

THE VEDIC CONCEPT OF *AMHAS*

In attempting to discover the exact meanings of the terms composing the ancient Indian vocabulary of social life, religion, and “Weltanschauung”, we encounter some serious methodological difficulties. How are we to know exactly which ideas were connected by the poets of the R̥gveda themselves with a great number of words bearing upon their spiritual, social, and intellectual life? Also, as the meaning of words is subject to fluctuation, how are we to know if that same sense was attached to those terms by the ensuing generations? Although nowadays nobody will stand by the ancient Indian commentators through thick and thin, who is able to say exactly how far he may follow them? That the etymological method is apt to over-estimate the value of cognate words which often were current among men of different beliefs, different traditions, and a different mental attitude, and to introduce foreign elements into ancient Indian thought, has not rarely been overlooked. It is a matter of regret that in discussing the meanings of Vedic words, etymologies – which, however evident they may be, always are of a hypothetical character – should often have been put on a par with well-established facts.¹ Even in those – fortunately enough frequent – cases in which only one etymologic connection is possible and all factors perfectly correspond with each other, there remains some uncertainty on the semantic side, not to mention possibilities of parallel developments. Moreover, are we right in the tacit assumption that the meanings of the words under discussion always admitted of exact definitions?; were they completely clear to those who used them?; did the traditional vocabulary of religion and spiritual life leave no room for any ambiguity?²

In short, the difficulties in reaching a correct understanding of the real intentions of those ancient poets, of their moods and thoughts, are

¹ Recently, P. Thieme gave evidence of a somewhat exaggerated confidence in the value of etymologies (in the periodical *Oriens*, VI, p. 396 ff.).

² See e.g. P. Radin, *Die religiöse Erfahrung der Naturvölker* (Zürich, 1951).

so obvious that they cannot fail to provoke mistrust of any too assertive attempt to lift a corner of the veil. For all that it is the fate of the philologist that, in full knowledge of the inadequacy of his tools and methods, he cannot forbear to pose questions and to search for answers, that is to say: to search for that view of a particular phenomenon which for the time being fits into the picture of ancient Indian culture which he has made for himself by studying the texts and by considering and re-considering what is the outcome of those studies of pre-scientific and ancient civilizations which for the present seem to be in accordance with the best standards.

In continuation of what in another publication³ has been observed on the frequent references in Vedic literature to "broadness" and the obvious importance of the ideas connected with such terms as *uru-* "broad" etc. by the poets and experts to whom we owe the ancient documents, and in addition to some notes by Rodhe⁴ and by myself,⁵ attention may be claimed here for the opposite idea which to all appearance was expressed by some words deriving from the root *aṃh-*. This family is one of those groups of words which, playing a more or less important part in Vedic times, was replaced by other expressions at a later period.⁶ There can be no doubt whatever as to its general sense: broadly speaking it meant something like "evil" and was in the commentaries explained accordingly by *pāpa-* and similar words.

Comparatively clear is, to begin with, the meaning of the noun *aṃhu-*: "Drangsal" (Grassmann); or "Enge, Drangsal" (Roth in the Petr. Dict.). It is always opposed to *uru-* or to the related *varivovittara-*: *varivas-* "space, freedom, relief, comfort": Kāth. 25, 9: 116, 21 where *varīyasī* "broader" and *aṃhīyasī* "narrower" (in a literal sense) are opposites; RV. 1, 107, 1 the good disposition (*sumati-*) of the Ādityas is expected to find or grant *varivas-*, relief from *aṃhu-*. The particle *cit* occurring 2, 26, 4 seems to intimate the serious character of the idea of distress expressed by *aṃhu-*: "even from *aṃhu-* Brahmanaspati, the marvellous one, is able to grant relief": literally, "to grant wide space, room, freedom from oppression etc., deliverance". There is no need for the interpretation of the text provided by Sāyaṇa of "he grants ample assistance in helping us out of poverty". The same limitation to economic conditions was assumed by this commentator also 1, 107, 1 (cf. 5, 67, 4).

³ J. Gonda, *Aspects of early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht, 1954), p. 61 ff. etc.

⁴ S. Rodhe, *Deliver us from evil* (Lund-Copenhagen, 1946), p. 40 ff.

⁵ *O.c.*, p. 69 f.

⁶ See L. Renou, "Les éléments védiques dans le sanskrit classique," *Journal Asiatique*, 1939, p. 390.

In 5, 65, 4 *mitró aṃhós cid ád urú kṣáyāya gātūṃ vanate* “Mitra gewinnt selbst aus Bedrängnis einen Ausweg, freie Bahn zu einem Wohnsitz”. In consideration of other passages – 1, 36, 8 where after the victory over Vṛtra and the conquest of the waters a broad (tract of land) is said to have been prepared for dwelling in (*urú kṣáyāya cakrire*); 8, 68, 12 where Indra is invoked to render available a broad (region) for those praying and their children, a broad (region) for dwelling in (*urú kṣáyāya nas kṛdhi*), and to procure broadness for living (in); 10, 99, 8 where Indra, giving water, is described as finding a place or free space for, or access to, a dwelling-place (*kṣáyāya gātūṃ vidán no asmé*) – these somewhat ambiguous terms may be taken as referring to the difficulties of nomadic life: the R̥gvedic Aryans, who constituted primarily pastoral communities and tilled tracts of fertile soil in a very uneconomic way, and who were, moreover, often dislodged from their fields and pastures by those who came after them, eagerly longed for an opportunity to settle in a broad and fertile region where they would be free from narrowness and oppression in various senses of the terms.⁷ RV. 5, 67, 4 Mitra and Varuṇa are said to give good guidance and good gifts, granting relief even from *aṃhu-* (*aṃhós cid urucákrayaḥ*). In 8, 18, 5 the sons of Aditi are described as being able to ward off hostilities and – again the same expression – to grant broadness instead of *aṃhu-*, in the next stanza the goddess herself is invoked to protect the cattle of those speaking and to protect them from *aṃhas*, “always increasing”. Here *aṃhu-* means, according to Sāyaṇa, *āhananaśīla- pāpa-* i.e. “evil of the nature of beating or killing”, which at least was no doubt one of the aspects of *aṃhu-*. The same gods are in a prayer for deliverance from danger and distress,⁸ not only implored for protection and liberation from bonds, but also stated to have the disposal of “relief from narrowness”, relief being, again, expressed by “broadness” (*ásti devā aṃhór urú*): 8, 67, 7. Here Sāyaṇa, misunderstanding *uru*, takes *aṃhos* as a term for “a killer (destroyer) of bad character”. In the Aitareya-brāhmaṇa the “comparative” to the word *aṃhu-* occurs as an adjective, again in opposition to *uru-* “broad”: 1, 25, 6 *paro varīyāṃso vā ime lokā arvāg aṃhīyāṃsaḥ* “these worlds are broader above and narrower below”. In the compound *aṃhubheda-* of obscene sense (“with a narrow slit”: Vāj. S. 23, 28), which occurs in one of the mantras used to accompany the rite of the queen

⁷ “Die arischen Nomaden und Viehzüchter begehren vor allem Raum (aw. *zavah-*) und fürchten die Enge (*qzah-*, ved. *aṃhas-*), auch nachdem sie sesshaft geworden sind, genau so wie die Germanen (Tac. Germ. 16)” J. Hertel, *Die Sonne und Mitra im Avesta* (Leipzig, 1927), p. 134.

⁸ See also K. F. Geldner, *Der Rig-veda übersetzt*, II (Harvard, 1951), p. 390.

and the horse in the Aśvamedha, the literal meaning of “narrow” is beyond any doubt.

The adjective *aṃhurá*⁹ occurs ṚV. 10, 5, 6 ~ Ath. V. 5, 1, 6, a stanza of uncertain purport: “the seers have fashioned seven boundaries, unto one of these went one *aṃhura*”. Are these seven entities, as was supposed by Geldner,¹⁰ “die letzten und höchsten Ideen oder Symbole des Urwesens, bei denen die Spekulation Halt machen musz”?; is *aṃhura*- “the man who does not find a way out”? Anyhow, this interpretation – which again connects the word with spatial narrowness or lack of room – seems more plausible than the ethical explication suggested by Yāska, Nir. 6, 27 and adopted by Durga and Sāyaṇa: *aṃhuraḥ* = *aṃhasvān* = *pāpavān puruṣaḥ* “a sinner” (i.e. a thief, the murderer of a brahman or of an embryo etc.).

A very interesting passage is ṚV. 6, 47, 20 “O gods, we have reached a tract of land without good pasturage for our cattle; the earth though (otherwise, usually) broad, has become narrow” (*agavyūti kṣétram āganma devā urvī satī bhūmir aṃhūraṇābhūt*). This statement which of course may be taken in a metaphorical sense – referring to a man who has lost his cows or livelihood: cf. the following words: “Bṛhaspati and Indra, show the way to the sage who anxious (to find his cows) is in such an (evil) plight” – was made by Sāyaṇa to refer to Garga who was lost in the forest. The same word *aṃhūraṇa*- occurs, as a substantive, 1, 105, 17 in a significant context: Trita¹¹ who has been buried in a well prays to the gods for help; Bṛhaspati – a god who protects the honest man from dangers and calamities – hears him and effects his escape, or literally “made broad(ness) from the narrow(ness)”: *kṛṇvānn aṃhūraṇād urú (a. aṃhasaḥ pāparūpād asmāt kūpapātād unnīya uru vistīrṇaṃ śobhanaṃ k. kurvan Sāyaṇa)*. The man who, either with regard to his person, or with regard to his house, “goes down to *aṃhūraṇa*-” is “seized by *aṃhaḥ*” (Kāth. 10, 9).

The same god Bṛhaspati or Brahmanaspati¹² is also addressed in connection with the term *aṃhas*- to a discussion of which we pass on now. Occupying a position of prominence in the Ṛgvedic pantheon, he

⁹ For *-rá*- see J. Wackernagel-A. Debrunner, *Altindische Grammatik*, II, 2 (Göttingen, 1954), p. 857. It is worth noticing that the *-rá*- adjective belongs to *aṃhú*-, although in many other cases *-rá*- is found beside substantives formed, like *aṃhas*-, with the suffix *-as*-: see my *Ancient-Indian ojas* . . . (Utrecht, 1952), p. 82 f.

