"), which he links with a distinction between specific fears ("les peurs particulières") and a climate of fear ("un climat de peur"). In Delumeau's view, the fact that the accumulation of various collective fears in Europe from the time of the Black Plague to the religious wars created a climate of fear, provides an important clue to the understanding of the history of Western civilizations.

But if the conceptual distinction between, roughly speaking, angoisse (anxiety) and peur (fear) is so important (in philosophy, in psychology, and in history), how is it possible that a concept closer to angoisse (namely, 'Angst') has come to occupy such an important place in German language and culture, over and above the concept of 'Furcht', given that the opposite appears to be the case in most other languages and cultures, in Europe and elsewhere?

Once again, we must conclude that there is something special about the German "Angst", something, therefore, that requires a special explanation.

I submit that it may pay to explore the possibility of there being a link between "Angst" (the German Angst) and the language and thought of Martin Luther; and in what follows I will try to do so.

7. Luther's influence on the German language

Luther's contemporary, Erasmus Alberus, said that Luther was "the father of the German language" ("linguae Germanicae parens"), and to a large extent, this opinion has been shared by later generations. It is generally accepted that the newly invented printing press played an essential role in the popularisation of Luther's writings, which "achieved a dissemination beyond anything that had ever happened before" (Keller 1978:355). Luther wrote and wrote, the presses printed and printed, and the nation read, studied, and often learnt by heart — thus absorbing both the message and the language.

In 1520 his famous treatises An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation and Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen started a flood

of German theological writing. Tracts, treatises, sermons, missives, dialogues, and pamphlets of abuse, condemnation and exhortation, poured from the printing presses. And there was above all else: the German Bible. The history of the German language took a new turn: the printed German written language reached every corner of the German-speaking countries and influenced and shaped the political destiny of the entire nation. (Keller 1978:356)

One of the first serious grammars of German, written by Johannes Clajus and published in Leipzig in 1578, was based on Luther's writings: Grammatica Germanicae linguae ex bibliis Lutheri Germanicis et aliis eius libris collecta, and the influence of Luther's writings on the standardization of the German literary language and the development of German literature is indisputable. To quote one German scholar (Bach 1965:259-60):

'A work of the linguistic power of Luther's Bible which circulated in many thousands of copies throughout Germany, including the Catholic regions, and which coming at a time of rapidly expanding literacy was not only read but often also learnt by heart. Such a work could offer a firmer basis for a common national language than the languages of the state administration or the printing offices.'

What had the greatest impact was — it is widely accepted — Luther's translation of the Bible, on which were also based the Catholic translations of Hieronymus Emser, Johann Eck and Johann Dietenberger. The assessment given by Chambers and Wilkie's (1970:42) "Short history of the German language" illustrates well the general opinion on this point:

... the richness of vocabulary, the felicity of idiom, and the vigour and directness of style which characterize all his works — Bible and hymns, catechism and sermons, expository and polemical tracts — mark a new beginning in the development of the German language. In particular, his masterly translation of the Bible, which in the four intervening centuries has been read and studied and learnt by heart

more than any other German book, has had a profound and incalculable stylistic influence — to say nothing of its spiritual effect — on every generation of speakers and writers until our own day.

Luther's translation of the Bible is also widely believed to have determined, to a large extent, the lexicon of the literary standard language. Its impact was not only lexical but also semantic. Significantly, "Many of Luther's own personal word creations have become part of the standard vocabulary" (Keller 1978:449). Keller notes also new meanings due to Luther's influence, commenting that "The semantic aspect of the lexicon tends to reflect the great cultural and spiritual movements of an age as well as internal structural changes on the plane of meaning" (p.452).

What is particularly interesting from the point of view of the history of "Angst", is that the expression angst und bange is listed as one of those whose spread was influenced by Luther, alongside with some other expressions referring to emotions, such as Hoffnung und Zuversicht ('hope and confidence') and bekümmern und vexieren ('afflict and disturb') (Keller 1978:449). Luther's creativity and impact in the area of the language of emotions has also been noted by other writers. For example, Chambers and Wilkie (1970:42) comment that "Among his many gifts he had a remarkable feeling for the manifold variety of language and for its emotional nuances".

Clearly, Luther's possible influence on the semantic history of "Angst" should be considered against the background of this general assessment of the role of his writings in general.

8. Eschatological anxieties of Luther's times

It seems to be generally accepted that — like many of his contemporaries — Luther believed in, and lived in imminent expectation of the end of the world, and the "Last Judgement". Discussing "the great eschatological anxieties" of the epoch, which "had a profound impact on the collective mentality", the eminent "historian of fear", Jean Delumeau (1978:211) quotes Hugo Wölflin's observation, made in connection with Dürer's works, that a sense of the end of the world was at that time present in everyone's mind, and he observes:

The birth of the Protestant Reform cannot be understood if it is not placed in the atmosphere of impending Doomsday which existed at the time in Europe and especially in Germany. (...) Luther was haunted by the idea. (...)

