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Etymology and development of semantics of ‘Angel’ and ‘Demon’  
in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian: a comparative study

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# Etymology and development of semantics of ‘Angel’ and ‘Demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian: a comparative study

Leksemų „angelas“ ir „demonas“ etimologija ir semantikos raida anglų, olandų ir ukrainiečių kalbose: lyginamasis tyrimas

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## Abstract

The paper deals with a dichotomy of an angel and a demon as opposed creatures that embody the good and the evil in various cultures. An interdisciplinary overview of angels and demons outlines their roles and significance in philosophy, literature, religion, and arts. Common and particular ways of ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ reflection in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian are identified with three types of linguistic analysis: etymological, componential, and that of dictionary definitions.

Thus, the paper gives the results of an etymological analysis for the two key lexemes based on English (‘angel’, ‘demon’), Dutch (‘engel’, ‘demon’), and Ukrainian (‘ангел’, ‘демон’) etymological dictionary entries followed by comparison and contrast and identification of both isomorphic and allomorphic features. It also provides the semantic changes in the meanings of ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ in three languages under study. The dictionary interpretations for the studied lexemes are added to present the ideas/images of angels and demons reflected in the consciousness of the English, Dutch, and Ukrainians. In fact, the obtained data enable readers to witness similarities and differences in perception, conceptualisation and categorisation of the good (embodied by angels) and the evil (embodied by demons) by speakers of different languages. This can both contribute to improved dictionary definitions and facilitate intercultural communication making it more efficient in today’s globalized world.

**KEYWORDS:** angel, demon, dichotomy, etymology, semantics, isomorphic, allomorphic.

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## Introduction

Digitalization and globalization of the world (including education and science) nowadays determines the researchers' focus on commonalities and differences revealing various phenomena, ideas, substances, or units irrespective of a knowledge field. Linguistic and cultural studies do not make an exception because language has always been a key to a human consciousness and culture. In addition, mankind through millennia has been immersed in building beliefs, outlining values, and establishing norms to be able to differentiate between the good and the evil for both a communal living and an individual being. Hence, there have always been attempts to define the roles and significance of angels and demons in life and culture by speakers of various languages all over the world.

As soon as language as a tool of oral communication appeared some 200 000–100 000 years ago and in its written form – some 5000–3500 years ago, there is no opportunity to identify the primary forms for most lexemes / language signs that we use today in modern languages. It can still be possible to do it only in the case of ancient manuscripts and records available in libraries, abbeys, monasteries or in the case of inscriptions on clay tablets and tombstones.

This paper aims at providing the detailed and systematised data for the two key lexemes in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian (the languages of our study) – 'angel' and 'demon' as the embodiment of the good and the evil in Germanic and Slavic cultures, further identifying the isomorphic and allomorphic features based on the analysis of their comparison and contrast. It can be achieved by elaborating the results of an etymological analysis presented in the etymological dictionaries of the mentioned languages, as well as by examining the explanatory dictionary definitions.

Such an approach choice relies on archetypal images and stereotypical thinking of human beings. Moreover, explanatory and encyclopaedic dictionaries are naturally based on frequency of use which means that the meanings are regular and, thus, fixed. Hence, the paper focuses on widespread generalised notions/concepts of 'angel' and 'demon' rather than individual perception and interpretation.

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## Literature Overview

Language is a unique tool that allows us to record and transfer the spiritual and material culture of a nation, the approaches to awareness in the collective memory of any ethnic group, the fundamental principles of human existence, which are embodied in behavioural patterns, ways of thinking, moral values, collective norms, customs, myths, beliefs, and everyday life.

Any culture is characterised by the dichotomy of the concepts of good and evil, which are always in constant existential struggle, interaction, opposition, and intertwined in human consciousness.

In many philosophical systems, good and evil are viewed as categories that form the basis of human behaviour and are associated with moral and ethical principles and values. In the religious aspect, the concepts of good and evil are embodied in doctrines and teachings and associated with the concept of divine morality. In modern political interpretation, the concepts of good and evil can arise and influence the solution of issues of justice, human rights, power, etc. In Christian culture, good and evil are usually represented through the images of an angel and a demon, which find a certain linguistic representation.

The understanding of the angelic and the demonic as an integral part of the human worldview is associated with the establishment and consolidation of Christian ideology in medieval European culture and the transition from the mythological paradigm of world perception, for instance, the ancient Greek, Germanic, and Slavic mythologies, which shaped human perceptions of the world, its origin, and the essence of human existence in it, to the religious one, which offered its own unique view of the origin of the world, the nature of an individual, the purpose of life, and moral principles. The worldview focuses on the ideas of theocentrism, divine creation, and revelation. In the mind of a Christian person, two realities coexist: material (mundane) and transcendent (beyond human limits and boundaries), which can only be perceived through religious and mystical experience in communion with God, the creator of all things. The Bible acts as a mediator of this dialogue between the mere mortal and the imperishable divine, as it is the source of the word of God and provides answers to questions that disturb the troubled human soul. The Word of the Creator becomes an object of cognition and study, which is attempted to be conveyed to the entire Christian world, where God's envoys – angels or demons – act as intermediaries between the spiritual world and physical reality.

The concepts of an angel and a demon are formed in the Christian religious tradition, according to which angels are seen as spiritual beings created by God to fulfil his will and are often depicted as messengers of God, performing the functions of protection, service, and transmission of messages between God and humans (Potapenko, 2015, p. 22–25; Khomishin, 2023), while demons are fallen angels who have deviated from God's will and have become a symbol associated with evil and Satan. In Christianity, demons are sinister antigods who tempt and lead people into sin and away from God. The concept of demons is deeply connected to the Christian understanding of evil and temptation. Demons are considered to be one of the causes and instruments of evil in the world.