¹⁰ Geldner, *o.c.*, III, p. 127, who translates “der Eingeengte (?)”.

¹¹ For Trita see A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 67 ff.; K. Rönnow, *Trita Āptya, eine Vedische Gottheit* (Uppsala, 1927).

¹² For Bṛhaspati see Macdonell, *o.c.*, p. 101 ff.

is a priest and a benevolent divinity. He is associated with Agni and Indra and plays also a part in the Indra myth of the release of the cows. He is described as a pathmaker (ṚV. 2, 23, 6), who drives away enemies and “wolves” (st. 7). “With good guidance Thou guidest and protectest the man who offers to Thee, (so that) no distress (*aṃhas*) will reach him”. Although Sāyaṇa is again inclined to regard *aṃhas* as a term for “poverty” (*pāpaṃ pāparūpaṃ dāridryaṃ vā*), some emphasis may be laid on the association of *aṃhas* with words for protecting and guiding or conducting (st. 4). “Neither *aṃhas* nor *duritam* (“bad course, difficulty, discomfort”) from anywhere subdue (“surpass”: *titiruh*) him, nor enviousness nor dishonest men; Thou drivest away all mischievous powers from that man whom, O Brahmaṇaspati, Thou protectest as a good herdsman” (st. 5). Here, Sāyaṇa identifies *aṃhas* with *āhantavyaṃ duḥkham* and *duritam* with *tatkāraṇaṃ pāpam*, the former explication “trouble to be struck or beaten” being inspired by an “etymological” association.¹³ Another interesting place has already been mentioned: 2, 26, 4 Brahmaṇaspati leads forward (conducts, promotes etc.) that man who offers to him (*prā tām prācā nayati*), he defends him from distress (literally or, rather, ‘originally’: “he makes him broad out of narrowness”), he saves him from injury . . .”¹⁴

Another divinity credited with the ability of protecting from the evil called *aṃhas* is Pūṣan,¹⁵ a knower of paths and a guardian of the roads par excellence: he is able to guide the searcher so as to retrieve what has strayed, knows the regions, protects cattle and property, brings it back when it is lost. He is implored to remove dangers, the wolf, the waylayer, from the road (cf. 1, 42, 1 ff.), to protect the herdsman and his herd from the many dangers which beset the way, to make the roads easy and passable, to lead the way to a pasture rich in grass. In this connection he is called the “deliverer” (*vimocana-*) and “the descendant of un-harnessing” (*vimuco napāt*¹⁶) which appears to mean “the representative of the power effecting a safe and sound return home” (1, 42, 1). The interpretation proposed by Sāyaṇa of the beginning of this passage (“O Pūṣan, pass through the ways, remove the *aṃhas*” . . . : *sám pūṣann*

¹³ For the character of these ‘etymologies’ see *Lingua, Int. Review of Gen. Ling.*, V, p. 61 ff.

¹⁴ The form *uruṣyati* has been discussed by L. Renou, *Grammaire de la langue védique* (Paris, 1952), p. 303, and T. Burrow, *The Sanskrit language* (London, 1955), p. 132, n. 1 and 188; for the construction, see Renou, p. 350.

¹⁵ See Macdonell, *o.c.*, p. 35 ff.; S. D. Atkins, *Pūṣan in the Rig-Veda* (Princeton, 1941), who also deals with Pūṣan as a god of the paths (p. 16 ff.).

¹⁶ It is the author’s intention to make some observations on the phrases of this type in another publication.

ádhvanas tira vy ámhaḥ . . .), viz. “O Pūṣan, cause us duly to reach the goal desired and destroy the evil which is the cause of hindrances (obstacles etc.)” (*vighnahetuṃ pāpmānam*) may be regarded as plausible.

Now that our attention has been drawn to the relation between *aṃhas* and difficulties on the road we may also discuss here passages such as 2, 34, 15 where the Maruts are besought to extend a similar favour to those praying and the verb used (*pārāyathāty aṃhaḥ*) literally means “to bring across”. The same significance is still more obvious 7, 66, 5: “may those be in front (of us) on our march who bring us across the *aṃhas*” (*prá nú yáman . . . yé no ámho ‘tipiprati*): there seems to be no need to explain this place metaphorically: in the preceding lines the god, Varuṇa, is implored to protect the eulogist and his relations and to hear their prayers; “this abode must”, it is added, “be very attentive or helpful”; and in st. 8 the poem is explicitly stated to lead to wealth and to power safeguarding against “wolves”, a term which no doubt included other living beings of a sinister and malevolent nature, such as robbers, waylayers etc.¹⁷ The same verb *ati-pṛ-* is used 10, 35, 14 “whom, O gods, you favour at the winning of *vāja-*, i.e. “vigour”, whom you rescue, whom you bring across *aṃhaḥ . . .*”: without insisting on the demonstrative force of the argument it may be observed that all other terms for various kinds of good and evil in this poem (favour, wealth, soundness; disease etc.) are usually taken in a literal sense. However, there is nothing which precludes us from taking these words in a metaphorical sense which 10, 63, 6 is even probable: “the sacrifice, offered to you (gods), which will bring us across *aṃhas* in order to obtain well-being (*svastaye*)”.

Incidentally the term under discussion is opposed to a word for “shelter, refuge, safety”, *śarman-* which however is likewise apt to be used in a metaphorical sense —: 10, 66, 5 where a variety of gods are invoked to grant *śarman-* which gives threefold (i.e. effective) protection against *aṃhas*: (Sarasvat, Varuṇa, Pūṣan, Viṣṇu etc.) *śárma no yaṃsan trivárūtham ámhasaḥ*. Still more significant are 10, 25, 8: “O Soma, do Thou that art more familiar with localities than man protect us from injury (*druh-*) and *aṃhas*” (*kṣetravittaro mánuṣo ví . . . druho naḥ pāhy ámhasaḥ . . .*)— in the preceding stanza Soma is implored to be the herdsman of those praying —, and 1, 106, 1: “As a chariot (is brought) across a difficult or narrow passage — *durga-*, which can also stand for “a place difficult of access” or “difficulty, danger or distress” in a more general sense, “bring us out of (rescue us from: *níṣ pipartana*) all *aṃhas*”: *pāpād asmān nir-*

¹⁷ See also H. Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras* (Tübingen, 1930), p. 113, 115 etc.

gamayya pālayata (Sāyaṇa). Compare also the difficult passage 1, 180, 5: *jūrṇó vām ákṣur áṃhasaḥ*; although Geldner's¹⁸ interpretation "abgenutzt ist eure Stange(?) infolge der Not" is very problematic, it must be conceded that *ákṣu-* seems to refer to a part of the chariot of the gods addressed (the Aśvins); cf. 1, 184, 3. If *jūrṇa-* means "worn out, decayed" and *ákṣu-* refers to a pole or similar object – is the word related to *ákṣa-* "axle", which denotes also "the beam of a balance" and the "collar-bone"?, *ákṣu* probably referring to other stakes or beams –, *aṃhasaḥ* may, in a literal sense mean: "on account of the narrowness of the road or passage", intimating the narrow escape from danger or evil on the part of those men who were rescued by the god. Worth mentioning is also 3, 59, 2 "he is neither killed nor defeated ("wird nicht erschlagen noch ausgeraubt", Geldner); *aṃhas* does not fall upon him . . .".

The word *aṃhas* is not infrequently accompanied by the verb *tr̥-* which, in a general sense, means "to cross over (a river), to pass across, to get through, attain an aim or end", and hence also "to overcome, surpass, rescue"; by the by-form *trā-* "to protect"; by forms belonging to *pr-* or its compounds "to bring over, rescue, save, escort, protect, preserve, surpass, etc." Cf. 2, 33, 3 *pārṣi ṇaḥ pāram áṃhasaḥ svastí . . .* "(O Rudra,) bring us successfully to the opposite side of distress, ward off all assaults of *rāpas* (a collective term for a special kind of injurious powers)"; 1, 115, 6; 2, 34, 15; 3, 32, 14; 4, 2, 8; 6, 4, 8; 7, 23, 2; 40, 4; 10, 65, 12. Thus we find 6, 2, 4 *dviṣó áṃho ná tarati* "he overcomes hostilities like *aṃhas*"; cf. also 10, 132, 7. ṚV. 5, 45, 11, the last stanza of a poem dealing with the first sunrise after the rainy season, expresses the wish to survive the *aṃhas*: no doubt the difficulties of the rains which prevented people from travelling or caused discomfort to those who were on the way. The poet of 6, 67, 8 using the phrase *dāśúṣe ví cayiṣṭam áṃhaḥ* "remove, for Thy worshipper, the distress" may have modelled it upon the frequent *vi-ci-pathas* "to clear or prepare roads": cf. e.g. 1, 90, 4; 4, 37, 7; see also 4, 20, 9 *vicayiṣṭho áṃhaḥ*. Similes not rarely shed light on the significance attributed to a phrase by the poet who used it: thus 4, 2, 8 where Agni is besought to rescue the man who honours him from *aṃhas* like a horse: probably the horse which after an accident on the road puts things right again. In the rather obscure stanza 10, 132, 7 the purohita Nṛmedha driving Agni as the horse of the chariot which is the sacrifice, is stated to have achieved a deliverance from *aṃhas*. 4, 12, 6 *aṃhas* is compared to foot-irons or similar impediments.

Of special interest is the association of *aṃhas* and *durita-*, which deriving

¹⁸ Geldner, *o.c.*, I, p. 259.

from *i-* “to go” means “faring ill, a bad course”, and hence, “a difficulty, hardship, danger, discomfort, evil”. Compare: 10, 39, 11 *námho aśnoti duritám nákir bhayám* “neither *a.* nor *d.* nor fear does reach him”; 126, 1 where Sāyaṇa is again inclined to consider *d.* the result or effect of *a.* : *a.* : *pāpam*, *d.* : *tatphalarūpaṃ durgamanam*; 6, 2, 11; 7, 82, 7 *aṃhas*, *d.* and *tapas* “pain, suffering”; 2, 23, 5 *ná tám aṃho ná duritám kútaś caná nárātayas titirur ná dvayāvinah* “über ihn kommen weder Not noch Gefahr von irgend einer Seite, nicht Miszgunst noch Doppelzüngige” (Geldner). For *durga-* see also 1, 99, 1. Other terms for related ideas are, for instance, *gātu-* “path, way” in the sense of “free space for moving, and hence progress, welfare”: see e.g. *RV.* 1, 96, 4; *suga-* “a good path, an easy or successful course”: 1, 106, 5 “Bṛhaspati, make us always an easy course” (*sugám kṛdhi*); 102, 4 the same word is associated with *varivas* “width, room, free scope”.