Like many other writers, Delumeau notes that "Luther's enormous popularity strengthened the conviction, already widely held, that the end of the world was near."

Delumeau (1978) notes also that what applied to the fear of Judgment Day applied also to the (closely related) fear of Satan. "In Luther, there lived both a fear of the devil and a certainty that the final cataclysm was already on the horizon" (1978:237), and the printing presses spread these fears both in learned volumes and in innumerable popular publications. The very success of Luther's works ensured that "Dr Martin communicated his fear of the devil to hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of readers" (1978:239). As a result, (asks Delumeau rhetorically), "how could have Germany of the sixteenth and beginning of seventeenth centuries not trembled from those two interrelated terrors?" (1978:237) And thus, "demonic literature" replaced in sixteenth century Germany the popular medieval genre of the lives of the saints. (1978:239). It has been calculated (he reports) that in one decade 1560-1570 one hundred thousand copies of works on the demon world were released in Germany, and that in the last twelve years of the century the story of Faust alone went through no less than 24 editions.

Discussing the colossal popularity of Luther's Bible and the impact of Dürer's apocalyptic engravings which illustrated it, Delumeau (1978:210) points in particular, to the conjunction of the planets in 1524 and 1525, which created a collective panic and alarmed both Luther and Dürer, and he observes that the protestant Reform was both an outcome of the deep eschatological ferment of the times and an important factor in its growth and expansion.

Thus, while eschatological fears were common in Europe in the 16th century, and the beginning of the 17th century, they were especially strong in Protestant countries and, in particular, in Germany. Delumeau (1978:228) notes, for example, that of the 89 eschatological works included in Georg Draudius' catalogue in Frankfurt in 1625, only

one was written by a Catholic author, whereas 68 were Lutheran, and 20, by Calvinist authors.

Delumeau points out in this connection a comment made in 1561 by a contemporary witness, André Musculus, who observed that "In no country of the world does the devil exercise a more tyrannical power than in Germany" (1978:240). In the light of such observations, it seems remarkably fitting that the legend of Faust, born in Germany, should have come to occupy such a central and symbolic place in German culture.

9. The meaning of Angst in Luther's writings

Before we can assess Luther's impact on the formation and/or spread of the modern German concept of 'Angst' we need to know how exactly Luther used the word Angst.

The "Theological German Vocabulary" based on quotations from Luther's Bible (Mosse 1955) glosses Angst as "anxiety, fear, distress", and includes as "synonyms" die Furcht 'fear', die Herzensangst 'the Angst of the heart', and die Seelenangst 'the Angst of the soul'. This gloss suggests that the meaning of Angst in Luther's writings was probably different from its present-day meaning. For example, Harrap's German and English Dictionary (1963) glosses Angst (in English) as "fear, fright, dread; mental anguish; anxiety; Psy: angst". The range of suggested senses is similar, but the focus seems to have shifted from something more like "anxiety" and "distress" to something more like "fear".

But in Luther's writings, Angst is not invariably linked with the thought "something bad will/can happen to me" and in his translation of the Bible Angst is not used to translate the Latin words timor (noun) and temere (verb) or the Greek words fobos (noun) fobeomai (verb) (roughly, 'fear'). Instead, Luther uses for this purpose the noun Furcht, and the verb sich fürchten (and in some contexts, erschrecken). Angst was normally used by Luther to translate other words: the Latin words pressura, angustia and tribulatio, and the Greek words stenoxoria, tlipsis, and synoxe, all of which had meanings corresponding, roughly, to those of English words such as affliction or distress.

Looking at the semantic history of the word Angst in historical perspective, it would seem that Luther constitutes a turning point in a shift from a meaning close to 'distress' and essentially unrelated to 'fear' (or 'Furcht') to a meaning much closer to 'fear' (or 'Furcht'), though still different from it and bearing distinct traces of the earlier meaning.

Schematically the history of Angst can be rendered in three stages:

1. Old German (Althochdeutsch), around year 1000: Angst means (according to the Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch (1968)) "seelische Bedrängnis, Erschütterung", that is, 'affliction, anguish' (Gegensatz zum Begriff des 'Friedens', an opposite of the concept 'peace'); "Sorge, quälende innere Unruhe" ('a worry, a tormenting inner turmoil, anxiety'); "Leid, schmerzvolle Bedrückung" ('suffering, painful oppressive feeling').
2. Luther's language, around year 1500-1550: Angst seems to mean, essentially, the same as in Old German (and is used for translating pressura, angustia or tlipsis 'affliction', rather than timor or fobos 'fear'), but is often used in contexts suggesting anxiety about the future, and therefore shifts — in connotations if not in actual meaning — in the direction of 'fear' (or 'Furcht').
3. Present-day language: Angst has lost its original meaning of, roughly speaking, 'distress, inner turmoil, anguish', and has come closer to 'fear' (or 'Furcht'), preserving, however, some components of the older meaning.