In philosophy, angels are a representation of certain ideas, abstract concepts, and moral values and act as a symbol of kindness, light, purity or higher spiritual forces that exist in the intangible world and interact with various aspects of reality. The concept of a demon has not always been opposed to the concept of an angel in the philosophical tradition. In the ancient philosophy, demons were not always associated with evil. Demons were various creatures that also served as intermediaries between gods and humans, personified various forces and influenced the fates of people. In Christian philosophy, demons are often seen as an evil spiritual world, messengers of evil and enemies of a man and spiritual purity (Dovbnia, 2015, p. 206). In contemporary philosophy, demons are an important element to be considered in the context of the problems of existence, morality, spirituality, and the nature of evil, and even in contexts such as political philosophy (demonisation of enemies) or ethics (the problem of evil), etc.

In fiction, angels are endowed with certain characteristics inspired by biblical themes or religious texts themselves, and convey various allegorical images, symbolic meanings of love, justice, faith, goodness, light, protection, mystery, mediation, and messages, while demons act as antagonists, symbols of evil, personifications of fears or internal conflicts, they appear as entities that intersect with the lives of the protagonists, posing challenges and tasks for them. For example, Archangel Michael or Archangel Gabriel can act as a key character or perform important functions in the plot. The theme of angels and demons often conveys the ideas of goodness, protection, salvation or even rebellion, for example, in John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost* (Milton, 2019), such biblical stories as Satan's rebellion against God, Satan's revenge in the form of Eve and Adam, and the latter's expulsion from Paradise are revealed. The angels in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* (Alighieri, 2017) perform different functions and serve as personifications of different aspects of God's will, accompanying and supporting the soul of the travelling poet on his spiritual journey, which symbolises the path of humanity in its pursuit of truth. The figure of an angel in literature often appears as a symbol or a literary image that carries various meanings depending on the confessional features of Christianity, national history, philosophy, the author's individual worldview (Udiak & Tymchuk, 2013, p. 238), and the context, personifying goodness, light, protection, and mystery. In European fiction, the image of an angel is traditional and represents ideological and aesthetic meanings, which, in turn, reflect both the demands of a certain era and the author's individual style (Udiak, 2004). In fiction, demons can be symbols of various ideas or states associated with internal conflicts, sins, and the influence of evil. They can represent an obstacle on the hero's or heroine's path that needs to be overcome to achieve their goal, which causes transformation and development of the character. In Goethe's philosophical tragedy *Faust* (Goethe, 2021), the main task of the devil Mephistopheles is to seduce the protagonist and to push him from his morally impeccable position.

In art, angels are often portrayed as extraordinary, pure and beautiful beings. The image of an angel is used to depict and convey the ideal of human existence. The theme of demons is also widely embodied in the art of different eras and cultures, where they are depicted as sinister, evil creatures that symbolise evil and temptation and act as symbols or allegories for certain ideas or concepts representing human fears, sins, internal conflicts, or moral trials (Buranelli et al., 2007; Giorgi, 2005; Gorgievski, 2010; Grubb, 1995; Waters, 2022). Nobody has ever seen God's messengers, so it is unclear how to draw or show them in a film: as an airy cloud, a zoomorphic or anthropomorphic being woven from weightless spiritual matter, in a perfect material body, a winged cute chubby baby, with its own character in a dynamic pose and with an impressive appearance. Depending on the context, angels or demons are depicted as good and beautiful or wrathful with a punishing sword. However, sometimes they are portrayed in such unexpected and unconventional images that they require deciphering. Such a continuous interest in the dichotomy of an angel and a demon in philosophy, religion, culture, and arts

requires a deep linguistic grounding that could provide additional explanations for motivation behind the key lexemes in various languages, for understanding and interpreting ‘good’ and ‘evil’ shades conveyed within different at first sight cultures.

## Methods

Common and particular ways of the reflection of ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian are identified with four (4) types of linguistic analysis: etymological, that of explanatory dictionary definitions, and a componential one accompanied by a comparative and contrastive analysis at all stages of this research.

Etymological dictionaries fix lexicographic information on a word origin, its form changes and development of entry word’s semantic structure in diachrony, a reconstructed etymon (a protoform / a primary form) if available, as well as offer a set of cognates from different languages that can be of the similar etymology (Dorskach, 2019, p. 23; Selivanova, 2010, p. 154; Sibruk & Hulchenko, 2013, p. 98–99). It evidences the fact that a relation (close or far) among lexical units from different languages in the focus of a researcher can be established by the results of their etymological analysis through comparing and contrasting the reconstructed etymons (Lemish & Zernetska, 2018, p. 229; Lemish et al., 2022, p. 70–71). Etymological data can stimulate cognitive activity of a person, provoke an interest in deeper culture studying, enrich mental space and experience of an individual (Kryzhko, 2021, p. 168), and promote more efficient language learning through explication of a discrete language unit lexical meaning evolution.

Analysis of dictionary definitions provides the number of meanings for each lexical unit/word combination available in different knowledge fields and styles. It also gives the idea of a full scope of meanings/senses for the unit/combination under study providing various connotations and contexts (Kryzhko, 2021, p. 174; Orlova et al., 2022, p. 64) from multiple literary sources illustrations.

A componential analysis follows that of dictionary definitions and allows distinguishing integral and differential semes (Orlova et al., 2022, p. 64; Selivanova, 2008, p. 92–93, 106–108) in the meanings of the two key lexemes in English (‘angel’, ‘demon’), Dutch (‘engel’, ‘demon’), and Ukrainian (‘ангел’, ‘демон’).

A comparative and contrastive analysis enables determination of isomorphic and allomorphic etymological features (common or different etymons), of both quantitative and qualitative similarities and differences in explanatory dictionary definitions, as well as of integral and differential semes (Kocherhan, 2006, p. 97; Lemish et al., 2019, p. 264; Selivanova, 2008, p. 55, 61–62). As a result, it is possible to outline similarities and differences in the perception, interpretation, and reflection of angels and demons in various languages and cultures.