In places the choice of words reflects the difficulties of nomadic life and the desire to find a suitable place of residence: 6, 2, 11 where the wish for *suastīm sukṣitīm* “well-being and a good abode” is followed by *diviśó aṃhāṃsi duritá tarema* “may we overcome enmities, troubles, and difficulties”.

That the idea expressed by *aṃhas* and that of “broadness” expressed by *uru-* and its family were opposites appears from a considerable number of places: 1, 63, 7, Indra in destroying the enemies changed, on behalf of Pūru, *aṃhas* into *vārivās* “room, space”, also “ease, comfort”, and according to Sāyaṇa *dhanam* “property, wealth”: “da schafftest du . . . dem Puru Befreiung aus Not” (Geldner); 6, 37, 4 where Indra, as broad as possible in giving the sacrificial gift,¹⁹ is stated to “go round”, i.e. to avoid the *aṃhas*, which is paraphrased by Sāyaṇa: *pāpaṃ yajñasaṃbandhi* “evil connected with the sacrifice”. *RV.* 1, 58, 8 Agni is besought to protect the eulogist from *aṃhas* by means of strongholds made of iron – i.e. with effective help (cf. Sāyaṇa) –, the term for “protect” being *uruṣya*; cf. also st. 9; 1, 91, 15 the same verb is used in connection with imprecations: protect us from *i.* (*uruṣyá ṇo abhísaṣteḥ*), save us from *aṃhas*; 4, 55, 5 “the Lord (in all probability: Varuṇa) may protect (*uruṣyet*) us against *aṃhas* originating with strangers, Mitra against that originating with friends”; 7, 1, 15 Agni is stated to protect against the jealous enemy and to safeguard (*uruṣyāt*) against *aṃhas*. It is in this connection important to notice that the geographic and economic contrast between the narrow, hostile and infertile mountains and the broad, inviting and productive plains was not rarely expressed by words

¹⁹ See also Geldner, *o.c.*, II, p. 134.

of a similar meaning: The Avestan *ravah-* which may be rendered by “clear space, open country” and “freedom, free scope, liberty” – an ideal so much desired that it is²⁰ expected to be realized in paradise: Yt. 3, 4 – is in the compound *ravas.čarāt-* used to characterize those animals which move in the plains, not in the mountains (Yt. 8, 36). This word is generally considered as related to the German group Goth. *rūms*, Germ. *raum* “broad, wide, spacious”, the Engl. *room*; cf. Lat. *rūs* “open country”.

Other opposites of *aṃhas* are wealth and happiness: 6, 4, 8 “on ‘wolfless’ paths”; 6, 11, 6 where wealth is a remedy for *aṃhas*; property: 4, 20, 9; “well-being” (*svasti-*), cf. 5, 51, 13; “life and physical abilities (denoted by *caratha-* “going”): 1, 36, 14; continuation of life: 4, 12, 6. The prayer for protection against the evil called *aṃhas* is accompanied by the wish to see the cattle in a well-preserved condition: 8, 18, 6. Ṛgvedakhila 2, 6, 18 Sch. *aṃhas* is co-ordinated with *enas* “sin” and opposed to *rāyaspoṣa-* “increase of wealth and property”. That *aṃhas* developed into a general term for “evil” (*pāpa-* Sāyaṇa) may also appear from the frequent use of verbs for “reaching, coming upon” etc. on the one hand, and from general terms for protecting or freeing on the other: cf. e.g. 3, 59, 2 *nainam āṃho aśnoti*; 6, 3, 2 *nāṃho mārtaṃ naśate*; 7, 82, 7; 1, 18, 5 *dākṣiṇā pātv āṃhasaḥ*. That the idea expressed by *aṃhas* sometimes had a rather serious character may also appear from 6, 16, 31 where the “distress” consists in immediate danger of life, occasioned by the weapon of an enemy; cf. probably also 7, 23, 2; 10, 36, 2 *aṃhas* is associated with *riṣ-* “injury” and *Nirṛti*, i.e. the goddess of destruction or perdition; in the next stanza *aṃhas* seems to be opposed to the safety of sunlight: literally the wolfless i.e. inoffensive, safe light of the sun. Sometimes *aṃhas* obviously refers to disease: 10, 97, 15 where the medicinal herbs are stated to deliver, by Bṛhaspati’s orders, from *aṃhas*. ṚV. 1, 118, 8 a man was in distress because his cow did not yield milk.

In a frequency of passages the term *aṃhas* must have had a very general meaning: “evil”. Here Sāyaṇa’s favourite interpretation *pāpa-* is no doubt pertinent. Cf. 6, 48, 8 where Agni is invoked to protect man, for the whole of his lifetime, against *aṃhas*; 7, 15, 3; 13, 15. It is worth noticing that it is, here and elsewhere, the burning fire which, of course owing to its character as a destroyer of evil influences,²¹ is explicitly described as exerting this protective function, which may be regarded as

²⁰ If Geldner’s conjectural interpretation of this passage is right.

²¹ Cf. e.g. also 1, 97, 1 “driving off evil by your flames, O Agni, bestow on us by flaming, wealth”; Taitt. Br. 2, 4, 1, 6 “Agni drives away demoniac beings, the brightly flaming one, the immortal, light, purifying, (who is) worthy of reverence”.

one of the fundamental motives of fire worship. See also 1, 18, 5; 93, 8; 136, 5; 4, 53, 5; 5, 31, 13; 6, 67, 8; 8, 31, 2; 9, 56, 4.

Of special interest is the connection with *bhaya*-: "fear, dread; peril, danger" and relative words: 2, 28, 6 Varuṇa is invoked to free the person speaking from *aṃhas* as a calf from a rope and to keep off fear; cf. also 10, 35, 14; with darkness: 7, 71, 5 (*tamas*); with battle or contest: 1, 54, 1; disease: 8, 18, 10 ward off disease, failing (*sridh-*), ill-will (*durmati-*) and protect us against *aṃhas*; cf. 2, 33, 2; bears and the weapons of the *dāsas* (non-Aryans): 8, 24, 27; hatred or hostility: 2, 33, 2; 6, 44, 16; 10, 24, 3; blame or disgrace: 1, 115, 6; various kinds of demons or evil beings: 9, 104, 6 *rakṣās*, *atri-* "devourer", and *dvayu-* "dishonest man"; 1, 36, 14; 4, 3, 14; 7, 15, 13; 15; *amati-* "indigence" and *durmati-* "bad disposition of mind": 4, 11, 6; dissatisfaction and haughtiness: 6, 3, 2. It may be noticed that Ṛ.V. 7, 15, 13 is prescribed by one of the authors of the Ṛgvidhāna²² in a rite performed in order to annihilate the guilt caused by "myriads of sins" (2, 25, 3-5).

The *aṃhas* is sometimes said to originate in a definite source, or to belong to a definite being. Compare 4, 2, 9 *nainam aṃhaḥ pāri varad aghāyōh* "the distress (trouble) brought about by the malignant one must not surround him"; although the metaphorical sense is obvious the verb "surround" instead of "vex, annoy" may be a reminiscence of the original meaning of *aṃhas*; 10, 164, 4 *aṃhas* of enemies ("Bedrängnis der Feinde" Geldner); 8, 19, 6 mentions *aṃhas* caused by gods or men; 7, 104, 23 *aṃhas* originating in heaven and on the earth.

In the Atharvaveda the original sense of the term under consideration has even more fallen into the background. It belongs to those manifestations of evil against which man attempts to protect himself by amulets: 2, 4, 3 "let this amulet which overpowers the *viṣkandha* – which is defined by the commentary on 1, 16, 3 as disorder or a disturbance caused by demons and obstructing motion – protect us from distress (*aṃhas*)"; although the use of this remedy is described with a profusion of terms of various evils, the observation made by the commentary: "(this text is) for thwarting witchcraft, for protecting one's self, for putting down hindrances" may have been inspired by this line. Cf. also 4, 10, 1 where a pearlshell amulet tied on in a ceremony for long life (cf. Kauśikasūtra 58, 9) is invoked to protect from distress. Elsewhere gods are besought for the same reason: 2, 28, 1 (Mitra); 6, 3, 2 (Soma); 11, 6, 1-6 (a great variety of divinities); 10-21 (gods and other potent beings or entities) cf. also 4, 23, 1-29, 7; 1, 31, 2 where the *aṃhas* combines with the fetters

²² See J. Gonda, *The Ṛgvidhāna* (Utrecht, 1951), p. 55 ff.

of *nirṛti*- (“perdition”). Or the purifying waters are expected to annihilate *aṃhas*: 7, 112, 1; 10, 5, 22; 14, 2, 45; or herbs: 6, 96, 1; 8, 7, 13; or rice and barley: 8, 2, 18; various animals: 11, 6, 8.

Ath. V. 8, 7, 13 the word *aṃhas* is associated with the idea of death; 2, 28, 1 with that of dying prematurely; 8, 2, 18 with *yakṣma*- a class of diseases of a consumptive nature (the text is to prolong one’s life); 4, 10, 3 with disease, misery or indigence and a class of evil beings called *sadānvās*; 6, 45, 3 with *durita*- (“difficulty”, Whitney-Lanman),²³ see above, cf. also 7, 64, 1; 10, 5, 22; 8, 4, 23 with demons, sorcery etc.; 6, 45, 3 the affliction called *aṃhas* appears to be an evil consequence of “proceeding falsely”; 7, 112, 1 f. a curse seems to be its origin, or, what is more probable, it is associated with a curse (cf. 6, 96, 1 f.); 7, 64, 1 the cause of the distress and difficulty is an ominous black bird which has dropped something; 10, 5, 22 untruth spoken; 19, 44, 8 untruth (*anṛtam*) and *aṃhas* seem to be identical; cf. 9.