We can say, then, that in modern German translations of the Bible the word Angst replaces two different words from Luther's Bible, which for Luther had very different meanings: Angst ('affliction/distress') and Furcht ('fear'). But the meaning of this new word Angst doesn't correspond exactly to either of those two words (as they were used by Luther). Rather, being a descendant of the two, it is a new concept, whose identity reflects its complex — and unique — past.

10. Martin Luther's inner life and its possible impact on the history of "Angst"

Erich Fromm's famous — and admittedly hostile — characterisation of Luther saw the key to his personality as lying in "Angst" — "Angst" and the quest for something that could quench. According to Fromm, "he [Luther] was a man driven to despair,

anxiety and doubt [Angst und Zweifel] and at the same time by (...) an ardent wish for certainty" (1980a:65). His whole attitude towards the world [was] "one of anxiety and hatred" (1980a:66), and his "need to conquer the unbearable doubt" led him to a "compulsive quest for certainty" (1980a:66). "He was tortured by doubts as only a compulsive character can be, and was constantly seeking for something which would give him inner security and relieve him from this torture of uncertainty. (...) His whole being was pervaded by fear, doubt [Angst und Zweifel] and inner isolation, and on this personal basis he was to become the champion of social groups which were in a very similar position psychologically." (1980a:56)

Other writers on the subject don't necessarily attribute to Luther "hatred towards the world", but they do seem to agree with Fromm as far as "anxiety" is concerned. Dalbiez (1974) not only attributes to him a "neurose d'angoisse très grave" (332) ('a serious anxiety neurosis') linked with a "l'angoisse morbide de culpabilité" ('a morbid guilt anxiety') and "un sentiment morbide de culpabilité d'une extreme violence" (p.12) ('a morbid sense of guilt') and goes so far as to "sum up" Luther in the words "pour moi, Luther n'est qu'angoisse" (p.24), ('for me Luther is nothing but anxiety').

The most striking pieces of evidence adduced by Dalbiez include the description of Luther's acute anxiety attacks given by his fellow-Reformer Philip Melanchton, the other famous "praeceptor Germaniae", 'teacher of Germany', Luther's own vivid description of states of anxiety caused by a sense of sinfulness, and the record of his suicidal tendencies (related to the same sense of sinfulness) contained in Luther's Tischreden and other writings. Thus, Melanchton (1939:158) reports:

Often, when he was thinking attentively about the wrath of God, or about some startling examples of divine punishment, he would be suddenly struck by such terror as to almost lose consciousness. I myself have seen him suddenly struck by such consternation whilst taking part in some doctrinal debate, that he had to go to an adjacent room to lie down, where he would pray and intermittently repeat: "God has locked all people in sin in order to show mercy to

everyone". He first experienced this intense terror in the year when a friend of his was killed in an accident. (...)

In the meantime, he pored over the sources of divine doctrines, the writings of the prophets and apostles, in order to better understand God's will and to nourish his fear and his faith with solid testimony. He was impelled to undertake this study by his sufferings and his fears.

Luther's own description of anxiety reads as follows (Dalbiez 1974:339):

I, too, have known a man who said he often suffered great affliction, very briefly but with such infernal intensity that neither tongue nor pen could describe it, nor any who had not experienced it believe it; had these sufferings been yet more intense or had they lasted half an hour or even one tenth of an hour, the man would have perished and his bones would have turned into ashes.

God would appear then to be terribly angry, and with him, the whole creation. And then there would be no escape, no consolation, neither inside nor outside, but only this universal accusation. And then the man would say, crying, this verse: "I've been rejected far from your eyes". And he wouldn't even dare to say: "God, don't punish me in your fury" (Ps. VI, 7). At this moment, *mirabile dictu*, the soul cannot believe that it can never be redeemed or that the punishment can never be completed. And yet this punishment is eternal and the soul cannot regard it as temporary, so it is left with the sole desire to be helped, and with a horrible moan, but it doesn't know where to ask for help.

The subject of Luther's personality is of course a controversial one, and I have no intention of trying to get involved in this controversy here. As far as the subject of "Angst" is concerned, however, certain points do seem to emerge quite clearly.

First, Luther's life was marked by intense spiritual suffering — by an inner

affliction and distress, and this suffering is reflected in his writings.