The language data are sourced from the following dictionaries:

- (En): Online Etymology Dictionary (OED); Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English (HOALDCE, 2010); Collins English Dictionary (CED, 2011); Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE, 2012), Cambridge Dictionary (CD);
- (Nd): Etymological Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 4 v. (EWN, 2003–2009); Van Dale: Big Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 2 v. (Kruyskamp, 1976); Van Dale: Big Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 3 v. (Den Boon et al., 2015);
- (Ua): Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 2 v. (Rudnitskii, 1972–1982); Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 7 v. (Melnychuk, 1982–2012); Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 4 v. (Hrinchenko, 1907–1909); Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 v. (Bilodid, 1970–1980); Signs of the Ukrainian Ethnoculture: a Reference Dictionary (Zhaivoronok, 2006).

## ‘Angel’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian Dictionaries

### Results

#### *Etymology and development of semantics of ‘angel’ in English*

Currently, most English-language explanatory dictionaries tend to include in their entries at least some information on the origin of the notional parts of speech. However, the most complete etymological data can still be found in special etymological dictionaries, among which *Online Etymology Dictionary* (OED) with its free access is one of the most popular, reliable, and useful.

Having checked the entry for the English lexeme ‘angel’ with OED, the following statement can be made: Modern English ‘angel’ ← Old English ‘engel’ ← Latin ‘angelus’ (“one of class of spiritual beings, attendants and messengers of God”) ← Greek ‘angelos’ (“messenger, envoy, one that announces”) (where ‘←’ means ‘originates from’). In addition, it should be noted that, in the New Testament, ‘angelos’ denoted ‘a divine messenger’, which possibly was related to ‘angaros’ (“mounted courier”) from “an unknown Oriental word (Watkins compares Sanskrit *ajira-* “swift”; Klein suggests Semitic sources)” (OED, n.d.). With the meaning “one of class of spiritual beings, attendants and messengers of God” (OED, n.d.), ‘angel’ started to be used from approximately 1300. From 1590s one more meaning was added, that of persons – “one who is loving, gracious, or lovely” (OED, n.d.). From 1881 the expression ‘angel food cake’ (a light and fluffy homemade cake) has been used, from 1968 – ‘angel dust’ (“phencyclidine” – an illegal street drug) (OED, n.d.).

*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (HOLDCE, 2010) gives three meanings (one informal among them) for ‘angel’ as a noun, namely:

- “a spirit who is believed to be a servant of God, and is sent by God to deliver a message or perform a task” (“Angels are often shown dressed in white, with wings, – see also GUARDIAN ANGEL.”);
- “a person who is very good and kind; a child who behaves well: *John is no angel, believe me* (= he does not behave well)”;
- “(informal) used when you are talking to sb and you are grateful to them: *Thanks Dad, you’re an angel. Be an angel and make me a cup of coffee.*” (HOLDCE, 2010, p. 48).

There are four meanings (two informal inclusive) for ‘angel’ as a noun in *Collins English Dictionary* (CED, 2011):

- “a spiritual being believed to be an attendant or messenger of God”;
- “a conventional representation of an angel as a human being with wings”;
- “informal a person who is kind, pure, or beautiful”;
- “informal an investor in a theatrical production [Greek *angelos* messenger]” (CED, 2011, p. 24).

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDCE, 2012) also provides four meanings for ‘angel’ as a noun (one old-fashioned spoken meaning incl. and several expressions with ‘angel’ from business):

- “a SPIRIT who is God’s servant in heaven, and who is often shown as a person dressed in white with wings: *the angel Gabriel*”;
- “someone who is very kind, very good, or very beautiful: *That little girl of theirs is an angel. | Sam in no angel* (= often behaves badly)”;
- “old-fashioned spoken used when asking someone to help you or when thanking someone for helping you: *Thanks for mailing those letters, you’re an angel. | Be an angel and get me my glasses, will you?*”;
- “(also business angel, angel investor) someone who gives new businesses money, often in exchange for a share of the company → GUARDIAN ANGEL” (LDCE, 2012, p. 56).

The online *Cambridge Dictionary* (CD) reflects the general tendency for the lexeme ‘angel’ to be used in modern English with four meanings, namely:

- a spiritual being in some religions who is believed to be a messenger of God, usually represented as having a human form with wings: *According to the Bible, an angel told Mary that she would have God’s son, Jesus*;
- someone who is very good, helpful, or kind: *Be an angel and help me with this*;
- [as form of address] used when speaking to someone you like very much and know very well: *What’s the matter, angel? Come along, my angels, time for bed*;

- (also ‘angel investor’) a rich person who invests in a new company: *Wealthy individual investors, known as angels, differ from lenders in that they want a stake in your business* (CD, n.d.).

In addition, it is also fixed that in American ‘angel’ is usually used in two meanings: 1) (in some religious traditions) a being in heaven who serves God, often represented in art as a human with wings; and 2) someone who is very good or kind: *You’re an angel to bring me this coffee* (ibid.).

To sum up, the concept of ‘angel’ begins to be recorded in the English language around 13th century in its original meaning of a spiritual being, a divine messenger / envoy / servant / companion of God, gradually adding to the religious context a secular meaning of loving / merciful / very good / kind / beautiful / pure / graceful person, penetrating into economic sphere and developing the meaning of someone who supports business by investing money ‘angel investor’, finding its way into everyday use of homemade cake naming as ‘angel food cake’.

#### *Etymology and development of semantics of ‘engel’ in Dutch*

*Etymological Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 4 v.* (EWN, 2003–2009) fixes Modern Dutch ‘engel’ (“herald of god”) as a noun from Middle Dutch ‘engel’ / ‘ingel’ (“angel”) (circa 1200). Middle Dutch ‘engel’ ← Latin ‘angelus’ (“messenger / herald”) ← from Greek ‘ángelos’ (“herald”). Further etymology is uncertain; there is an assumption that it is a borrowing from an Oriental language, partly because of the existence of the Greek ‘án-garos’ (“Persian courier on horseback”). The same borrowing can be found in other Germanic languages: Old Saxon ‘engil’, Old High German ‘engil’, Old Frisian ‘engel’, Old English ‘engel’, Old Scandinavian ‘engill’, Gothic ‘aggilus’ (EWN, 2003–2009, 1, p. 684–685).