Aṃhas, 6, 99, 1, can on the other hand be caused by human beings: 9, 2, 3 the wish is pronounced that those who devise distresses – the word used is the related *aṃhūraṇa*- – will be afflicted by manifold evil. The other place exhibiting the term *aṃhūraṇa*- (at least in one of its ‘special meanings’ or ‘developments’ expressed by a derivative) is of interest because of the antithesis between “distress” and “width” (*varimatas*): “Thee, O Indra, on account of width, Thee against ‘distress’ I call”: the commentator is no doubt right in interpreting these words: “for the sake of width” (*uruvād dhetoh*).

It may be of interest to add some particulars borrowed from other Vedic texts. Vāj. Saṃh. 4, 10 a staff of udumbara wood given by the adhvaryu priest to the institutor of the sacrifice is addressed: “stand up, O tree; being erect protect me from distress (*aṃhas*) until this sacrifice is ended”. Here the harm is of a general character. Cf. e.g. also Taitt. Br. 3, 6, 1, 2. In 12, 9 – one of a series of formulas relating to the treatment of Agni of the Fire-pan and the preparation of the āhavanīya fire-altar – Agni is implored to return with food and life and to preserve those praying from *aṃhas*. In 20, 14 ff. the person speaking addresses Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya asking them to free him from “that ‘sin’ and all distress” (the words used are *enas* and *aṃhas*) which he has committed and which has stirred the wrath of the gods: one of those prayers from general deliverance from “evil” or “sin” frequently to be found in these documents.²⁴ Another passage where the *aṃhas* is not specified is 33, 42:

²³ W. D. Whitney-Ch. R. Lanman, *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā* (Harvard, 1905), p. 314.

²⁴ See also Rodhe, *o.c.*, p. 41 f.

“O gods, deliver us from distress and dishonour (*nir aṃhasaḥ pipṛtā nir avadyāt*) when the sun has arisen”. A special evil is, however, meant 19, 10: the ‘goddess’ of cholera (or a similar disease) Viṣūcikā²⁵ who protects man from wild animals, is brought to guard the client of the priest from distress, i.e. not to attack him.

Similar prayers occur in the Yajur-veda. In the Taittirīya-saṃhitā 1, 8, 1, 1 the goddess of perdition, Nirṛti, is implored “to free him from *aṃhas*”; 2, 3, 13, 1 Indra and Varuṇa (“with their strong, protective, brilliant body”); 4, 7, 15, 1, Agni; 4, 3, 13, 5, the Maruts. The author emphasizes Indra’s power to deliver man from *aṃhas*: 2, 2, 7, 3 f. “he who is seized by misfortune should offer a cake on eleven potsherds to Indra, deliverer from tribulation (*aṃhomuc-*), tribulation (*aṃhas*) is misfortune (*pāpman-*) . . .”. Cf. also 2, 4, 2, 2; 3. A formula (ibid. 3, 1, 4 i) found also in various śrautasūtras (e.g. Āpast. 7, 17, 3)²⁶ is to appease the evil caused by inauspicious behaviour of the sacrificial animal and implores Agni “to release the person speaking from that sin (*enas*), from all misfortune (*aṃhas*)”. TS. 4, 3, 13, 4 the poet asks the Maruts to unloosen the bonds of tribulation; instead of *aṃhasas* the corresponding line in the Ath. V., 7, 77, 3 has *enasas* “sin, evil”. See also 3, 2, 4, 3. Finally, the man whose enemy is superior to him, is described as being seized by “trouble or tribulation” (*aṃhas*): 2, 4, 2, 3.

Some words may be said on *aṃhas* in the brāhmaṇas and other Vedic texts, in which it is not very frequent. Śāṅkh. (Kauṣ.) Br. 26, 4 it means “affliction, trial, tribulation” in a rather general sense: “it is an *aṃhas* to the sacrifice if the priest in the *sadas* calls attention to a flaw passed over”; however, the tribulation may be an “oppression”. A very interesting formula quoted, with some variations, in several works (ŚatBr. 1, 5, 1, 22; Āp. Śr. sū. 6, 2, 2, 1; Āsv. Śr. sū. 1, 2, 1; Śāṅkh. Śr. sū. 1, 6, 4 runs as follows: “the six broad ones must protect me against *aṃhas* (*ṣaṇ morvīr aṃhasas pāntu*), to wit fire, earth, water, the power of vegetation and victorious success (*vāja-*), day and night” (ŚatBr.), “. . . heaven and earth, water and medicinal herbs, refreshing food (vigour) and youthful vitality” (. . . *ūrka ca sūṅṛtā ca*, Āp.), or “heaven and earth, day and night, water and herbs”, (Śāṅkh.). The antithesis *uru: aṃhas* is again obvious, the more so as the powers²⁷ enumerated are representatives of that beneficial ‘broadness’ and extensiveness, which carries man through the difficulties

²⁵ Cf. J. Jolly, *Medicin (Grundriss)* (Strassburg, 1901), p. 75 ff.

²⁶ And in other texts: see A. B. Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School* (Harvard, 1914), p. 227, n. 2.

²⁷ For “power” see e.g. also M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, I (München, 1941), p. 37 f.; 41 f.; 60 ff.

of life. It is clear that to the mind of those composing these formulas the ideas associated with earth, water, herbs, youth etc. were opposed to *aṃhas*. With the exception of the night – which however in connection with day merely serves to express the idea of time – these ‘concepts’, phenomena or powers are all of them not only conducive, but even necessary, to human life, well-being and happiness: the broad sky, atmosphere and earth allow the powers of heaven to produce the effects desired, without water no fertility is possible, without youthful vitality the community is doomed to death. The evil consequences of any event preventing these powers from operating and manifesting their “broadness” are therefore called *aṃhas*. In Āpastamba’s sūtra the above formula is followed by Taitt. Saṃh. 4, 7, 15w (~ ṚV. 4, 12, 6) “even as ye did set free, O bright ones (the gods), the buffalo cow bound by the foot, so do ye remove tribulation (*aṃhas*) from us; be our life prolonged further, O Agni”, and Taitt. Br. 2, 5, 8, 3 “set us free, who so to say, have been caught in a snare”.

Another formula (Maitr. Saṃh. 4, 13, 9: 212, 12; ŚatBr. 1, 9, 1, 20; TBr. 3, 5, 10, 5; Āśv. Śr. sū. 1, 9, 5 etc.): *iṣṭam ca vittam* (or: *vītam*) *cety ubhe cainam dyāvāprthivī aṃhasas pātām* “. . . heaven and earth must protect him against *aṃhas*”, is explained (ŚatBr.) as follows: “that is to say: heaven and earth must preserve him from painful occurrences” (mischiefs including pain, illness, trouble etc.: *ārter gopāyatām*).

Another interesting formula occurs Taitt. Br. 3, 7, 7, 2; Taitt. Ār. Āndhra rec. 10, 47 c; Āp. Śr. sū. 10, 8, 9; Mahānār. Up. 2, 47: “We touch from behind – an act executed in order to participate in power – with the mind, wind and breath, Prajāpati who is the herdsman of the world; he must rescue us from death, he must protect us against *aṃhas*; may we live long and attain a great age”. Other passages worth mentioning are: Maitr. S. 4, 14, 17; Taitt. Br. 3, 7, 12, 2 *rtena dyāvāprthivī rtena tvam sarasvati kṛtān naḥ pāhy (rtān mā muñcata) aṃhasaḥ yad anyakṛtam* . . . (also Taitt. Ār. 2, 3, 1): here *rta-* “norm, cosmic and moral order” is considered a means of freeing a man from *aṃhas*, the powers invoked are heaven and earth and the river Sarasvatī which surpasses all other waters in purity and greatness, the best of mothers, bestowing wealth, plenty, vitality, and ‘immortality’ and protecting her worshippers against their enemies.²⁸ Taitt. Br. 2, 4, 1, 6 *agne rakṣā no aṃhasaḥ*; cf. 2, 6, 6, 1; 2 from *enas* and *aṃhas* (Agni and Sūrya); cf. also 2, 8, 7, 9; “deliver” (*muc-*) 1, 6, 1, 3.

In the brāhmaṇas *aṃhas* is also ‘something’, a potency or influence,

²⁸ See Macdonell, *o.c.*, p. 86.

which may be removed by means of a sacrifice (*ava-yaj-*). In describing the sacrifices performed at the beginning of the seasons the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā, 1, 10, 10 (cf. Kāṭh. 36, 5) relates that the creatures, after having been created by Prajāpati, were *aṃhogr̥hīta-* “seized by distress” because the Maruts had scattered the god’s oblations; wishing therefore to cure them he produced from himself milk, and by sacrificing that he removed the *aṃhas*. Therefore, the text adds, the Varuṇapraghāsāḥ, i.e. the second of these periodical sacrifices,²⁹ are considered to be an appeasing (or expiation by sacrificing) of *aṃhas* (*aṃhasaḥ . . . aveṣṭi-*). In other texts – cf. e.g. Śat. Br. 2, 5, 2, 1; 23; Kāṭh. S. 36, 5 the ceremony is to deliver people from the evil called Varuṇa’s snare, which in this connection in all probability refers to dearth of food. This is in agreement with the part which the Maruts – who are concerned with rain – played in this rite: they are, beside Varuṇa, the gods for whose special benefit the oblations are prepared. An important feature in this ritual is the ceremony by which the wife of the sacrificer is called upon to admit what lovers she has had and to offer grains pounded in an uncooked condition. According to Maitr. Saṃh. 1, 11 the latter act is to appease *aṃhas*; if the grains are roasted, this evil is not expiated. From other particulars concerning ritual details in which the same expression “to appease distress” recurs, it appears that the specific sort of evil to be freed from is *aṃhas*, a term not inconsistent with dearth and famine. Other acts in the same ritual are performed in order to obtain rain and food (ibid. 1, 12). For it is said (ibid. 13) that by the Varuṇapraghāsāḥ the occurrence of rain is effected. After having created the creatures and expiated the *aṃhas* the above god wished to destroy the great demon of obstruction, Vṛtra (ibid. 14).

