

Etymology and Semantic Fields: the DWEE-Project
Deutsche Wortfeldetymologie in europäischem Kontext =
Semantic Field Etymology in German
and in European Context¹

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1 Preliminary remarks

The analysis of semantic fields is the main goal of the DWEE-project “Semantic Field Etymology in German and in European Context: The human being in nature and culture”, that is funded by the Saxonian Academy of Sciences. As the title says, the intention is to analyse the German vocabulary on the basis of the central conceptual field “human being”, by concerning the modular structure of this field, its historical layering in relation to the European language area and in a language stage oriented semantic field comparison. The timeframe of the investigation goes back from Modern High German via Early Modern High German and Middle High German to Old High German. Further Germanic languages and other Indo-European languages are used when they are required for the semantic field etymology. The units of analysis are the nouns, so called “Begriffswörter”.

We are concerned with the following central questions:

- How is a certain fact, a certain concept denoted in a language or in a group of related (or non-related) languages?
- Are there several verbalisations and if so, how do they relate to each other in geographical, stylistic or quantitative respect?
- Where do the verbalisations come from? Are there typical source concepts from which they originate?

The natural concept of the human being constitutes the starting point before cultural references are presented. Thus the biological features of the human being are treated first and then the cultural features. This leads us to the following semantic fields on a meta-level:

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- (A) biological features of the human being
- (B) cultural features of the human being
- (B) (1) the human being in everyday life
- (B) (2) the human being in the diversity of its cultural relations
- (B) (2) (a) the human being and society
- (B) (2) (b) the human being and religion and ethics
- (B) (2) (c) the human being and economy
- (B) (2) (d) the human being and science and arts
- (B) (2) (e) the human being and new technologies

In dialogue with modern linguistics and by contact with several other dictionary-projects the following basic aspects can be found in our work: Concerning the etymology the latest state of knowledge of Indo-European research is presented adequately. The change of meaning will be analysed according to the principles of modern semantics. Moreover, the so called “Benennungsmotiv” (the impulse that gave rise to the name) is identified and included into the history of the word as well as into the factual history. That the German vocabulary is not an isolated one, but stands in intercultural relations, is shown by the inclusion of foreign words, especially so called Europeanisms, German borrowings from and into other languages and Europhrases.² The language stage oriented semantic fields are compared based on their content from a diachronic perspective, as Jost Trier (1931) demonstrated first for the vocabulary of the “sense area of the mind” (“Sinnbezirk des Verstandes”). Thus our approach consists of several components: semantics of the semantic field and its words from synchronic and diachronic perspective; etymology; diachronic comparison of semantic fields and within a field; European component, etymology of the semantic field.

We started with the first semantic field on the meta-level “biological features of the human being” and analysed the “terms for parts of the body” section. Now, we limit ourselves to a central term from this segment, namely the concept “hand”. The different namings for “hand” in older German imply that this is a multifaceted historico-cultural concept. In earlier times the hand was an existential instrument for mastering one’s life. Therefore, in the German dialects, in Early New High German, in Middle High German and in Old High German many synonyms existed. In the following it is shown how highly differentiated

² Cf. Bock/Lühr 2014.

the semantics was, especially from a diachronic perspective. Hereby, we want to find out whether the words for the concept “hand” were semantically opaque, i.e. unmotivated, or motivated for speakers at the time. If they are unmotivated, lexeme substitution and lexeme loss occurred often. It needs to be answered with a view on the neighboring concepts and their namings why this took place. In the course of time different diachronic semantic field layers can be identified. Our next issue is the comparison of the semantics of the concept “hand” in older stages with Modern High German. Finally semantic parallels from other Indo-European languages are given.

2 Semantics of a semantic field section from a diachronic perspective

As lexeme substitution and lexeme loss came to pass frequently within the semantic field segment “hand” the meaning of the neighbouring words in the field must be carefully determined. Although the basic word *hand* is unmotivated in present-day language this was not the case with other words for this concept in older language stages of German. One can find many synonyms in the German dialects, in Middle High German (MHG) and Old High German (OHG):