*Van Dale: Big Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 2 v.* (Kruyskamp, 1976) presents four meanings for ‘engel’, namely:

- (religious) a messenger or envoy of God, intangible / immaterial spirit of the sky; *de engelen des helmes* [the angels of heavens]; *een engel Gods* [an angel of God], *de engel des Heren heft Maria gebodschapt* [the angel of the Lord has spread the word to Maria]; *de “Engel des Heren” had ie al horen luiden* [the angel of the Lord, he had heard calling], the Angelus; *engelen worden voorgesteld als menselijke figuren* [angels are represented as human figures with wings]; in relation to the apostate angels: the devil; *de engelen schudden hun beddeken uit* [the angels shake out their duvets] (jesting) it is snowing; colloquially: *het was oj er een engeltje op mijn tong pieste* [it was like an angel pissed / uniated on your tongue] = extremely tasty; *zijn goede engel* [his good angel] his guardying angel; *hij spreekt als een engel en doet als een bengel* [talk like an angel and act like a rascal] use devout language but in the meantime act naughty; (Southern NL) *een engeltje met een duiveltje* [a little angel with a little devil]; *mensen zijn geen engelen* [people are no angels] nobody is without flaws; *van een engel een duivel maken* [to make a devil out of an angel] to provoke smb, make him devilish (by grunting, nagging etc.); *een reddende engel* [a saving angel] a saviour in need; *u komt als een engel uit de hemel* [you come like an angel from heaven exactly at the right time];
- image/picture of an angel as under the first meaning;
- somebody with the characteristics which are attributed to angels with regards to either showing love and dedication / devotion or lovely appearance; an epitome / paragon of men: *een engel van een man, van een meisje* [an angel of a man, of a girl]; *engelen van kinderen* [little angels of children]; *zij is een engel* [she is an angel], *een engel van geduld* [angel of patience]; *als je dat doet, ben je een engel* [when you do that you are an angel]; (spoken) *een engel met een b ervoor* [an angel with a b in front of it] (b + engel = bengel [rascal]) especially a naughty child; in a passive means as a cuddling: *mijn engel!* [My Angel!];
- in heaven accepted deceased person: *Zij die hun reeds een engel scheen* [they who (to) them already angels seemed] (Kruyskamp, 1976, 1, p. 633).

*Van Dale: Big Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 3 v.* (Den Boon et al., 2015) gives six meanings:

- (religious) intangible / immaterial spirit of the sky, particularly as a messenger or envoy of God, usually impersonated as a humanoid figure with wings: *een engel des hemels* [an angel of heavens];

*een engel Gods* [an angel of God]; *de engel des doods* [an angel of death] in the Jewish tradition: the angel which announces a person's time and comes to get him, angel of death; *de engel des Heren* [the angel of the Lord] God's messenger; *het engel des Heren bidden, luiden* [praying the angel of the Lord] praying the angelus; *de engelen schudden hun bedje uit* [the angels shake out their beds] = it is snowing; (informal) *(het is, smaakt) alsof een engeltje op je tong piest* [(it is / tastes) like an angel pisses / uniates on your tongue] = extremely tasty; *de engelen horen zingen* [to hear the angels sing] = being dizzy (after a fierce blow); *der engelen zang* [singing of the angels] = singing of the angels; *zijn goede engel* [his good angel] = guardian angel; *spreken als een engel en doen al seen bengel* [talk like an angel and act like a rascal] use devout language but in the meantime act naughty; proverb: *mensen zijn geen engelen* [people are no angels] people have shortcomings; *van een engel een duivel maken* [to make a devil out of an angel] to provoke smb, make him devilish (by grunting, nagging etc.); *discussieren over het geslacht der engelen* [to debate about the gender of angels] to senselessly discuss trivial matters; *een reddende engel* [a saving angel] a saviour from need / trouble; *al seen engel uit de hemel komen* [descending like an angel from heaven] arriving on the right moment, appearing as on call; *een engeltje op de zijn schouder hebben (zitten)* [having an angel (sitting) on his shoulder] being very lucky; *een engeltje op de lat hebben* [having an angel on top of the bar] to be lucky; *gevallen engel* [fallen angel] a rogue / apostate ghost of heaven, devil b (figurative) somebody who lost his reputation / fame c stock market: a previous popular fund which has become out of grace with investors; *engel der wrake* [Angel of wrath] angel of wrath; *de engel der duisternis* [Angel of darkness] the devil; Roman catholic: *de Engelen* [the Angels] lowest sub department of the 9 angel-choirs;

- (metonymic) representation of an angel for the description in the first meaning;
- somebody with the characteristics which are attributed to angels with regards to either showing love and dedication / devotion or lovely appearance; a paragon of men; *een engel van een man* [An angel of a man]; *van een meisje* [an angel of a girl]; *engelen van kinderen* [angels of children]; *een engel van Geduld* [an angel of patience] smbd with great patience; *een engel met een b ervoor* [an angel with a b in front of it] (b +engel = bengel [rascal]) especially a naughty child; *een engel in bed* [an angel in bed] *een drunke vrouw is een engel in bed* [a drunk women is an angel in bed] a woman with whom it is great to have sex;
- in passive means as a cuddling; *mijn engel* [My Angel!];
- in heaven accepted deceased person;
- infant passed away = butterfly 1200 < Latin 'angelus' < Greek 'aggelos' (Den Boon et al., 2015, p. 1065–1066).

Thus, the Dutch lexeme 'engel' demonstrates a wide variety of its semantic structure – from a messenger/herald, a saviour up to an epitome/paragon of a man through showing love/dedication/cuddling. A separate notice should be made for being lucky (with an angel on one's shoulder) and emphasising purity of soul on deceased and infants passing away.

#### *Etymology and development of semantics of 'ангел' in Ukrainian*

*Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 7 v.* provides for Ukrainian 'ангел' a list of cognates first. Then it is possible to follow its origin back to Old Slavic 'ангелъ' ← Greek "angel, messenger, herald" (from Greek verb "I am announcing, informing, reporting"). There is a probability of relating it to old Indian 'ángirah' ("divine") or being borrowed from an Oriental word (Melnychuk, 1982–2012, 1, p. 72).