In a formula quoted Sāmav. Saṃh. 2, 1182; Maitr. Saṃh. 1, 7, 1 : 109, 17 f. etc. etc. Agni is invoked in this way: “Return with strengthening food (*ūrj-*), return, O Agni, with refreshing food and life; again protect us against *aṃhas*”. Here again *aṃhas* is clearly opposed to a sufficient supply of food. These words are followed by “Return with wealth, O Agni, fatten with the stream, all nourishing on every side”. Elsewhere *aṃhas* is identified with *enas* “sin, guilt”, and *apsas* “hidden fault, sin”: 1, 10, 2 : 142, 1 ff.: “what sin we have committed, what hidden fault we have committed – Thou art the means of expiating all that *aṃhas*”. From another passage, Maitr. Saṃh. 4, 8, 9 “Prosperity must increase through coagulated milk and clarified butter, the sacrifice must free the

²⁹ See A. Hillebrandt, *Ritualliteratur, Vedische Opfer und Zauber, (Grundriss)* (Strassburg, 1897), p. 116 f.; J. J. Meyer, *Trilogie altindischer Mächte und Feste der Vegetation* (Zürich-Leipzig, 1937), III, p. 255 f.

sacrificer from *aṃhas*” it appears that *aṃhas* and prosperity were opposites. In Āp. Śr. sū. 9, 11, 15 this formula is used in a rite to be executed in order to obliterate impure footprints by means of a cow.³⁰ Cf. also Kāth. 10, 10; 36, 3. According to Kāth. 36, 1 the creatures were “seized by *aṃhas*” when the Maruts had set their minds on their place of birth. “Seized by *aṃhas*” is also the man who is sick or diseased (Kāth. 10, 9); he therefore should sacrifice to Indra *aṃhomuc-*; see also Taitt. Br. 3, 9, 17, 4.

Some words must be said on this compound *aṃhomuc-* “delivering from distress”, ṚV. 10, 63, 9 an epithet beside “the benevolent one” (*sukṛt-*) given to Indra; AthV. 19, 42, 3 beside *suṛāvan-* “who rescues well” to the same god (cf. also st. 4 and TS. 1, 6, 12, 3; 4); cf. also Taitt. Br. 2, 7, 13, 3 etc. VS. 4, 12 to the water drunk by those speaking: “free from all distress and disease, . . . divine, immortal strengtheners of eternal order (. . . *ayakṣmā anamīvā anāgasah . . . amṛtā ṛtāvṛdhah*).³¹ Cf. also Śat. Br. 3, 2, 2, 20 and other texts. By sacrificing to Agni *aṃhomuc* one is freed from the *aṃhas* by which one is caught (*aṃhasā . . . grhūtaḥ*: Taitt. Br. 3, 9, 17, 4). In Maitr. Saṃh. 2, 2, 10 an explication of Indra’s character as *aṃhomuc-* is given: *eṣā vā indrasya bheṣajā tanūr yad aṃhomuc* “*aṃhomuc* is Indra’s healing form (manifestation)”: he frees from *aṃhas* (cf. Kāth. 10,9). Compare also 2, 3, 1 where the gods Mitra and Varuṇa are implored to deliver a person from *aṃhas* by their *ojas* form or manifestation (*ojasyā tanūḥ*), by their *sahas* form, their *yātu* form (i.e. that ‘body’ of theirs which is serviceable against witchcraft: *yātavyā tanūḥ*, and by their *rakṣasyā tanūḥ*, i.e. their anti-demoniacal appearance: from these formulas it may be concluded that *aṃhas* was put on a par with the evil activity of demons and sorcerers and could be counteracted by *ojas* “the power-substance of creative and vital energy” and *sahas* “the power-substance of victoriousness and superiority”. Cf. also Kāth. 11, 11. Indra *aṃhomuc-* and Indra *suṛāman-* “the good protector” are associated: Maitr. Saṃh. 2, 6, 6. Or Indra *aṃhomuc-*, Agni *aṃhomuc-* and Mitra, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Savitar, the Aśvins, the Maruts, Heaven and Earth, – all of them being called *āgomucaḥ*, i.e. “the deliverers from sin or from the transgressions”,³² and the *viśve devāḥ enomucaḥ* “deliverers from *enas*”: ibid. 3, 15, 11. These gods are the typical rescuers and protectors. Ibid. 4, 3, 9 the function of Indra *aṃhomuc-* is somewhat specified “if one has committed sin (*enas*) ‘on this side of his birth’ this god

³⁰ See W. Caland, *Das Śrautasūtra des Āpastamba*, II (Amsterdam, 1924), p. 92 f.

³¹ Cf. also Ath. V. Par. 46, 7, 3.

³² See e.g. Rodhe, *o.c.*, p. 138 ff. etc.

will free him from it". Cf. also *ibid.* 4, 12, 3: 182, 15; 4, 14, 6, p. 223, 11; Taitt. Saṃh. 2, 4, 2, 2f.; 7, 5, 22. For Agni, the god of fire as *aṃhomucsee* e.g. also Maitr. Saṃh. 3, 16, 5; Kāṭh. 22, 15 : 17, 4 f.; Taitt. Br. 3, 9, 16, 4.

A curious use of *aṃhas* appears in the phrase *aṃhasas pati* "Lord of distress" which VS. 7, 30 and 22, 31 occurs as a name of the genius of the thirteenth or intercalary month; cf. also Taitt. Saṃh. 1, 4, 14; 6, 5, 3, 4; Śat. Br. 4, 3, 1, 20; Taitt. Br. 3, 10, 7, 1. As this intercalated month necessary to bring the two incommensurable periods given by the sun and the moon into agreement, was already known in Vedic times,³³ a thirteenth month being repeatedly mentioned in the brāhmaṇas,³⁴ it may be supposed to have become early an object of magico-religious speculation. As another Sanskrit name of this thirteenth month is *samsarpa*-: "which glides into" it obviously was, in a natural manner, considered as something which forced its way into the normal order of months. Is there room for the supposition that that is the reason why the evil represented by this abnormality was considered an *aṃhas*?, for it was in a way an *aṃhas* because its genius was called "Lord of *aṃhas*".³⁵ It probably was an evil because 'leap years' and intercalated periods are widely considered inauspicious. "Das Schaltjahr³⁶ ist im Volksglauben, wie alles vom Normalen und Geregeltten Abweichende, unglückbringend. . . Wichtige Unternehmungen gedeihen in einem Schaltjahr nicht. Was man baut oder anpflanzt, gerät nicht. In einem Schaltjahr ist manches verkehrt. Schalttage galten schon bei den alten Mexikanern als Unglückstage, an denen man nicht arbeiten durfte. Wer zu dieser Zeit geboren wurde, galt als Unglückskind".³⁷ This popular belief was also Indian. In a very interesting description of some scenes of the religious life of the Mandaeans in South Iraq³⁸ Lady Drower relates that on the occasion of their five-day feast (*panja*) - i.e. the ceremonies to be performed during the five days and a quarter inserted between the end of one month and the

³³ Compare e.g. RV. 1, 25, 8 and the Index (vol. 50) of the well-known series *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford).

³⁴ See e.g. Śat. Br. 5, 4, 5, 23; 6, 2, 2, 29; 9, 1, 1, 43.

³⁵ For the relation between powers and their gods see the author's treatise *Sūnuḥ sahasas*, which is to appear elsewhere.

³⁶ On the difficulties in reckoning months in primitive societies, see especially M. P. Nilsson, *Primitive time-reckoning* (Lund, 1920), p. 240 ff.

³⁷ G. Jungbauer, in *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, VII (Berlin-Leipzig, 1935/36), 996 ff. "In Bezug auf das Unglück selbst, das dem Menschen an diesen Tagen droht, heisst es oft ganz allgemein dasz alles miszlingt, was man unternimmt" (*ibidem*, 1438).

³⁸ E. T. Drower, "Scenes and sacraments in a Mandaean sanctuary," *Numen, Int. Rev. for the Hist. of Religions*, III (1956), p. 72 ff.

beginning of another in order to bring their lunar year into line with the solar year – every Mandaean should be baptised, remember his dead, and take part in sacraments for the dead. This baptism which is of great antiquity is to wash away sin; it is a purification and exorcism of demons, symbolizing rebirth. The tribe of the Changs (Assam-Birma) who reckon eleven months to the year fill the remaining part in with a period which is not reckoned at all, but is regarded as night. It may not be counted because it belongs to the spirits.³⁹ One of the Sanskrit names of this month leaves no room for doubt: *mala-māsa*- “the month of impurity”, another, *malimluca*- means also “robber, thief”; “imp, demon” and “mosquito”. “The month called Malimluca is polluted (*malina*-) and springs from sin (guilt: *pāpa*-); it is condemned for all acts; it should be discarded in all rites in honour of gods and deceased fathers” (Gṛhyapariś.⁴⁰). The ‘sinful’ i.e. ritually impure character of this extra-ordinary month is also apparent from such statements as that found in the Aitareya-brāhmaṇa (1, 12, 2 f.): the vendor of soma and the thirteenth month (which in the beginning had sold the soma to the gods) are *pāpa*- “sinful, wicked; inauspicious”.

Passing on now to some other related words the Vedic *aṃhati*- may be described as meaning “distress, straitened circumstances”: ṚV. 1, 94, 2 the man who is Agni’s favourite has success and authority, enemies and *aṃhati*- do not afflict him (*sá tūtāva nainam aśnoty aṃhatih*); 8, 75, 9 the *aṃhati*- is described as coming from a malevolent hater, crushing the victim like waves which beat a ship; 67, 2 Mitra etc. are asked to help men over (*ati-pr-*) *aṃhati*, and st. 21 this term is put on a par with “hatred” (*dveṣas*), “bodily injury” (*rapas*), and an elliptic expression which according to Sāyaṇa, means a closed net; in 5, 55, 10 the poet asks the Maruts to lead his clients and himself from *aṃhati*- towards welfare (*vasyas*). Indian lexicographers of a later period explain this word by “disease”.

The root noun *aiṃh-*, fem. gen., occurring ṚV. 6, 3, 1 – where in opposition to peace and tranquillity it combines with *tyajas-* “difficulties caused by abandonment” – has a similar sense. For the combination compare, in the Avesta, Yt. 10, 22 *qzanḥat* . . . ⁱ*ḍiyajḥat*.

Returning for a moment to the above *durita-*, which was not correctly interpreted by Grassmann,⁴¹ it should be observed that this rather frequent term, though sometimes referring to committed sin, in most cases means something like “mishap, disaster, including outward disaster and

³⁹ J. E. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas* (London, 1921), p. 262, n. 1.

⁴⁰ Quoted by P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, IV (Poona, 1953), p. 546.