OHG *fūst*, MHG *fūst* ‘fist’; OHG Bavarian, Alemannic *tenar*, *tenra* ‘flat hand’, MHG Upper German *tener*, NHG Styrian *ten*, *tien* ‘flat hand’ (Bavarian *tern* ‘slap in the face’); MHG *laffe* ‘flat hand’; OHG *goufa* ‘a handful’, OHG *goufana* ‘handful, hollow hand’, MHG *goufe* ‘hollow hand’, NHG Bavarian (*gauffel*) *gauffen* ‘the bowl formed by two hands held together’; OHG *goufsa* ‘a handful’; OHG *gousana* ‘a handful’; OHG *gavila* ‘a handful’; OHG *goffela* ‘handful’; NHG Upper German *gaufe*, Older NHG *Gaufel*; MHG *neve-mez* ‘measure of a fist, handful’; OHG *wini(s)star*, MHG *winster(e)* ‘left hand’; OHG *lenka* ‘left hand’ (MHG *link*, *lenk*), Austro-Bavarian *tengge*, *tenke* ‘left hand’; Bavarian, Alemannic *letze* ‘left hand’

Moreover, the following words can only be found in Old High German:

OHG *breta* ‘flat hand’; OHG *hantbreita* ‘*palma extensa*’; OHG *folma* ‘flat hand’; OHG *laffa*, *lappo* ‘flat hand’; OHG *flazza* ‘palm, *palma*’; OHG *munt*, *munda* ‘*palmus*, hand as a measure of length’; *spanna* ‘flat hand as a measure of length’

The prototypical and stereotypical features of the term “hand” in present-day language are helpful in the identification of the motivation of these namings. Thus *hand* is prototypically characterized by the following features:³

- <IS: the lowest part of the arm>
- <IS: the counterpart to the foot, also regarding the structure>
- <FUNCTION: to grasp and hold>
- <FUNCTION: to feel>
- <IS: consisting of palm and five fingers>
- <IS: an important feature of the human species>
- <IS: in pairs>

And stereotypes are:

- <with rolled up fingers and tucked up thumb>, <with strength> *geballte Hand* “clenched hand”, *Faust* “fist”
- <upwards open> *hohle Hand* “hollow hand”
- <flat> *flache hand* “flat hand”

The next step of our investigation is the question whether the words stated above were semantically opaque, i.e. unmotivated, or motivated for speakers at the time. In the second case they could be arranged in word families. Word families are important structural features of the language awareness⁴ because the speaker can establish meaning relations on the synchronic level by himself. To investigate this procedure is very useful for the diachronic comparison of a semantic field.

If one starts with OHG *win(i)star*, MHG *winster(e)* ‘left hand’ it seems as if in this case the left hand was viewed as the more favourable one, thus an old positive concept. The word is originally a comparative formation Proto-Germ. **uēnistrō* (Old Icelandic *vinistri*), which belongs to the root **uēnh-* ‘become fond of’, that can be found in the Latin *venus* ‘love, charm’; cf. related Old Indic *vāma-* ‘dubious’, *vānate* ‘loves, has appreciation’.⁵ A parallel in word formation and semantics is Latin *sinist(e)ra* ‘left hand, left side’. Old Indic *sānīyān* ‘more useful, more advantageous’, Old Indic *sanóti* ‘wins, gains’, Avestan *hanaēmai*

³ Cf. DWEE s.v. *Hand* (Bock), esp. the rubric “prototypicality”.

⁴ Blank 2001: 155.

⁵ LIV 682f.

‘we want to win’ < Proto-IE **senh₂-*⁶ are related. The Austro-Bavarian *tengge*, *tenke* ‘left hand’ is based on this notion, too, because the early form **denkī* ‘the better, pleasant, good’ is related to the word *thanks*.⁷ However, neither *win(i)star* nor Austro-Bavarian *tengge*, *tenke* are semantically motivated in Old High German. The original meaning was probably not known anymore.