Second, from Luther's translation of the Bible we know that Luther's word for affliction and distress was "Angst" (his translation equivalent of the Latin words pressura, angustia and tribulatio and the Greek words stenoxoria, synoxe, and tlipsis).

Third, nobody doubts that Luther's suffering was linked with his faith in God, his passionate need to be certain of his salvation, and his overpowering sense of sinfulness (human in general and his own in particular).

Fourth, since for Luther the prospect of his salvation was linked with God's judgement, and since he thought that this Last Judgement was imminent, his distress at the thought of his sinfulness was inextricably linked with an intense anxiety over his eternal destiny.

Fifth, since for Luther salvation depended on faith, and only faith, the very doubts which tormented him seemed to stand between him and his salvation; and so his present anguish was inseparable for him from anxiety over the future (a possible future hell was inseparable from what he called the "hell" experienced here and now).

There are reasons to think, then, that for Luther, the two phenomena — distress (inner suffering in general) and anxiety about the future in particular — were inextricably connected. When he used the word Angst (or the phrase angst und bange), it meant in his speech what it meant in the language of the time, that is, something like "distress in general", but he often used it in contexts which implied, roughly speaking, not only distress but also anxiety (rather than any other kind of affliction). In his writings, as in his life and his teaching, therefore, the two concepts ("affliction" and "anxiety") came to be closely related.

To put it differently, there was no greater suffering for Luther than uncertainty about one's eternal fate — and since he talked and wrote incessantly about the subject it is likely that his general word for something like "affliction", namely Angst, became tinged with connotations of something like "anxiety". This, in turn, is likely to have set off a semantic shift, of a very familiar nature, a kind of semantic narrowing from "affliction" in general to "affliction caused by uncertainty about the future", that is to say, to a kind of

cross between "affliction" and "anxiety".

In addition to eschatological anxieties (which, given Luther's conception of eschatology, were also existential anxieties), there is another vital ingredient in Luther's theology which is consistent with the concept of 'Angst': the idea that a man quite literally CANNOT DO ANYTHING which could improve his eschatological prospects. For salvation depends exclusively on faith, not on anything that one might do. Our own efforts to live well, to do "good things", can get us nowhere. To quote one (Lutheran) commentator, Althaus (1966:245-6):

Justification, and therewith all of salvation, is given to men through faith alone, sola fide. For justification and salvation depend only on God's mercy; and this can be received only in an act of faith. Man's ethical activity and "works" have no place here. They can neither cause nor preserve salvation for us. It is only through faith that we are preserved to eternal life.

Thus, the existential uncertainty ("I don't know what will happen to me") [after I die], the eschatological fears ("many very bad things can happen to me"), and the theology of "faith alone" ("I can't do anything [to cause these bad things not to happen]") form a conceptual whole which is remarkably congruent with the German concept of 'Angst' as it subsequently evolved.

Given the wide dissemination of Luther's writings, their great popularity, and their unquestioned impact on the German language, Luther's use of the key word Angst was likely to have an impact on the use of this word in German in general, and is more than likely to have contributed to the semantic shift which has demonstrably taken place: "affliction" (1000-1600), "affliction/anxiety" (1600-1900), "anxiety/fear" (1900/2000).

11. Luther's possible role in the shift from Angst 'affliction' to Angst 'anxiety/fear'.

As we have seen, Luther didn't use Angst as a quasi-synonym of Furcht (as, for example, modern translations of the Bible often do), but rather in a more general sense of, roughly speaking, 'distress'. But the contexts in which he used the word Angst had to do, typically, with death, sin, and the danger of hell, and they exuded anxiety. One example is

provided by Luther's famous hymn "In the midst of earthly life"

In the midst of earthly life,
 Snares of **death** surround us;
 Who shall help us in the strife
 Lest the Foe confound us?
 Thou only, Lord, Thou only (...)

In the midst of **hell**-born woe
 All our **sins** oppress us,
 Where shall we for refuge go,
 Where for grace to bless us?
 To Thee, Lord Jesus, only. (...) (Polack 1942:420)

In the standard modern German version, the phrase rendered here as "hell-born woe" is "der Hölle Angst" which of course suggests (to modern readers) the fear of hell, whereas in Luther's original version, the phrase "der Hellen angst" suggested indeed something closer to torment and "woe".

One can understand, then, why Mosse's (1955) dictionary based on quotations from Luther's Bible should assign to Luther's angst not one but three glosses: "anxiety, fear, distress". The word's invariant in Luther's speech appears to have been 'distress' rather than either 'anxiety' or 'fear'; but since, typically, the word is used in contexts inspiring fear and exuding anxiety, its very meaning may seem to be somewhat indeterminate and to span a wider range of emotions than it actually encoded.