The meaning of the entry word 'ангел' in *Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 4 Volumes* (Hrinchenko, 1907–1909) is revealed through illustrative examples and is represented by the juxtaposition of the notion of an angel and the notion of a devil "Був би ангел, коби не роги" [I'd be an angel if I didn't have horns]; the second and the third illustrative examples convey meaning through the semes 'defender', 'protector' "Над тим дитям три анголи дихали" [Over that child three angels breathed], "Да над домом ангелочки літали, Ісуса Христа в ризи сповивали" [Little angels were flying over the house wrapping Jesus Christ into chasuble] (Hrinchenko, 1907–1909, 1, p. 51.)

*Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 v.* (Bilodid, 1970–1980) provides three meanings for the lexeme ‘ангел’:

- (religious) supernatural being, messenger, herald of God; usually depicted as a young man with wings “Якби ангел з неба прилетів в Горобцівку, то й він не помири́в би їх” [If an angel from heaven had flown to Horobtsivka, he would not have reconciled them either];
- (whose, figurative, old-fashioned) defender or protector; guardian “А знаєш, Густочко, пан Борис для молодих жінок небезпечний чоловік!.. Так що, я буду твоїм добрим ангелом і заберу його від тебе” [You know, Hustochka, Mr. Boris is a dangerous man for young women!.. So, I shall be your good angel and take him away from you];
- (figurative, old-fashioned) about a person (a woman, most frequently) characterised as being beautiful or kind, nice, or having done or is doing smth nice, pleasant to smb “Полю, здрастуй! Скоріше, бо ми запізнимось. А ось і водичка мінеральна й помідорчики. Ти у мене ангел!” [Hello Paul! Hurry up not to be late. And here is mineral water and tomatoes. You are my angel!] (Bilodid, 1970–1980, 1, p. 44).

In the reference dictionary *Signs of the Ukrainian Ethnoculture* (Zhaivoronok, 2006), there is an etymological note for the lexeme ‘ангел’ (from Greek ‘aggelos’ “herald”) followed by two (2) meanings:

- (religious) supernatural being, messenger, God’s herald; protects people, being a mediator between them and heaven; usually depicted as a young man with wings; every person has his/her own angel-guardian; when a child smiles in a dream, it means that an angel looks at it; there is always dissension between an angel-guardian and a devil-tempter; to get reassurance a person always prays in such a way as follows: “Ангеле мій, охороню мій! Збережи мою душу, зміцни моє серце на всяк день, на всяк час, на всяку хвилину. Вранці встаю, росою вмиваюся, пеленою Спасового Пречистого образу втираюся. Ворог-сатана, відійди від мене на сто верст – на тисячу! На мені є хрест Господній! На тому хресті написані Лука і Марк, і Микола-мученик: за Христа мучаються, а за нас Богу моляться. Пречисті замки ключами замкнені, замками запечатані, нині, і присно, і на віки віків. Амінь!” [My Angel, my guardian! Save my soul, strengthen my heart for every day, for every time, for every minute. I get up in the morning, wash with dew, rub myself with the shroud of the Most Pure Image of the Saviour. Enemy Satan, move away from me a hundred versts – a thousand! I have the Lord’s cross on me! Luke and Mark, and Nicholas the Martyr are written on that cross: they suffer for Christ, and they pray to God for us. The most pure castles are locked with keys, sealed with locks, now, and forever and ever. Amen!]; a person is often called a sinful angel (non-angel), so they say “Чоловік не ангел, щоб не согрішив” [A man is not an angel so that he does not sin];
- angel-custodian – a star as a custodian of any person; everyone gets it at birth (hence Angel’s day – a fete day) when it appears in the sky; when a person dies, his/her star falls from the sky (it is advisable to cross oneself after seeing that happens); in general, a defender, protector, guard; in the folk aphorisms it serves as a component of the antitheses ‘angel – devil’, i.e. ‘good – evil’, e.g. “І з янгола можна зробити чорта” [And you can make a devil out of an angel], “Ангельський голосок, а чортова думка” [An angel’s voice, but a devil’s thought]; (figurative) – the same as it was already mentioned above under the 2nd and 3rd meanings from *Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 v.* (Bilodid, 1970–1980; Zhaivoronok, 2006, p. 13).

The Ukrainian lexeme ‘ангел’ appeared with the meanings of “a messenger, a herald” and “a defender/protector”, later denoting a person who is kind/nice or having done something good. As an angel-custodian, the lexeme ‘ангел’ symbolises a star that appears in the sky when a person is born and falls from the sky when this person passes away.

### ‘Demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian Dictionaries

#### *Etymology and development of semantics of ‘demon’ in English*

For the English lexeme ‘demon’, OED presents such information as follows: its use was fixed in Middle English circa 1200; Modern English ‘demon’ ← ‘demon’ (“an evil spirit, malignant supernatural being, an incubus, a devil”)



← Latin ‘daemon’ (“spirit”) ← Greek ‘daimon’ (“deity, divine power; lesser god; guiding spirit, tutelary deity; one’s genius, lot, or fortune”) ← PIE \*dai-mon- (“divider, provider” (of fortunes or destinies)) ← PIE \*da- (“to divide”) (OED, n.d.) (“PIE” = Proto-Indo-European language; “\*” denotes a reconstructed form). “The malignant sense” is connected with Christian Greek translations and the Vulgate where the Greek word meant either “god of the heathen, heathen idol” or “unclean spirit”. It is also worth mentioning that from 1560s the usual ancient Greek sense for ‘demon’ (‘daemon’ / ‘daimon’) as “supernatural agent or intelligence lower than a god, ministering spirit” has been exploited in English; from 1610s – as “destructive or hideous person”, from 1712 – as “an evil agency personified” (ibid.). HOLDCE (2010) depicts ‘demon’ as a noun with three meanings (including one informal):