Moreover, one can also find the contrary notion in terms for the left hand often: OHG *lenka* ‘left hand’ (MHG *lenk*, *link*) together with NHG *linkisch*. OHG *lenka* means ‘the slack’ and belongs to the Latin *languēre* ‘to be slack, to be idle’ (< **(s)l-n-g-*;⁸ with renewed ablaut in pre-Proto-Germ. **leng-*). Present-day speakers may connect *die Linke* with *linkisch* ‘clumsy’, however, this is an derivation of *link* ‘left’. Thus, the etymological meaning is not conscious anymore, but the relation to *link*, *linkisch* is. A similar meaning, as for OHG *lenka* is the basis of Bavarian, Alemannic *letze* ‘left hand’. The pre-form **lattija-* means ‘the idle’. It is safe to assume that the speakers were aware of the relationship with Bavarian *letz* ‘decrepit, sickly, infirm’ (Alemannic *letz*, *lätz* ‘athwart’; cf. Gothic *lats*, Old Norse *latr*, Old English *læt*, OHG *laz* ‘idle’, Old Frisian *let* ‘evil’).⁹ All in all, the concept of ‘left hand’ possesses a negative connotation in Germanic languages as the etymology of Gothic *hleidumei* (sc. *handus*) ‘left hand’, actually ‘the crooked’, shows. It can be linked to the root of Latin *clivium* (*auspicium*), Lithuanian *šleĩvas* ‘bow-legged’, Old Irish *clé*, Middle Bretonic *cleiz* (< **klijō-*), Old Welsh *cledd*, Cornish *cladh* ‘dubious, unhappy’ (< **klijā-* < Proto-IE **klej-* ‘to lean on’).¹⁰

On the contrary, the right hand is considered to be the ‘more skilful one’. An example is Old Icelandic *hægri*, Faroese *høgri*, Norwegian Bokmål, Nynorsk *høgre*, Middle Swedish *höger*, Old Dansk *høire* ‘right (hand)’; cf. Old Norse

⁶ EWAiA II: 696f.; LIV 532f. In augural language ‘left’ in the meaning of ‘prosperous’ could be used, because in the case of orientation towards the south the Eastern side of the praying man was to the left (Walde/Hofmann 1965).

⁷ For further reading cf. Lühr 1987: 70.

⁸ LIV 565.

⁹ Lühr 1987: 71.

¹⁰ Schrijver 1995: 118; de Bernardo Stempel 1999: 204; Falileyev 2000: 32; Matasović 2009: 209. IEW 602 (however to Old Icelandic *híta* ‘to rely on, trust, abide by’ < **klej-d-*). Cf. further Modern Dansk *kej*, *kejtet* ‘left hand’; to Norwegian Bokmål, Nynorsk *keik* ‘twisting, waggle’, Old Icelandic *keikr* ‘bent backwards, the belly jutting forwards’; Old Indic *jihmá-* ‘oblique, transverse, athwart’; Norwegian Bokmål *keive* ‘left hand’; to Norwegian Bokmål *keiv* ‘oblique, sloped, twisty’; Lithuanian *geibūs* ‘clumsy, awkward’ (IEW 354; LITEW 141).

hœgr ‘easy, skilful, gentle’, Modern Icelandic *hægur*, Faroese *høgur*, Norwegian Bokmål, Nynorsk *høg* ‘big, large, strong, robust’.¹¹

Ultimately, “right” and “left” are based on the stereotype <IS: in pairs>. While the original partly positive partly negative connotations of these concepts are not present in OHG *win(i)stra*, MHG *winster*, Austro-Bavarian *tengge*, *tenke* ‘left hand’ anymore, the speakers of Bavarian-Alemannic were probably still conscious of it in Bavarian, Alemanc *letze* and OHG *lenka* ‘left hand’.

A further naming for “hand” occurring with connotations can be found in OHG *munt*, *munda* ‘*palms*, hand as a measure of length’ (Old Icelandic *mund* ‘hand’). The word is identical with Old English *mund* ‘hand, protection’, OHG *munt*, Old Saxon *mund* ‘protection, patronisation’¹² < Proto-Germ. **mundō* (beside Old Icelandic *mundr* ‘price of a woman, patronisation’, Old Frisian *mund* ‘patronisation’ < **munda-*) < pre-Proto-Germ. **m̥ntáh*₂.¹³ However, the meaning ‘protection’ is metaphorical (cf. also Middle Irish *muntar* ‘family’ < *‘the one who is under the charge’). The old meaning is ‘hand’, as Latin *manus* ‘hand’,¹⁴ Hittite *manijahh-* ‘to hand in, to administer’, adverb *maninkuwan* ‘close, soon’ (< *‘at hand’)¹⁵ show. The meaning ‘hand’ lives on in the idioms *sich in jemand's Mund befinden* (to be in somebody's hand ‘to be under his power, his protection’), *Morgenstund hat Gold in Mund*¹⁶ (It's the early bird that catches the worm). Naturally, this connection of OHG *munt* ‘hand’ is not present anymore but the link to OHG *munt* ‘protection’ still is.