⁴¹ “Eigentlich “das schlimm ergehende””, *Wörterbuch*, 613.

various evil”.⁴² The original sense must, as already stated, have been “faring ill; something that has turned evil”. It is one of those terms which is often used in the same context as *enas* “sin”, *bhaya-* “fear, alarm”, *abhihrut-* “injury, damage”. Although the verb *nayati* “to conduct” with which *duritam aṃhas* and *dviṣaḥ* “hates” is associated (10, 126, 1), may, like the substantives, have been metaphorically used the combination is worth mentioning: “the man whom Aryaman etc. conduct is safe from these manifestations of evil”. Cf. also 1, 41, 3; 2, 27, 5; 6, 51, 10; 10, 63, 13; 10, 126, 6; 10, 161, 3; 3, 20, 4; 4, 39, 1; 5, 3, 11; 5, 77, 3; 6, 15, 15; 7, 32, 15; 8, 97, 15; 9, 59, 3; 9, 70, 9; 10, 31, 1; 10, 96, 8. A more literal sense may also be supposed to occur RV. 6, 75, 10 *pūṣā naḥ pātu duritāt* “Pūṣan – the god of the roads – must protect us against *durita-*” (“vor dem Abweg”, Geldner) – this stanza belongs to a text used in blessing a military expedition – and 9, 97, 16 where the soma draught is implored to provide those praying with good paths and good roads, to make broadness, and to destroy all *durita-* (plural); cf. also 1, 99, 1; 6, 68, 8; 8, 18, 17; 9, 62, 2; 8, 42, 3 “we would embark in the boat which conveys easily across (the river) by which we may get through all *durita-* (pl.)”; 10, 93, 6 “the man who is protected by the Aśvins etc. – the verb used is *uruṣyatām* – passes all *durita-* (pl.) like a desert”.

Other words which may be used in contrast with *uru-* “wide, broad” – which, as we have seen, is an opposite of *aṃhu-* and as such can express the idea of “broadness, freedom, wide or free space, room” – are *nid-* “mocking, contempt; mocker, blamer”, which 2, 34, 15 is coordinated with *aṃhas*: 5, 87, 6 *té na uruṣyatā nidāḥ* “protect us against contempt”; 6, 14, 5; *pariṣūti-* “urging from all sides, oppression, beleaguering”: 1, 119, 6 *rebhām pariṣūter uruṣyathāḥ* “ihr befreiet den Rebha aus der Umschnürung” – 9, 85, 8 this “Umklammerung” is “vielleicht perzonifiziert, eine dem Soma nachstellende Unholdin”⁴³ –; *abhiṣasti-* “imprecation, damnation; effect of imprecation, misfortune, evil, accusation, defamation” which 1, 91, 15 combining with *aṃhas*, depends on *uruṣya* “protect us, O Śoma, against imprecation and distress” and 8, 66, 14 is accompanied by “desperateness” (*amati-*) and “hunger”; *aghāyat-* “who intends to injure”: cf. 4, 2, 6 *viśvasmāt sīm aghāyatā uruṣya* “make broadness for him (i.e. protect him) against every malevolent being”; similarly, 5, 24, 3; *samṛti-* “(inimical) contact, conflict”; 8, 101, 4.

The importance of these semantic developments and the light which they throw on the difficulties of ancient Aryan life, many of which

⁴² See Rodhe, *o.c.*, p. 74 etc.

⁴³ Geldner, *o.c.*, III, p. 78.

materialized as powers to be feared and revered, renders it worth while to consider some other words of a similar character. First the pair *durga-* and *suga-*. As an adjective *durga-* means “difficult of approach or access, impassable”, as a substantive: “a difficult or narrow passage, a place difficult of access” and also “rough ground”, or “a stronghold or citadel”, then also “a difficulty, danger, distress”: cf. e.g. ṚV. 8, 93, 10 “also on a difficult road, O Indra, procure for us a good path” (*durgé cin naḥ sugám kṛdhi*); 6, 21, 12, likewise addressed to Indra: “be Thou our guide on good roads, on difficult roads preparing a way” (*sá no bodhi puraetá sugésútá durgéṣu pathikṛt . . .*). For definite classes of sinners the earth is hard to go upon: Ath. V. 12, 4, 23; in the same corpus, 10, 1, 16 “no road” (*apatha-*) is opposed to “light” (*lux*), and witchcraft which is to be cast out is ordered off “by a distant (road) beyond ninety difficult navigable (*suga-*) streams”. In the more extended and general sense of “difficulties”: 19, 50, 2 (night is implored for protection:) “do thou pass us always over difficulties (*durgāni*)”; 7, 63, 1. The opposite *suga-* is not only used for “a good path”, but also for “an easy or successful course, prosperity, welfare”. Compare e.g. ṚV. 8, 93, 10 (see above); 6, 51, 15 *kártū no ádhvann á sugám* “schaffet uns unterwegs gute Fahrt” (Geldner); 2, 23, 7; 5, 54, 6; and for the ‘completely metaphorical’ use: 7, 104, 7 “things must not be going well with the criminal” (*duṣkṛte má sugám bhūt*), cf. 10, 86, 5; 1, 106, 5; especially interesting is 1, 102, 4 (= 6, 44, 18) where *sugam* and *varivas* (a word related to *uru-*) are coordinated: *asmábhyam indra várivaḥ sugám kṛdhi* “schaff uns Freibahn und gute Fahrt” (Geldner); cf. also 9, 62, 2 *vighnánto duritá puru sugá . . . kṛṇvántaḥ* “die die vielen Fährlichkeiten brechen und . . . gute Bahnen bereiten” (Geldner; subject: the soma drops), and 10, 113, 10 *sugébhīr vísvā duritá tarema vidó śú na urviyá gādhām adyá* “may we pass over (surmount) with good paths (a successful course) all difficult roads (difficulties); find for us widely a ford, today”.⁴⁴ ṚV. 1, 91, 1 we find *tvám rájiṣṭham ánu neṣi pánthām* “do Thou (Soma) guide us along the straightest way”.

For reasons of space only one further point may be touched upon here. By performing certain sacrifices to Indra *sutrāman-* “Indra the protector” and Indra *aṃhomuc-* “Indra who delivers from distress”, one could win blessings; the formula pronounced on that occasion runs as follows: “may the king, the slayer of Vṛtra, be our king and slay the enemy” (Taitt. Br. 1, 7, 3, 7; cf. TS. 1, 8, 9, 2). Here a relation appears to exist

⁴⁴ “Bildlich zu verstehen. Der Sänger wünscht alle Klippen der Rede glücklich zu umgehen” (Geldner, *o.c.*, III, p. 336). It would appear to me that the last part of this comment might be formulated in a more general way.

between the great mythical exploit, the Vṛtra combat, and deliverance from the evil called *aṃhas*. In this connection the undeniable fact may be emphasized that the very name of the great antagonist of Indra derives from the root *vṛ-* which means: “to cover, surround, obstruct, keep back, hinder, restrain”. Now, Vṛtra is certainly not identical with *aṃhas* and *vṛ-* and *aṃh-* are no synonymous roots. But, to whatever view of the original character of the great evil or demon we may adhere, it represented a very formidable obstacle to the welfare of the Aryan community, whether it is described as encompassing the rivers or causing other obstruction. Its name (“der Bedränger”) and character show without a shadow of doubt that the minds of the Vedic Indians and their forefathers were much preoccupied with fear of being enclosed and surrounded, not only on their earthly roads, pastures and territories, but also with regard to the range of action of divine powers active in the heavens and the atmosphere.⁴⁵

This is a convenient place to discuss also the Vedic term *tyajas* which, if I am not mistaken, conveys a sense nearly related to that of *aṃhas*. The translations proposed by Grassmann:⁴⁶ “1) Wurfwaffe; 2) Angriff, Gewaltthat” are less convincing than those given by Roth:⁴⁷ “1) Verlassenheit, Noth; Gefahr; 2) Entfremdung, Abneigung, Missgunst, = *krodha*-Naigh. 2, 13”. The latter equivalence was adopted by Geldner:⁴⁸ – “wie (*krodha-*) bedeutet *tyajas* Zorn, Hass, Feindschaft” – whose explication of the word was justly rejected by Oldenberg.⁴⁹ This scholar was no doubt right in arguing that a study of the meaning of the noun *tyajas* cannot be disconnected from that of the verb *tyaj-*. The thesis might indeed be defended that *tyajas* ‘originally’ denoted the idea of “abandonment” in both senses: “the act of giving up, relinquishing, or forsaking” and “the state of being forsaken”. In more or less ‘primitive’ communities isolation, attended with anxiety and insecurity is much dreaded and considered a very great evil, which when manifesting itself in a striking form could be thought of as a power. To a man overtaken by *tyajas* all services were – we might easily imagine – refused and his very existence in the community was most difficult. That the verb *tyaj-* can express this meaning is beyond doubt: ṚV. 10, 71, 6 “who has left an intimate

⁴⁵ See also the author’s *Aspects of early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht, 1954), p. 28 ff. etc.

⁴⁶ Grassmann, *Wörterbuch*, 553.

⁴⁷ Roth, in the *Petr. Dict.*, III, 412.

⁴⁸ R. Pischel and K. F. Geldner, *Vedische Studien*, II (Stuttgart, 1897), p. 32 f.