- “an evil spirit: *demons torturing the sinners in Hell.*”;
- “(informal) a person who does sth very well or with a lot of energy: *He skis like a demon.*”;
- “something that causes a person to worry and makes them unhappy: *the demons of jealousy* IDM the demon drink (*BrE, humorous*) alcoholic drink (HOLDCE, 2010, p. 389).
- Three meanings can be found for ‘demon’ in CED (2011):
- “an evil spirit”;
- “a person, obsession, etc. thought of as evil or persistently tormenting”;
- “a person extremely skillful in or devoted to a given activity: *a demon at cricket* [Greek *daimōn* spirit, fate] demonic *adj*” (CED, 2011, p. 202).
- LDCE (2012) provides four positions, the fourth in fact giving an expression ‘the demon drink’:
- “an evil SPIRIT or force: *He was speeding down the motorway as if pursued by a demon.*”;
- “[usually plural] something that makes you anxious and causes you problems: *She struggled with her husband’s demons of addiction and alcoholism.*”;
- “someone who is very good at something – often used humorously; *a demon cook*”;
- “the demon drink *BrE* alcoholic drink – often used humorously → DAEMON” (LDCE, 2012, p. 450).
- In the online *Cambridge Dictionary* (CD, n.d.) ‘demon’ is interpreted in four senses:
- an evil spirit;
- a person who does a particular activity with great skill or energy (approving): *She works like a demon. Stefan has a demon serve*;
- a person who behaves very badly: (humorous) *That’s the last time I take care of her kids – I’ll be glad when the little demons go home*;
- a negative feeling that causes you to worry or behave badly: *She had her demons and, later in life, they drove her to drink* (CD, n.d.).

It also has a section with “SMART Vocabulary” with related words, phrases, and synonyms from different areas of life, religious concepts, enthusiasts, experts and specialists, bad and wrong behaviour, difficult things, and people inclusive (ibid.).

The results of etymological analysis and analysis of dictionary definitions of English ‘demon’ show that its primary meaning is an evil spirit/force. Over time, the semantic structure of this lexeme has evolved and added such meanings as obsession, anxiety, an idea that persistently torments, with further acquiring the positive connotations when describing someone’s abilities, an extremely skilled person – someone who is good at something, and even developed a humorous meaning, naming the drink ‘the demon drink’.

#### *Etymology and development of semantics of ‘demon’ in Dutch*

As for ‘demon’ in *Etymological Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 4 v.* (EWN, 2003–2009), it is fixed with the meaning “devil, evil spirit”; New Dutch also uses the lexeme ‘daemon’ “benign being” [1721; WNT (Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal) Supp. *accent*], ‘daemon’ “evil spirit” [1844–1851; WNT]. It was borrowed from

French ‘démon’ (“evil spirit, devil”) [17th century], before ‘daemon’ (“demi-god, genius”) [16th century], but more probably directly from Latin ‘daemōn’ (“evil spirit, demon”) ← Greek ‘daímon’ (“divine power, deity”). The original meaning (in Greek) was possibly a person who administers the fate, but with Homeros it means “deity”. In the course of time the meaning shifted also to “divine power” and later to “demi-god”. The negative connotation became enhanced by the New Testament, where it is described, how Jesus expels demons “evil spirits”. In the meaning of “positive power” it is still used today. Sometimes the spelling ‘daimon’ is used to imply this difference (EWN, 2003–2009, 1, p. 543–544).

In *Van Dale: Big Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 2 v.* (Kruyskamp, 1976), there is the remark on the Greek origin of ‘demon’ followed by two (2) meanings:

- supernatural being which controls / administers humans and their actions for the good or (mostly) for the worse; evil spirit: *door een demon bezeten* [possessed by demons]; (improper): *de drank is zijn demon* [drinking is his demon];
- (figurative) a devilish man, a bad guy / an evil person (Kruyskamp, 1976, 1, p. 508).

*Van Dale: Big Dictionary of the Dutch Language in 3 v.* (Den Boon et al., 2015) gives three (3) meanings:

- supernatural being which influences people and their behaviour, for the good or (mostly) for the worse, ≈ *duivel* [devil]: *door een demon bezeten* [possessed by demons]; *de demonen van de middag* [the demons of the afternoon] after the French *les démons de l’après-midi*; the midlife crisis;
- (figurative) smth which exercises a bad influence on somebody, for example a bad habit of alcohol consumption;
- (figurative) a devilish person, ≈ *slechtard* [devil]. 1809 < Latin *daemon* [deity, ghost, evil spirit, devil] < Greek *daimōn* (Den Boon et al., 2015, p. 847).

Thus, starting from the meaning ‘divine, power, deity’, the Dutch ‘demon’ was used to denote “a person who administers the fate”, acquiring “a positive power” (hence there are two spellings – ‘demon’ and ‘daemon’ to differentiate between negative and positive shades). Gradually several more negative meanings have appeared: someone influencing people and their behaviour (mostly for worse) and becoming a devilish person in the end.

#### *Etymology and development of semantics of ‘демон’ in Ukrainian*

*Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 7 v.* outlines some cognates for Ukrainian ‘демон’ followed by Old Slavic ‘демонъ, дѣмонъ’ ← Greek “deity; spirit; soul of a dead; devil” (connected with both the Greek verb “I am dividing, distributing” and the noun “people, country”) (Melnychuk, 1982–2012, vol. 2, p. 32).

*Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 2 v.* gives ‘демон’ with the meanings “demon, fiend, devil” followed by a list of derivatives. It is noted that ancient Greeks considered the spirits / demons being kind and evil, but Christians believed the demons being either evil spirits or evil people (Rudnitskii, 1972–1982, vol. 2, p. 42).

*Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 4 v.* (Hrinchenko, 1907–1909) presents the entry word ‘демон’ as Lead (Saviour) through the hell of the demon (Hrinchenko, 1907–1909, vol. 1, p. 367).

*Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 v.* (Bilodid, 1970–1980) points out that ‘демон’ in Greek mythology names a lower deity, an evil spirit or devil, sometimes benevolent to people “А разом з розсвітом... Ослабла й сила демона страшного” [And with dawn... The power of the terrible demon also weakened] // (figurative old-fashioned) personification of some vice, passion, etc. “Який легіон демонів упертості сидить в сій дівчині! Нічого, певне, вже з нею не поробиш” [What a legion of demons of stubbornness is in this girl! You probably won’t be able to do anything with her]; “А той демон, браття милі, – Се бажання наші власні!” [And that demon, dear brothers, – These are our own desires!] (Bilodid, 1970–1980, vol. 2, p. 239).