¹¹ de Vries 1962: 278.

¹² Tiefenbach (1973: 78ff.) separates OHG *munt* ‘protection’ from OHG *munt* ‘hand’, because *munt* in the meaning ‘protection’ is early documented in male personal names (cf. Schramm 1957: 88; Kaufmann 1968: 262).

¹³ Specht 1944: 82; IEW 740f. Neri (2013: 198f.) suggests a basic meaning ‘peak’ for **m̥ntáh*₂ by connecting this formation to the root **men-* ‘to jut, rise’ (cf. Latin *mentum* ‘chin’, Welsh *mant* ‘jaw’, OHG *mund* ‘mouth’). A semantic parallel can be seen in the etymology of the numeral Proto-IE **h₂ok óh₁* ‘eight’, literally ‘two peaks’ (‘the two hands without the thumb’) (Lipp 2009: 89ff.).

¹⁴ The derivation of Latin *manus* and Greek *μαρῆ* ‘hand’ from an *r/n*-stem has to be abandoned, because a root consisting of a single consonant *m-* is impossible in Proto-Indo-European (Schrijver 1991: 458). Therefore, the connection with the family of Albanian *merr* ‘takes, gripes, receives’ (< **marnē/o-*, transformed from **m̥r-n-h₂-*; vgl. Old Indic AV *ní m̥r̥n̥hi* ‘grasp’) (GEW II: 175) is obsolete. Forssman (1966: 135ff.) doubts the authenticity of *μαρῆ* ‘hand’. The form could be coined to explain Greek *ἐύμαρῆς* ‘easy’ (EDG 905).

¹⁵ Neri 2013: 185.

¹⁶ *Mund* originally was feminine.

Now concerning the bearing of the hand: An old word for the concept “clenched hand”, occurring in west Indo-European languages, is: OHG *fūst*, MHG *vūst*, Old English *fīst*, Old Frisian *fest* (< **fūsti-*), Serbian Church Slavonic *peštъ*, (with rearrangement) Lithuanian *kūmstė* ‘fist’ (< Proto-IE **puḱ^w-sti-*) originally meant ‘fiveness’ and referred to the bent fingers of the hand. Because of the loss of the nasal in front of **χt* in Proto-Germ. **fūsti-* the connection to the numeral *five* (Proto-IE **pénk^we*)¹⁷ is not understandable for speakers of West Germanic anymore.¹⁸ The naming refers to the prototypical feature <consisting of five fingers>.

Another concept for “fist” is conveyed by MHG *neve-* in *neve-mez* ‘measure of a fist, handful’. It presents the fist as the ‘clenched one’; compare Old Norse *hnefi* ‘fist, sword’, Old English PN *Hnæf*, OHG PN *Hnabi* to Old Icelandic *hnafa*, *hnōf* ‘to cut’, Old Swedish *nappa* ‘to pinch, pick to pieces’, Old Icelandic *-hneppa* ‘to pinch, clamp, press’, Old English *hnæppan* ‘to hit, bump against something’.¹⁹ In German this word family is only present in the PN OHG *Hnabi*. Therefore MHG *neve* is unmotivated. The “Benennungsmotiv” is the function of grasping.

A further manifestation of hand is the “flat hand”.²⁰ There is no possibility to connect OHG Bavarian, Alemannic *tenar*, *tenra*, MHG Upper German *tener*, NHG Styrian *ten*, *tien* ‘flat hand’ (Bavarian *tern* ‘slap in the face’ < **denra-/ō*) within German or Germanic. The word belongs to the Greek neuter *θέναρ*, *-αρος* ‘palm, sole’ (< **d^henr*) and furthermore to Hittite *dannareššar*, gen. *dannarešnaš* ‘armpit’, actually ‘flat dip’ (cf. Greek *θέναρ* ‘deepening in the upper altar surface, in which sacrifices are placed’ Pindar²¹). OHG *tenar* is a case of an

¹⁷ Cf. furthermore Greek adverb *πύξ* ‘with the fist’, *πυγμή* ‘fist, fist-fight’, *πυγμαῖος* ‘one fist high, dwarf’, Latin *pugnus* ‘fist’; to Latin *pungō*, *pupugī*, *punctum* ‘to prick’, *pūgiō* ‘dagger’ (IEW 828; GEW 1254; Schindler 1972: 95).