The difficulty in sorting out the semantic invariant of Angst from the implications induced by the context is reflected, in an interesting way, in a controversy between the editor of the Middle German dictionary (1854) Georg Friedrich Benecke, and the brothers Grimm, the editors of the monumental dictionary of modern German published some decades later. In essence, Benecke emphasized the difference in meaning between the Middle German meaning of Angst (roughly, 'affliction') and its modern meaning (roughly, 'anxiety/fear'), whereas the brothers Grimm were inclined to see some mixture of

'affliction' and 'fear' (or 'anxiety') in both the earlier and the later meaning.

But the account of the Grimm brothers fails to explain why Luther never used Angst to translate timor or fobos ('fear') and why he only used it to translate pressura, angustia, and tribulatio, or tlipsis and synoxe ('affliction/distress'). By contrast, Benecke's hypothesis does explain this fact — and at the same time it is not inconsistent with the Grimms' observation that nineteenth-century Angst means not just 'fear' but rather, roughly speaking, something between "fear" and "distress". (See also Dietz 1870).

The evolution in the meaning of the compound word Höllenangst ('hell-angst') is particularly revealing in this respect. In modern (20th century) German this word is generally taken to refer to the "fear of hell" (i.e. fear that one might go to hell). In Luther's language, however, (as pointed out earlier) Höllenangst (or der Höllen angst) referred to the "torments of hell".

As noted, for example, in the "Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch" (1989), in pre-modern German angst was associated, in particular, with Christ's suffering before his death ("Passion Christi, Todesangst Christi" p.1190), and with religious and didactic use of language ("religiöse und didaktische Texte", p.1191). But for Luther, thoughts about death (including Christ's death) were inextricably linked with thoughts about God's judgment and the possibility of eternal damnation.

The characteristic link between "angst", "Todesangst" (present also in Jesus' agony), and "Höllenangst", which came to be associated with Lutheran theology in general, is clearly articulated in Paul Tillich's discussion of this concept (rendered by him in English as "anxiety"):

If man is left to his "having to die," the essential anxiety about non-being is transformed into the horror of death. Anxiety about non-being is present in everything finite. It is consciously or unconsciously effective in the whole process of living. Like the beating of the heart, it is always present, although one is not always aware of it. (...) The dramatic description of the anxiety of Jesus in having to die confirms the universal character of the relation of

finitude and anxiety.

Under the conditions of estrangement, anxiety has a different character, brought on by the element of guilt. The loss of one's potential eternity is experienced as something for which one is responsible in spite of its universal tragic actuality. Sin is the sting of death, not its physical cause. It transforms the anxious awareness of one's having to die into the painful realization of a lost eternity. (Tillich 1957:67-9)

But to appreciate the full force of Luther's references to Höllenangst we must take into account Luther's theology and, in particular, Luther's eschatology, and we must pay attention to the fact that for Luther, hell was not just a matter of a person's possible eternal future, but also very much a matter of a person's spiritual distress in the present. To quote Asendorf's (1967:57) (sympathetic) account of Luther's eschatology:

The Last Judgement will not happen at some distant point in time; rather, it is one's immediate present. One's conscience is hell. The Judgment, wrath, sin and death are all present at the same time. (...) When we feel our conscience, then we feel hell and we think we are lost for all eternity. (...)

Thus, for Luther, "Angst" was very much linked with the idea of hell, but not just in the frightening images of a place of eternal damnation; rather and above all, with "hell" as intense anguish suffered here on earth and linked with a subjective experience of God's wrath and rejection. It is hardly surprising that given this conception of "hell" and this conception of "Angst", the notions of 'anguish' and 'anxiety' became closely linked in Luther's writings, and — one must hypothesize — in Luther's spiritual and linguistic heritage in Germany. The fact that we can see traces of this heritage not only in Germany but in other Lutheran countries as well, lends additional support to this hypothesis. The importance of "angst" in Danish language and philosophy (cf. Tillich 1957:67-9) is relevant here.

It is also interesting to note Luther's use of the words Hölle and infernum (Latin

for hell) as labels for pain and anxiety, as in his 1527 letter to Melancton, written when he [Luther] seemed to be mortally ill:

For more than a week I have been thrown hither and thither in death and hell, I felt beaten throughout my whole body, all my limbs were trembling. Driven by floods and storms of despair and blasphemy against God, I all but lost Christ. But thanks to the prayers of the faithful, God started to show me mercy and to tear my soul from the bottom of hell.

Speaking of the "Angst" which Luther showed on this occasion (when he thought he was on his deathbed), a sympathetic commentator, Oberman (1983:335) remarks:

It was not the encounter with death which caused him so much Angst and fright. Physically, Luther improved quickly, as he reports. What he experienced on the outbreak of the sickness as an attack of the devil, was only to come into full swing as his health improved. Nor was he tormented by any doubts about the truth of the Gospels. What worried him (caused him Angst) was the question whether he himself could hold on to this truth.