The reference dictionary *Signs of the Ukrainian Ethnoculture* (Zhaivoronok, 2006) also starts from the interpretation of ‘демон’ in Greek mythology as of a lower deity, an evil spirit, sometimes benevolent to people. Here we have the following description: the Greek historian Procopius (6th century) says that the Slavs “honour rivers, nymphs, and some other deities-demons, sacrifice everything to them and use those sacrifices to prophesy for themselves”; our ancestors even offered human sacrifices to their gods, and the first martyrs for the faith were the Varangian Tur and his son; there were frequent sacrifices to their own, domestic demonic

gods, the traces of which have reached our time, such as, for example, a rich festive table; the wedding loaf, as a sacrifice to God, is also an echo of former sacrifices (blood sacrifices were replaced by bread sacrifices under Christianity); the appeasement of evil forces by man also affected folk aphorisms: “Бери, чорте, груш, а мене не руш” [Take the pears, demon / devil, and don’t touch me], “Чорт, бери шапку, аби голова була ціла” [Take my hat, devil, so that my head is intact], “Роби чортові добре, він тобі пеклом відплатить” [Do good to the devil, he will repay you with hell]; fear of evil forces gave birth to various folk warnings: “Де ліс, там біс” [Where there is a forest, there is hell], “Кожний біс тягне в ліс” [Every demon pulls into the forest]; with the spread of Christianity, the Greek names of demons remained to define only evil (black) spirits; most pagan gods also came to be considered evil demons (Zhaivoronok, 2006, p. 172–173).

In summary, the lexeme ‘демон’ initially used to mean “demon, fiend, devil”. In the meantime, it acquired the meanings of “evil spirits” or “evil people”. In Ukrainian interpretation of ‘демон’, the positive shade in the meaning is absent in contrast to the Greek mythology.

### Comparative and contrastive analysis

The detailed study of the dictionary definitions for the English (‘angel’, ‘demon’), Dutch (‘engel’, ‘demon’), and Ukrainian (‘ангел’, ‘демон’) and further systematisation of the obtained data made it possible for the authors to establish the isomorphic and allomorphic features in their meanings on having compared and contrasted them.

As a result, the quantitative and qualitative outcomes are presented in the following tables.

Table 1 outlines the identified etymons from Old Slavic, Latin, Greek, and Proto-Indo-European (a reconstructed form if available).

**Table 1** Probable etymons for ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian

Key lexemes	Old Slavic	Latin	Greek	PIE
‘angel’ (En)		angelus	angelos	
‘demon’ (En)		daemon	daimon	*dai-mon ← *da
‘engel’ (Nd)		angelus	ángelos	
‘demon’ (Nd)		daemōn	daímon	
‘ангел’ (Ua)	ангель		angelos	
‘демон’ (Ua)	демопъ, дѣмопъ’		daimon	

The findings witness that the only lexeme from our research ‘demon’ (En) has a reconstructed protoform from PIE – \*dai-mon ← \*da. All six lexemes under study are of Greek origin (proving the same archetypal nature for English, Dutch, and Ukrainian cultures). English and Dutch modern forms were borrowed via Latin, while Ukrainian were borrowed directly from Greek.

The number of meanings for ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian given in Table 2 varies and makes from 1 to 6 maximum.

**Table 2** Number of meanings for ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian

	‘angel’ (En)	‘demon’ (En)	‘engel’ (Nd)	‘demon’ (Nd)	‘ангел’ (Ua)	‘демон’ (Ua)
number of meanings	3–4	3–4	1–6	2–3	1–3	1–2

Table 2 demonstrates the absence of unequivocal lexemes under this study presenting the minimum and maximum number of meanings registered in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian dictionaries. According to the obtained data, Ukrainian shows a higher level of semantic structure stability. The widest variety is provided by Dutch ‘engel’.

Having elaborated the dictionary definitions for the key lexemes, 31 semes were identified as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** Integral and differential semes for ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ from English, Dutch, and Ukrainian dictionary definitions

semes	‘angel’ (En)	‘engel’ (Nd)	‘ангел’ (Ua)	‘demon’ (En)	‘demon’ (Nd)	‘демон’ (Ua)
a person	+	+	+	+	+	+
a servant / an attendant	+			+		
a god / deity					+	+
a demi-god / mediator			+		+	+
a spirit	+			+	+	+
a messenger / an envoy	+	+	+			
a herald		+	+			
a protector / defender / custodian / guard / guardian		+	+			
divider / provider				+		
saviour		+				+
lot / fortune				+		
image / picture / representation	+	+	+			
kind / good	+	+	+		+	
nice / pleasant	+	+	+			
beautiful / lovely	+	+	+			
lucky		+				
divine	+		+	+	+	
grateful	+					
benevolent / helpful						+
pure / graceful			+		+	
supernatural / immaterial		+	+	+	+	
bad / evil / malignant				+	+	+
doing sth very well / being extremely skillful / one’s genius / paragon		+		+		
with a lot of energy				+		
obsession				+		+
force / power		+		+		
persistently tormenting				+		
causing problems				+		
administering the fate		+		+		
influencing people		+		+	+	
showing love/ loving / cuddling	+	+	+			
30	11	16	13	16	10	8

Thus, the English ‘angel’ has 11 semes, the Dutch ‘engel’ has 16, the Ukrainian ‘ангел’ has 13; the English ‘demon’ has 16, the Dutch ‘demon’ has 10, the Ukrainian ‘демон’ has 8. The only integral seme for all 6 key lexemes is ‘*person*’. The analysis of dictionary definitions shows that the highest number of semes is found for ‘demon’ in English (16) and ‘angel’ in Dutch (16) demonstrating their more developed semantic structure. The least developed semantic structure is observed for ‘demon’ in Ukrainian evidencing once again the highest level of its homogeneity.