¹⁸ Kluge/Seebold s.v. consider the phonetic closeness to Latin *pugnus*, Greek *πυγμή* ‘fist, fist-fight’, *πύξ* ‘with the fist’ to be remarkable. The word for ‘fist’ was also connected to the root of Proto-Germ. **fanχα-* ‘to catch’ (IEW 839).

¹⁹ IEW 561; Barber 1932: 159.

²⁰ Cf. also Latvian *plaiṅksta* ‘flat hand’; to Latin *plautus* ‘broad, flat, flat-footed’, Umbrian imperative *pre-plotatu* ‘prosternito’ (IEW 838; LIN 564 footnote. 14; but cf. Mühlentbach/Endzelin III: 325); Old Indic *tala-* ‘surface, level, palm’; to Old Church Slavonic pl. *tbla* ‘ground’, Lithuanian *pā-talas* ‘bed’ (EWAiA I: 637); Middle Welsh *adaf* ‘hand, talon’; to Proto-IE **pleth₂-* ‘to spread’ (LIV 478f.).

²¹ Ahnert 1942; 64f.; Hendriksen 1940: 7; Pisani 1951: 1ff.; Lühr 1987: 68f.; 1990: 178 Anm. 61. de Vaan (2008: 210) rejects the connection of Latin *femur* ‘thigh’ for phonetic reasons: A sound change *ny* > (*n*)*m* is not documented otherwise.

Upper German relict word that was apparently used for denoting flat body parts in Indo-European.

Furthermore, the flat hand was denoted by the West Germanic word OHG *folma* ‘flat hand’, Old English *folm*, Old Saxon *folmōs* (< **pelh₂-/p̥h₂-*). The word is also unmotivated,²² it is a hereditary word, too, that can directly be compared with Greek *παλάμη*, Latin *palma* (Middle Latin *palmus*) (< **p̥h₂-mah₂-*), Old Irish *lám* (< **p̥h₂-máh₂-*), actually ‘the flat’; cf. Latin *plānus* ‘flat, smooth, level’; cf. also Greek *παλαστή* ‘palm, width of five fingers’.²³

OHG *breta* (StSG I, 4, 9; III, 9, 41 [Cass.] *pretā* ‘*palma*’)²⁴ is the next term for the flat hand. It denotes a measure of length. The word connects to OHG Hildebrandslied *breton* ‘to strike down’, actually ‘to make flat’: V. 50 *breton mit sinu billiu* ‘to strike down with his sword’.²⁵ The verb is a poetic word and has got its counterpart in Old English *bre(o)dwian* ‘*prosternere*’. However, it is debatable whether a speaker of Old High German was able to link the simplex *breta* ‘flat hand’ to the poetic verb *breton*. In contrast, the compound *hantbreita* ‘*palma extensa*’ is not opaque. Even nowadays the word *Handbreite* ‘handbreadth’ is known as a measure of length that is based on the breadth of the palm. Comparable with it are the compounds Old Frisian *hondbrede*, Old English *handbred* < **-brīda*-²⁶ (cf. Old Frisian *brede*, Old English *bred* ‘surface’),²⁷ a formation with zero grade that belongs to the adjective *broad* < **braiða-* ‘broad’. *breta* could therefore be interpreted as ‘handbreadth’.

During the times of Old High German a motivation of the naming for OHG *flazza* ‘palm, *palma*’ was recognisable. OHG *flaz* ‘smooth, flat’, *flazzi*, *flezzi* ‘smoothed out floor, barn floor, hallway, front hall’ (cf. Lithuanian *plādas*, *pladė*, *pladīs* ‘flat bread, loaf’, Latvian *plaņdīt* ‘to make broad’)²⁸ are related.

Furthermore, OHG *laffa* (< **lapōn-*) and *lappo* (< **labb-a/an-*) ‘flat hand’ are probably motivated in Old High German because these words among other things mean ‘oar blade’ so that the speakers were able to make a connection to

²² Buck 1949: 239; IEW 805f.

²³ EWA III: 459ff.; de Vaan 2008: 44; Kroonen 2013: 159; LIN 563ff. (**pleh₂-* ‘flat, broad’), GEW II: 467 (like Greek *παλάμη* to a lost verb for ‘to spread’). To Avestan *pərənā-* ‘the full’, Old Indic *pāñi-* ‘hand’ cf. EWAiA II: 117f.