Since for Luther salvation (and heaven) depended on faith alone, the doubt which he experienced (not a doubt about God but a doubt about his own salvation) was for him, by his own testimony, a source of intense torment and anxiety - of "hell" - not in a modern metaphorical sense of the word, but in a literal sense: to feel that one was cut off from God WAS for Luther what he understood by "hell". Anguish and anxiety were for him one: "infernal anguish" and "fear of hell" were one and the same thing.

Thus, the semantic shift from angst 'anguish' to angst 'anxiety/fear', which took place in the German language at some time between the XVIth century and modern times, mirrors a synchronic shift which we can observe in Luther's own language and thought: a shift from angst as a translation equivalent of the Latin words pressura, angustia, and tribulatio ('anguish/distress') to angst as a word associated with anxiety-inspiring thoughts

about death, the devil, and hell.

12. The great social and economic anxieties of Luther's times

In the view of many historians, the times when Luther lived were marked by a wide-spread anxiety — an anxiety which was linked with the breakdown of feudalism in Europe and the birth pains of capitalism. In the words of Erich Fromm (1980a:67):

... the old order was breaking down. The individual had lost the security of certainty and was threatened by new economic forces, by capitalists and monopolies; the comparative principle was being replaced by competition.

This breakdown of the old system led to wide-spread anxiety [Angst]:

The breakdown of the medieval system of feudal society had one main significance for all classes of society: the individual was left alone and isolated. He was free. This freedom had a twofold result. Man was deprived of the security he had enjoyed, of the unquestionable feeling of belonging, and he was torn loose from the world which had satisfied his quest for security both economically and spiritually. He felt alone and anxious. (1980a:85)

[Er fühlte sich nun allein und war voller Angst. Fromm 1980b:275]

Again and again, the word Angst reappears in Fromm's discussion of those times as a key word. Fromm asks: "What is the connection of Luther's doctrines with the psychological situation of all but the rich and powerful towards the end of the Middle Ages?" (1980a:67). And he replies that the new religious doctrines carried a special appeal to the urban middle class, to the poor in the cities, and to the peasants, "because they gave expression to a new feeling of freedom and independence as well as to the feeling of powerlessness and anxiety [Angst] by which their members were pervaded" (1980a:53). Luther's picture of man mirrored (Fromm remarks), these people's dilemma: "Man is free from all ties binding him to spiritual authorities, but this very freedom leaves him alone and anxious [Angsterfüllt] (1980b:264).

Thus, "Angst" plays in Fromm's analysis a crucial role, representing as it were a

meeting place of history and theology.

13. Uncertainty vs. certainty, 'Angst' vs. 'Sicherheit'

According to some commentators, the salient role of the concept 'Angst' in German culture is linked with the cultural value of "certainty", of knowing exactly what one should expect and what one should do. As Bernard Nuss (1993:188-9) put it in the passage quoted earlier, "[for Germans] uncertainty generates Angst, (...) Not to know what will happen (...) arouses [in Germans] much more Angst than a real danger".

Nuss' remarks about the value of "certainty" in German culture tally with comments on the importance of certainty that one encounters in the writings of many German scholars. One characteristic example is provided by the following passage from a foreword to a popular book on theology, with the characteristic title "Vergewisserung" ("acquisition of certainty" or "becoming certain"):

"I am certain!" — Is this a sentence from our time? (...) It seems that nowadays certainty is more rarely found, and that searching for it requires a greater effort. But who would really forsake certainty? To be certain: of oneself, of one's goals, of another person — and above all: of one's own beliefs — this is necessary for life. It is impossible to live in uncertainty. Even the more or less trivial uncertainties of everyday life are difficult to bear. Often they make us ill, and in this way demonstrate how much people suffer from them. Uncertainty in the basic questions of life threatens life itself.

(Rössler 1979:6).

As the above quote illustrates, the adjective gewiß can be matched with the English adjective certain, and the noun Gewißheit, with the noun certainty. The adjective sicher, in one of its meanings, can be regarded as an equivalent of gewiß, and the noun Sicherheit, as an equivalent of Gewißheit. (As Langenscheidt's dictionary (1993) puts it, Gewißheit means "das sichere Wissen in bezug auf etwas = Sicherheit", i.e. "a certain knowledge about something, that is, Sicherheit".)