⁴⁹ H. Oldenberg, “Über *tyajas*”, *Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenl. Ges.*, LV (1901), p. 281 f. (with references and particulars not mentioned in the above text). — It is the author’s intention to revert to the etymology of this word in another article.

friend in the lurch . . . does not know the path of virtue” (*yás tityāja sacividaṃ sákhāyam . . . nahí pravéda sukṛtásya pánthām*⁵⁰). With regard to the substantive ṚV. 1, 166, 12 may be quoted as one of the most evident places: *índraś caná tyájasā ví hruṇāti táj jánāya yásmai sukṛte árádhvam* “auch Indra macht sie (die Gabe der Marut) nicht aus Feindschaft dem frommen Mann abwendig, dem ihr sie geschenkt habt”, rather: “even Indra does not frustrate that to the prejudice of that man . . . , abandoning him” (cf. also Sāyaṇa’s *tyāgena*); 1, 119, 8⁵¹ mention is made of a man (Bhujyu) who was lamenting in the distance, because he was “pressed down” (“ins Wasser hinabgestoszen”, Geldner⁵² or “oppressed”) by the *tyajas* (“abandonment”) of his own father. In 6, 62, 10 evil indicated by the words *sánutyena tyájasā* is imprecated upon the heads of the plotters: the adjective, deriving from *sanutar* “aside, off, away, far from” is used in opposition to *antara-* “near” – compare 6, 5, 4 where it has a similar sense – and a probable translation might be “wring the necks of the plotters by means of a distant abandonment on the part of men (human beings, cf. 8, 71, 1)”, i.e. “destroy them in isolation”. Elsewhere this meaning is in any case possible: ṚV. 8, 47, 7 those who are protected by the Ādityas are not afflicted by intense and heavy *tyajas*, both adjectives, *tigma-* and *guru-* admitting of a ‘metaphorical’ use; 1, 169, 1;⁵³ 4, 43, 4 (*uruṣyatam* in the same line); 10, 79, 6; 10, 144, 6; 6, 3, 1 (see above) *yám . . . déva pási tyájasā mártam aṃhaḥ* “the mortal man whom Thou protectest against *aṃhas* as a result of *tyajas* (abandonment, isolation)”.

In investigating the significance of Vedic terms relating to ‘Weltanschauung’ attention should be directed also to the etymologically related terms in the other Indo-European languages, in order to detect, as far as possible, which elements in the ideas under discussion were inherited and which were new and proper to the ancient Indians. Moreover, a comparative study is not only of interest, but a necessity from the point of view of comparative semantics, a province of historical linguistics much neglected by the authors of etymological dictionaries.

The cognate words in the Avesta, though semantically closely related, exhibit traces of what may appear to be a further development of sense without, however, showing reminiscences of nomadic life. The principal

⁵⁰ For the same use in later texts see e.g. *Petr. Dict.*, III, 408 f.

⁵¹ See especially Oldenberg, *o.c.*, p. 281.

⁵² Cf. also RV. 7, 68, 7 where Bhujyu is left in the lurch by malevolent companions in the midst of the waves.

⁵³ Cf. Geldner’s note, *o.c.*, I, p. 246, drawing attention to a parallelism between *tyajas* and *enas* “sin, guilt”.

meaning of *qzah* (AInd. *aṃhas*) seems to have been that of “straitness, distress, affliction”: cf. e.g. Yt. 10, 22, where it is followed by *ʾθyaʾjah-*, another term for “trouble, danger” which is etymologically identical with AInd. *tyájas-*, which has already been discussed. See also Yt. 13, 41; 146 etc. Sometimes the context seems to suggest the sense of “confinement, captivity” another form of “narrowness”: Y. 10, 17; V. 18, 10 (in opposition to “liberty”). Cf. also the compound *qzō.būg-* “delivering from affliction or confinement”, e.g. Yt. 13, 134. Bartholomae’s translation⁵⁴ of *qzanhe* “zu bedrängen, in Not zu bringen” (Yt. 13, 39) seems to be correct; *qzō.ʾjata-* (often “killed by dogs and wolves” V. 7, 3) may be “durch Erdrosselung getötet”, since Yt. 5, 127 *hā hē maiḍīm nyāzata* obviously means “she laces herself (tightly)”. V. 13, 30 the same *nī-qz-*: “pushing” (a piece of wood) into (a mouth, i.e. into a narrow passage). As far as appearances allow us to infer, the central or ‘original’ sense was, in Avestan, that of “narrowness”, not that of “tying” (“schnüren”) as was supposed by the author of the dictionary. The meaning “to lace oneself in”, like “strangling”, may be considered to be only a special form of “narrowing”.

In Old-Slavonic we find *qzəkə* “narrow”⁵⁵ (Matth. 7, 13; 14), an ancient *-u-* stem corresponding to AInd. *aṃhu-* etc. This word survives in Russ. *úzkij* “narrow” (Dutch “smal, nauw, eng”); Pol. *wąski* “narrow”; Cz. *úzký* “narrow; pinched, oppressed; anxious; needy, indigent”; Slov. *ózek* “narrow”; Serbocr. *üzak* “id”. Other OChS. relatives are *qzostə* “Enge, Beengung” ~ OHD. *angust* “fear, fright” (cf. Lat. *angustus*),⁵⁶ and *qzilište* “prison.” In Lithuanian *añkštas* (*añksztas*) means “narrow”; as a substantive it stands for “a narrow place”; the verb *ankštinù* means “to make narrow(er)”. In Celtic languages we find for instance Brit. *enk* “narrow”, *concoez* (< **com-anged-*) meaning “throat-disease”, Ir. *ing* “Bedrängnis, Klemme” – for this Ir. *ing* the following meanings are, moreover, given: “force, compulsion, obligation; peril, danger; a neck of land” –; Cymr. *ing* “bedrängte Lage”; in these idioms the root under consideration is also clearly used in opposition to “broad, wide”, but also to “abundantly, wealthy”.

The German relatives are, generally speaking, of considerable interest. The Gothic *aggwus* (< IE. *oñghu-*, cf. OChSl. *qzəkə*) serves, Matth. 7, 13

⁵⁴ Chr. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), 362.

⁵⁵ For the form of the word see W. Vondrák, *Vergl. Slavische Grammatik*, I (Göttingen, 1924), p. 148, 162, 426; *ibidem*, p. 209 f. on *vezati* “to bind” (see also H. Pedersen, *Kuhn’s Zeitschrift*, 38, p. 311; 39, p. 437).

⁵⁶ See e.g. K. Brugmann, *Grundriss der vergl. Grammatik der indogerm. Sprachen*, II (1892), p. 289.

and 14 to render Gr. στενός “narrow, strait”, (εἰσέλθετε διὰ τῆς στενῆς πύλης, as opposed to the πλατεῖα πύλη “the broad gate”). The subst. *ga-aggwei* translates στενοχωρία “confined space”. In medieval and modern Dutch *enge* is opposed to “wide, broad, spacious” (“wijd, ruim”): it is used, inter alia, in connection with a path, gateway, passage, room, clothes etc.; often, but not always, the meaning of this adjective implies the idea of “being locked or closed in”. Hence such connotations as “oppressive, causing a feeling of physical or (and) psychical oppression, of slight fear”; especially in colloquial usage (and among girls) *eng* means “producing a certain feeling of dislike, repugnance, aversion, horror etc.”; creepy, weird”: *'t is eng om in het donker langs een smalle weg te gaan; ik vind het eng om met die man alleen te zijn*. An *engerd* is a horrible fellow or horror.⁵⁷ Similar meanings belong to the Germ. *enge*:⁵⁸ the grave is called *das enge, dunkle Haus*: compare the English expression: *a narrow bed*. In the translation of the Bible *enge* is (Jos. 17, 15 and 2 Macc. 12, 21) used in connection with mountains: for a numerous people the mountains are too *enge*, they should descent to the woods and clear them, an injunction which could have been directed to the Vedic Aryans. Germ. *enge* further applies to paths, passes, defiles, tracts of land etc. – e.g. *denn dein wüstes, verstörtes und zerbrochenes Land wird dir ... zu enge werden, drinne zu wohnen*, again a Vedic thought, and hence Goethe's *mir wird zu eng*. As an adverb *eng(e)* occurs e.g. *in enge in einander wohnen = anguste habitare*. The substantive *Enge* is e.g. employed in the phrase *in die Enge treiben* “press a person hard, drive a person to the wall etc.” In Old English *enge* meant “narrow” (houses, passes; hell being the *engestan* i.e. narrowest realm) and “anxious”. The Old Norse *öng* was equivalent to “narrow” (Dan. “snæver”, Germ. “eng”) also in the extended sense of economically “limited, pover, scanty” (Dan. “trang”); the subst. *öngd* means, in German “Bedrängnis, Drangsal”. ON. *angr* may be translated by “sorrow, affliction, harm”; *angra* “do harm, teaze, vex, cause sorrow etc.” It is significant that Germ. and Dutch *angst*, OHG. *angust* etc., which continuing a prehistoric **anghos-ti*, express such ideas as “fear, terror, fright, or anguish” belong to this same family of words, a frequent phrase being *mir ist, wird, angst* (hence the modern adj. *angst*). The cognate OHG *ango*, MHG *ange* is at the root of the adj. and adv. *bange*, Dutch *bang*⁵⁹ – in medieval Dutch *het doet hem*

⁵⁷ The reader may also consult *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, s.v.

⁵⁸ Cf. also Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, III (1862), 469 f.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Franck-van Wijk, *Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*² (Den Haag, 1929), p. 32 f.; Kluge-Götze, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*¹⁵ (Berlin, 1951), p. 50.

anghe meant “it oppresses him, it makes it hot for him, worries him” – which, expressing the sense of “afraid, uneasy” does not only convey the idea of ‘Mutlosigkeit’, but also that of “eine quälende Sorge, zweifelnder, beengender Zustand überhaupt”. Luther’s attempt to define the contents of *angst*⁶⁰ may be reproduced here: “Angst im ebraischen lautet als *das enge ist*, wie ich achte, das im deutschen auch *angst* daher komme, das *enge* sei, darin einem *bange* und wehe wird und gleich beklemmet, gedrückt und gepresst wird, wie denn die anfechtungen und unglück thun, nach dem sprichwort, *es war mir die weite welt zu enge*”. Thus we find in the German Bible Ps. 4, 2 *Gott . . . der du mich tröstest in angst*. With regard to *bang*, *bange*, attention may be drawn to such instances as Bible, Es. 13, 8 *es wird inen bang sein, wie einer gebererin*; 26, 18 *und ist uns bange, das wir kaum adem holen*; Lam. Jer. 1, 20 *wie bange ist mir, das mirs im leibe weh thut*; 1 Macc. 9, 7 *da Judas sahe, das die feinde auf in drungen, ward im bang*; (Fleming) *das reisen macht mir bange*. In connection with the Dutch *angst* the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*⁶¹ observes that, generally speaking, *angst* is “benauwdheid” (i.e. “closeness, oppression”) but in an older and a younger sense which were clearly distinct in medieval usage, whereas in modern times the older has almost disappeared: in the first meaning *angst* refers to the state of the person who is oppressed, “who is in a state of closeness”, in the second to the subjective feeling of embarrassment, fight, terror, distress. From the meaning “kwellend, nood” i.e. “vexation, torment, trouble, distress” another use developed, viz. that of “danger, risk”. The second meaning may be illustrated by a few quotations: *de angst des doods* “the fits of oppression preceding the moment of dying”, i.e. pangs of death; in (Conscience): *de angst had haar alle gevoel ontnomen*, *angst* is a feeling of oppression, tightness, fear; *de angst bekruipt iemand* means “fear creeps over a person”. *Angst* is attended with a feeling of tightness of the chest, constriction, oppression, bewilderment, sometimes also with trembling, or even with paralysis. It may also appear without any objective cause, being occasioned by physical or psychical affections. The adjective *bang* originally also presupposed oppression, constriction, strain; the man who is *bang* felt uncomfortable; nowadays the usual meanings of the word are “uneasy; nervous; afraid”, but in Flanders and Zeeland *de lucht is bang* or *het weer is bang* still means “het is benauwend, drukkend in de lucht”, i.e. “the weather is close, sultry”. Formerly, *bang* was generally used of anything which oppresses the body, especially breast, throat etc., and

⁶⁰ Quoted in Grimm, *o.c.*, I, 358.