The difference in the number of semes between lexemes ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ makes 5 in both English (11 vs 16) and Ukrainian (13 vs 8), but 6 in Dutch (16 vs 10). English ‘demon’ seems to be of greater interest for people because of their wish to know different (especially negative) effects as a result of the contact with demons and the probability of predicting them.

## Conclusion

The investigation into the etymological, structural, and explanatory information on ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ in English, Dutch, and Ukrainian enabled us to systematise the available data and identify 31 semes in the development of the semantic structure of six key lexemes under study (English ‘angel’ and ‘demon’, Dutch ‘engel’ and ‘demon’, Ukrainian ‘ангел’ and ‘демон’).

The list of semes comprises the following: a person, a servant, a god, a demi-god, a spirit, a messenger, a herald, a protector, a divider, a saviour, fortune, representation, kind, nice, beautiful, lucky, divine, grateful, benevolent, pure, supernatural, evil, doing something very well, with a lot of energy, obsession, power, persistently tormenting, causing problems, administering the fate, influencing people, showing love.

The only integral seme (i.e., an isomorphic (common) feature for the meanings of all six lexemes under study) is ‘*person*’, as in all three languages, the key lexemes can relate to good or bad people.

For the English ‘angel’ (11 semes in total), the Dutch ‘engel’ (16 semes in total), and the Ukrainian ‘ангел’ (13 in total), there are 22 differential semes among which only six are isomorphic, namely: *a messenger/an envoy, image/picture/representation, kind/good, nice/pleasant, beautiful/lovely, showing love/loving/cuddling*. Only one seme, i.e. *divine*, is isomorphic for the English ‘angel’ and the Ukrainian ‘ангел’. As for the Dutch ‘engel’ and the Ukrainian ‘ангел’, there are three isomorphic semes: *a herald, a protector/defender/custodian/guard/guardian, supernatural/immaterial*.

There are three allomorphic semes for ‘angel’ (identified only in English): *a servant/ an attendant, a spirit, grateful*. For ‘engel’ (identified only in Dutch) there are six allomorphic semes: *a saviour, lucky, doing sth very well/ being extremely skillful/one’s genius/paragon, force/power, administering the fate, influencing people*; and for ‘ангел’ (identified only in Ukrainian), there are two allomorphic semes: *a demi-god/mediator and pure/graceful*.

For the English ‘demon’ (16 semes in total), the Dutch ‘demon’ (10 semes in total), and the Ukrainian ‘демон’ (8 in total), there are 22 differential semes, among which only one is isomorphic, i.e., *bad/evil/malignant*. There are three isomorphic semes for the English ‘demon’ and the Dutch ‘demon’: *divine, supernatural/immaterial, influencing people*. There is only one isomorphic seme for the English ‘demon’ and the Ukrainian ‘демон’, i.e., *obsession*. There are two isomorphic semes for the Dutch ‘demon’ and the Ukrainian ‘демон’: *a god/deity, a demi-god/mediator*.

There are nine allomorphic semes for ‘demon’ (identified only in English): *a servant/ an attendant, a divider/ provider, lot/fortune, doing sth very well/being extremely skillful/one’s genius/paragon, with a lot of energy, force/power, persistently tormenting, causing problems, administering the fate*; there are two allomorphic semes for ‘demon’ (identified only in Dutch): *kind/good, pure/graceful*, and two allomorphic semes for ‘демон’ (identified only in Ukrainian): *a saviour and benevolent/helpful*.

Isomorphic features can be explained by the fact that all three languages under this study are of the same Indo-European family with the similar mythological history. More isomorphic features between Dutch and Ukrainian can be determined by a closer contact between Dutchmen and Ukrainians after the West Germanic tribes moved to the British Isles in 4th–5th centuries AD. Allomorphic features signal the result of an individual historical, economic, political, and cultural evolution.

A special focus is on the cases when one and the same seme is present in ‘angel’ (e.g., ‘showing love’) and ‘demon’ (e.g., ‘obsession’), especially from different languages (e.g., ‘pure’ for Dutch ‘demon’ and Ukrainian

‘ангел’). It signals that sometimes the good and the evil cannot be strictly separated requiring further research into their individual perception and interpretation in Germanic and Slavic cultures. Among relevant future studies, there can also be corpus research with establishing the frequencies of separate lexemes nominating notions/concepts of ‘angel’ and ‘demon’ to show the most typical for each language, as well as adding one of the Romance languages to cover a wider spectrum of languages.

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## Santrauka

**Nataliya Lemish, Oksana Kaliberda, Olena Kryzhko, Iryna Ovchynnikova**

**Leksemų „angelas“ ir „demonas“ etimologija ir semantikos raida anglų, olandų ir ukrainiečių kalbose: lyginamasis tyrimas**

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama angelo ir demono, kaip priešingų būtybių, įkūnijančių gėrį ir blogį įvairiose kultūrose, dichotomija. Tarpdisciplininiam tyrimui apžvelgiamas angelo ir demono vaidmuo ir reikšmė filosofijoje, literatūroje, religijoje ir mene. Panašumai ir skirtumai vaizduojant angelus ir demonus anglų, olandų ir ukrainiečių kalbose nustatomi pasitelkiant trijų tipų lingvistinę – etimologinę, komponentinę ir žodyno apibrėžčių – analizę. Straipsnyje pateikiami etimologinės analizės rezultatai, remiantis anglų (*angel, demon*), olandų (*engel, demon*) ir ukrainiečių (*ангел, демонст*) etimologinių žodynų įrašais. Lyginant ir gretinant nustatomi izomorfiniai ir alomorfiniai požymiai. Taip pat pateikiami semantiniai reikšmių pokyčiai tiriamosiose kalbose. Gauti duomenys leidžia skaitytojams suprasti gėrio (įkūnijamo angelų) ir blogio (įkūnijamo demonų) suvokimo, konceptualizavimo ir klasifikavimo skirtingose kalbose panašumus ir skirtumus. Šio tyrimo rezultatai gali prisidėti prie žodyno apibrėžčių tobulinimo ir palengvinti tarpkultūrinį bendravimą šiuolaikiniame globalizuotame pasaulyje.

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