In addition, however, both the adjective sicher and the noun Sicherheit are widely

used in German in a sense which, roughly speaking, combines the ideas of 'certainty', 'safety', and 'security'. If something is "sicher" in this second sense, one can be certain that one can rely on it and that nothing bad will happen to one because of that. This meaning of sicher is so salient and so important in German culture, that the adjective sicher in this sense has become semi-grammaticalized and is used widely in compounds such as diebessicher 'thief-proof' or fälschungssicher 'secure against forging' (of a document, for example, a passport). Langenscheidt's dictionary (1993) describes this use of -sicher as "very productive".

To be sicher in that characteristically German sense does not mean to be immune from dangers but rather to be, so to speak, free from Angst; it implies not only that one is safe, but also, that one can be CERTAIN of being safe. To put it differently, Sicherheit is an opposite of both danger and doubt: it suggests a deeply satisfying sense of being free from danger and doubt at the same time.

The English word security implies, so to speak, more than safety, because it promises that not only "nothing bad WILL happen (to someone or something)" but that "nothing bad CAN happen [to someone] because of [something]". But the German word Sicherheit (in the relevant sense), promises even more than security: not only CAN nothing bad happen to one if one has that "Sicherheit", but one can be CERTAIN that nothing bad can happen to one.

The concept of 'Sicherheit', combining, as it were, the ideas of 'certainty', 'safety', and 'security', is widely regarded as a key German value (cf. e.g. Syberberg 1995:122), and as a positive counterpart of 'Angst'. The key role that the word Sicherheit plays in German advertising (including permanent signs displayed over shops and businesses) provides some evidence for this perception, as do various linguistic facts, such as the wealth of derivatives and compounds involving this concept, including, for example, the verbs sichern, sicherstellen, and sichergehen.

The notion of 'Sicherheit' is also linked with the specifically German ideal of "Geborgenheit" (from geborgen 'sheltered'), that is, of being in a place where one can feel safe and protected (that is, so to speak, a feeling of being in a place where one doesn't have

to feel Angst). This in turn is related to the specifically German concept of 'Heimat' — that is, roughly, 'homeland, or home region, seen as a place where one was a child and where one could feel safe and protected'. (For detailed discussion, see Wierzbicka 1997 and Forthcoming a).

German-English dictionaries often translate the word Geborgenheit as "safety" or "security", but in fact the concept of 'Geborgenheit' is unique and there is no word for it in English. Roughly speaking, it stands for a feeling of existential security (rather like Angst stands for a feeling of existential insecurity); and it could never be used with reference to such practical matters as, for example, "safety pins" or "security belts". On the other hand, it is perfectly suited to talk about a more or less mythologised native country, that is, Heimat.

As is often pointed out in the abundant literature on 'Heimat', the very word Heimat suggests something like a lost paradise, the only place where one could feel "Geborgenheit" and be free of "Angst". If Angst represents, as Heidegger put it, a state of nicht-zuhause-sein ('not being at home'), Heimat represents a metaphorical (and metaphysical) "Zuhause", that is, "home".

Thus, the concept of 'Angst' is not only language- and culture-specific, but occupies moreover an important place in a whole network of language- and culture-specific concepts, and is closely related to other independently identifiable cultural attitudes and cultural values.

14. Conclusion

Fear is supposed to be a fundamental human emotion — an emotion determined by human biology, not by culture (see, e.g. Kemper 1987, Plutchik 1994) But in the German intellectual tradition, and also in the prevailing German "naive" psychology, it is not fear (or, in German, Furcht) which is widely regarded as a "primeval" feeling (an Urgefühl), but something that the Germans call "Angst", and for which English and most other European languages don't have any equivalent.

In this paper, I have tried to show that the concept of 'Angst' to be found in German psychology, philosophy, and theology is rooted in everyday language, and that it

is actually quite close to the concept of 'Angst' with which ordinary speakers of German operate on a daily basis. I have also tried to trace the origin of the peculiarly German concept of 'Angst', in the spiritual, cultural, and linguistic legacy of Martin Luther.

Having explored Luther's own use of the word Angst, and the kinds of context in which this word appeared in Luther's religious writings, I have proposed that there may be a link between Luther's theology and the emergence of the new concept of 'Angst' — a concept different from that encoded in the 16th century word Angst but which may have been suggested by the contexts in which this word tended to appear in Luther's voluminous and hugely influential writings.

On a more general level, I have tried to show that the concept of 'Angst' is a cultural creation, and that the boundaries between "different emotions" such as "Angst", "anxiety" or "fear" are in the eye of the beholder — the collective beholder, defined above all by a given language. This doesn't mean that these boundaries between "different emotions" are not real: they are real, but they are imposed by different cognitive scenarios with which the words in question are associated, and the cognitive scenarios themselves are shaped not just by universal human biology but by culture, which in turn is shaped by history, religion, and way of life.