⁶¹ Vol. II (Den Haag-Leiden, 1898), 461.

also of that which at the same time makes the mind anxious, cf. e.g. *een bange droom* "a frightening dream"; *bange dagen* "anxious days"; moreover it is often used of occurrences which weigh heavily upon the mind alone, *het iemand bang maken* means "iemand in het nauw brengen".

In Latin, the *u*-stem **anghu-* may be supposed to have survived in *angi-portum-, -us* "a small and narrow bystreet". In the substantive *angor* which is based on **ang^e/o^s-* (> AInd. *amhas*, OHG. *angust*, ModGerm. *angst* etc.) the meaning "constriction, feeling of psychical oppression, uneasiness, anxiousness" (*angores = molestiae, sollicitudines*) combines with that of "physical oppression" and suffocation, strangling": *angor est animi vel corporis cruciatus* (Paul. F. 83). Although these meanings are usually given in the reverse order, the 'psychical' connotations cannot, in view of the above cognate words in other languages, be proved to be merely secondary in character. Anyhow the idea of tightness or narrowness was still present to the Romans themselves: cf. Ovid. *Met.* 9, 78 *angebarr, ceu guttura forcipe pressus*; and also Cic. *Tusc.* 4, 18 *angor est aegritudo premens*. From **angostos* comes *angustus*⁶² in which the primary sense of the word has been clearly preserved: "narrow (not wide or broad)", of a path, way, bridge, pit, opening, ravine or mountain-pass, steep and sloping mountains, the entrance of a harbour etc.; as a substantive, *angustum* means "a confined space"; *angusta viarum* are "passes". The same adjective has, moreover, a variety of extended meanings: "limited, indigent; precarious, critical; narrow-minded"; *angustum* being also "narrowness, unpleasant predicament, embarrassment, danger". The subst. *angustiae* is equivalent to "narrowness" (of a road), the plural meaning "mountain-passes", but *angustiae spiritus* is "shortness of breath"; moreover, "need, indigence, distress, straitened circumstances, difficulties" etc. The adj. *anxius* < **ang-s-io-s*, the source of Engl. *anxious* denotes the idea of "uneasy, solicitous, apprehensive, anxious, afraid". Those etymological dictionaries⁶³ which derive this word from the verb *angere* "to press tight, throttle, cause pain, vex" are mistaken: for **anxus*, *anxius* and *ango* cf. *noxa*, *noxius* and *noceo*; *alsus*, *alsius* and *algeo*; sometimes this adjective means "alarming" (e.g. *Lucr.* 3, 993). It is also open to doubt whether those authors are right who with Paulus (F. 8, 3: *angor . . . strangulatione dictus*) regard the 'psychical' meanings of *angere*

⁶² See also A. Ernout-A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, I (Paris, 1951), p. 59.

⁶³ See e.g. H. C. Wyld, *The universal dictionary of the English language* (London), s.v.

⁶⁴ Cf. e.g. K. E. Georges, *Ausführliches Lateinisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch*, I (Leipzig, 1879), 399. Walde and Pokorny do not even mention this meaning (cf. e.g. J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bern, p. 42).

(“to alarm, torment, vex”) as secondary:⁶⁴ at the root of both uses seems to have been the idea of oppressing, choking or gasping for breath, irrespective of the cause, which might have been lack of space or room (cf. e.g. Val. Fl. 4, 688 *fluctuque coacto angitur*), subjective feelings of fear or uneasiness, anyone’s attempt to throttle the victim or the pressure of various difficulties and alarming circumstances.⁶⁵

At first sight, the Greek relatives seem to have specialized in meaning: ἀγχω means “strangle, throttle”, but this sense may be supposed to have arisen from that of “squeezing (tightly)”, which still occurs in the Iliad: Γ 371 ἀγχι δέ μιν... ἰμάς ἀπαλήν ὑπὸ δειρήν “he was choked by the strop under his soft throat”; hence also such meanings as “to embrace” and “to hug (in wrestling)”. The substantive ἀγχόνη stands for “strangling, hanging”. The more original use of the word group ἀγχ- is still to be seen in ἀγκτήρ 1) “an instrument for closing wounds (more literally: “an object serving to make narrower”); 2) a part of the throat; 3) bandage”; 4) in the plural: “bonds” and in ἀγχι and ἀγχού “near” (cf. Fr. *près* < Lat. *pressus*, *presse* “pressed, squeezed”), and in ἄσσον < *ἀγχιον “comparatively near, nearer”, which is especially used of an hostile approach: cf. A 567. The absence of *u*-stems (Skt. *amhu-*) in Greek is worth noticing.⁶⁶

In view of the above meanings and connotations there appears to be reason for doubt about the correctness of the opinions expressed by the authors of comparative dictionaries with regard to the ‘original’ or ‘fundamental’ sense of the root *angh-*. Neither Walde-Pokorny’s⁶⁷ “eng, einengen, schnüren” nor Hofmann’s “einengen”,⁶⁸ Buck’s “tight or pressed”⁶⁹ and Boisacq’s “serrer”⁷⁰ carry complete conviction. Some authors do not give any fundamental meaning at all.⁷¹ The general idea

⁶⁵ The name of the rather mysterious Roman divinity Angerona was brought into connection with the root under discussion by F. Stolz, *Hist. Grammatik der Lateinischen Sprache*, I (Leipzig, 1894–5), p. 488 (rejected by A. Walde-J. B. Hofmann, *Lat. etymol. Wörterbuch*, I, p. 47) and H. Wagenvoort, *Mnemosyne*, N.S. III (1941), p. 215 ff., who draws special attention to the *fauces Orci* and the *angustiae* past which the nether world is reached.

⁶⁶ See also Hj. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1954), p. 17 f. For ἀύχην see *ibidem*, p. 192, and Walde-Pokorny, *o.c.*, I, p. 62 f.

⁶⁷ A. Walde-J. Pokorny, *o.c.*, I, p. 62. Similarly, Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, p. 42.

⁶⁸ J. B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*² (Heidelberg, 1938), p. 47; *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen* (München, 1950), p. 3.

⁶⁹ C. D. Buck, *A dictionary of selected synonyms in the principal I. E. languages* (Chicago, 1949), p. 886.

⁷⁰ E. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, p. 11.

⁷¹ E.g. Hj. Frisk, *o.c.*, p. 17 f. suggesting, by doing so, that the sense prevalent in

expressed by this root seems rather to have been, primarily that of spatial narrowness in a general sense of the word, then also the feeling of physical and psychical oppression experienced by those who find themselves in a limited space. Hence, in part of the Indo-European territory the idea of social and economical ‘narrowness’, various special forms of confinement and the immediate bodily experiences such as want of breath, suffocation, strangling, psychical experiences such as fear, serious difficulties, etc. It would be interesting to examine the semantic relations between these concepts in a great variety of other, modern and non-Indo-European, languages. A close connection between “narrowness” and certain somatic and psychical sensations and conditions is a priori likely to appear in many of them. A few instances collected at random may be quoted in substantiation of this assertion. The Greek στενοχωρία “narrowness of space, a confined space” was also used for “straits, difficulty, distress”; the phrase στενωῶς διακείσθαι meant “to be in difficulties”: στενός “narrow”. SCroat. *tjeskoba* “anxiety” ‘literally’ is “tightness, narrowness”: *tjesan* “tight, narrow”;⁷² similarly, Czech *úzkost* “anxiety”: *úzký* “tight, narrow”. In Hungarian *szűk* “narrow, strait, tight” is also used to denote such ideas as “scarcity, dearth, shortage, deficiency”; in combination with other words also “restricted, illiberal, stingy etc.” In Hebrew *šar* expresses the ideas of “narrow” and “oppression, distress”; *mešar* and *mušāk* those of “a narrow place” and “distress”. In Malay, *sempit* – which belongs to a wide-spread root *pit* to which may be attributed the general sense “shutting in on both sides”, various derivatives denoting such ideas as “nipping, pressing between two objects, persons, connected or unconnected surfaces, pressing together, holding tightly etc.” – does not only mean: “confined (of space); shut in, cramped”, but, in definite phrases, also “limited (in) means; poverty”; one of its opposites is *lapang* “empty space, vacuity”. In the word *sesak* three meanings combine: “packed close together, tightness in breathing” and “pressure of want or sorrow or difficulties”. Another word, *pitjik* “narrow, confined” (also to denote “smallness of the world, lack of space” for definite people), is dialectically used in the sense of “exiguous (of means)”. In Bare’e (Celebes) *ipu* – which is identical with OJav. *ipu* “anxious, uneasy, troubled, desperate” – means “narrow, jammed, locked”; it helps to form phrases meaning “distressed; oppressed; uneasy, anxious”.

Greek (“zuschnüren, endrosseln”) was the original one. Cf. also S. Feist, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Gotischen Sprache* (Leiden, 1939), p. 13 f.

⁷² Cf. F. Miklosich, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der slavischen Sprachen* (Wien, 1886), p. 357.

The Buginese (Celebes) *séka* answers to our “narrow, limited”, “choking, stifling”, “oppressive”, “difficult, intricate”, “being in trouble”. In Bola’ang-Mongondow (Celebes) *sisi*’ is “narrow, limited”, but also “difficult etc.”.