Above all, I have tried to show that by studying the semantic system of language in a rigorous way and in a coherent methodological framework, we can both reveal and document the cultural underpinning of emotions — even the most elusive and unfathomable ones such as Angst.²

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ For a full explanation of and justification of this metalanguage see Wierzbicka 1996.
- ² For a full documentation of the history of the concept 'Angst' in German culture see Wierzbicka, Forthcoming b.

REFERENCES

- Althaus, Paul. 1966 [1963] The theology of Martin Luther. Translated by Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Asendorf, Ulrich. 1967. Eschatologie bei Luther. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.
- Bach, Adolf. 1965. Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache. Heidelberg: Quelle and Meyer
- Benecke, Georg Friedrich. 1854. Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch mit Benutzung des Nachlasses von Georg Friedrich Benecke (ed. by Wilhelm Müller), Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1963.
- Blum, Siegfried, T. Frings, H Götz, S Habermann, E. Karg-Gasterstädt, G. Müller, E Ulbricht and G. Wolfrum (eds). 1968. Althochdeutsch Wörterbuch. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Bradbury, Malcolm. 1975. The History Man. London: Arrow Books.
- Chambers, W. Walker and John R. Wilkie. 1970. A Short History of the German Language. London: Methuen.
- Dalbiez Roland. 1974. L'angoisse de Luther. Paris: Téqui.
- Delumeau, J. 1978. La peur au Occident (XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles). Une cité assiégée. Paris: Libraire Arthème; Fayard.
- Dietz, P. 1870. Wörterbuch zu Dr Martin Luther deutschen Schriften. Leipzig.
- Duden. 1972. Duden Sinn- und sachverwandte Wörter und Wendungen. Mannheim/Wien/Zürich: Dudenverlag
- Duden 1993. Duden Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache. 6 volumes Mannheim-Leipzig-Wien-Zürich: Dudenverlag.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1963[1917]. Anxiety. In: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Writings of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XVI, pp.392-411, London: Hogarth.
- Fromm, Erich. 1980a[1941] The Fear of Freedom. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Fromm, Erich. 1980b. Gesamtausgabe (Collected works). Vol 1. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

- Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch. 1989. Vol 7. Oskar Reichmann (ed). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- Harrap German-English Dictionary, 1963. Trevor Jones, ed. London: Harrap.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1953. (1926) Sein und Zeit. (7th Auflage.) Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Jaeger, Hans. 1971. Heidegger und die Sprache. Bern & München's: Francke Verlag.
- Keller, R.E. 1978. The German Language. London/Boston: Faber.
- Kemper, T.D. 1987. "How many emotions are there? Wedding the social and the autonomic components." American Journal of Sociology 93:263-289.
- Langenscheidt's Grosswörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache (1993) Berlin: Langenscheidt.
- Melanchton, Philip, 1939. "Epistolarum Lib.X. 1546", in C.G. Bretschneider (ed) Corpus Reformatorum. reprinted 1963. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva.
- Mosse, Walter, M. 1955 A Theological German Vocabulary. German theological key words illustrated in quotations from Martin Luther's Bible and the Revised Standard Edition. New York: Macmillan.
- Nuss, Bernard. 1993. Das Faust Syndrom. Ein Versuch über die Mentalität der Deutschen. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Oberman, Heiko A. 1983 Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel. Berlin: Severin and Siedler.
- Polack, W.G. 1942. The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal. Saint Louis / Missouri: Concordia Publishing House.
- Plutchik, Robert. 1994. The Psychology and Biology of Emotion. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers.
- Rössler Dietrich. 1979. Vergewisserung: 22 Beispiele christlicher Rede Stuttgart / Berlin: Kreuz Verlag.
- Ruoff, Arno. (ed) 1981. Häufigkeitswörterbuch gesprochener Sprache Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Sapir, Edward. 1949 (1921). Language: an introduction to the study of speech. New

York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch.

Strachey, James. 1962. Appendix: The term Angst and its English translation. In: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Writings of Sigmund Freud vol. XX, pp.116-17, London: The Hogarth Press.

Syberberg, Hans Jurgen. 1995. "Germany's heart: The modern Taboo". In: P. Gardels, ed. At century's end great minds reflect on our times. La Jolla: ALTI Publishing, pp.114-124.

Tillich, Paul. 1957. Systematic Theology. Vol 11 Existence and The Christ Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

von Klappenbach, Ruth and Wolfgang Steinitz. 1964. Wörterbuch der Deutschen Gegenwartssprache. Akademie-Verlag. Berlin. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. Semantics: Primes and Universals. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wierzbicka, Anna. 1997. Understanding Cultures through their Key Words. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wierzbicka, Anna. Forthcoming a. "German Cultural Scripts: Public signs as a key to social attitudes and cultural values."

Wierzbicka, Anna. Forthcoming b. Emotions across languages and cultures: diversity and universals.