²⁴ Cf. StSG III: 443 *fora britunga* ‘pretense’.

²⁵ Lühr 1982: 658ff.

²⁶ Kluge/Seebold s.v.: of unknown origin; Falk/Torp 1909: 277.

²⁷ EWA II: 325f.

²⁸ IEW 834; EWA III: 357f.

the concept of flatness; cf. Early NHG *ruđerlaff* ‘oar blade’. Directly related words in the Germanic languages also have the meaning ‘flat hand’: Gothic *lofa*, Old Icelandic *lófi* ‘flat hand’; cf. further Middle English *lōf* ‘big oar’ (< **lōfan-*), Modern Icelandic *löpp* ‘paw’ (< **lapp-*), OHG *laffa* ‘oar blade, (< **lapōn-*), Modern Swedish *labb* ‘paw’, OHG *lappo*, Early NHG *lappo* ‘oar blade’, MHG, Early NHG *lapp* ‘paw’ (cf. NHG *Bärlapp*) (< **labb-a/an-*). This is the case of a Proto-Germanic paradigm **lōfan-*, **lapp-* (< **labn-*), where a new nominative **lapōn-* was created for **lapp-*, like it is continued in OHG *laffa*, whereas *-*bb-* in **labban-* shows an expressive or sound-symbolic geminate *-*bb-*. Apart from the Germanic words Lithuanian *lópa* ‘paw’ belongs here.²⁹

The next term for the flat hand is OHG *spanna* ‘flat hand as measure of length’. It is certainly fully motivated for it belongs to the verb OHG *spannan* ‘to stretch’.

So far, we can see that there were a lot of words with the “Benennungsmotiv” ‘flat hand’ in OHG: *spanna*, *tenar*, *breta*, *flazza* and *laffa*, *lappo*. Keep in mind that this “Benennungsmotiv” is a modern prototypical feature, too.

The opposite to the “flat hand” is the “hollow bent hand”. This “Benennungsmotiv” appears in OHG *goufa* ‘a handful’, MHG *goufe* ‘hollow hand’, NHG Upper German *gaufe*,³⁰ and in the derivations OHG *goufana* ‘handful, hollow hand’ (Bavarian *gauffen*, also *gauffel* ‘he bowl formed by two hands held together’), OHG *goufsa*,³¹ OHG *gousana*,³² *gavila* ‘a handful’, *goffela* ‘handful, Gaufel’. Cf. further Middle Low German *gepse*, *gespe*, *göpsche*, Low German *gaspe* ‘a hand full’, NHG Prussian *geps* ‘amount to be grasped by both hands’,³³ NHG *gäpse*, Dutch *gaps* ‘both hands full’ (< **gapsōn-*, **gipsōn-* with folk etymological vocalism),³⁴ NHG Westphalian *göpsche*, *göppelsche*, *göupsche*, *göüpelske*. The words connects to Old Norse *gaupn* ‘hollow hand’ (*geypna* ‘to collect or hold in one’s hand’)³⁵ (< **gaupnō*), Modern Dansk dialectal *gjøve* (< **gaupōn-* with original nominative **gauf/bōn-*). Further connections are Old English *géap* ‘open’, *aerngéap* ‘falcon’, Old English *géopan* ‘to gather’, Old

²⁹ Lithuanian *lópa* is probably related to Lithuanian *lōpas* ‘patch, rag’ (‘spread cloth’?) (Lühr 1987: 68; cf. Falk/Torp 1909: 370; Barber 1932: 159).

³⁰ Dazu Törnqvist 1949: XXXIX; Bahder 1925: 79.

³¹ AHDW IV: 371.

³² AHDW IV: 383.

³³ PreußW s.v.; vgl. Dietrich 1976: 319.

³⁴ de Vries 1962: 159.

³⁵ de Vries 1962: 166.

Norse, Norwegian Nynorsk *gaupa* ‘lynx’, and (with different word formation and different ablaut) Lithuanian *žiūpsnis* ‘as much as one can grasp at once, half a handful, a little, hollow hand’ (with old *p*?) < **g^heyp-* opposite Proto-Germ. **geyp-* with a *p*-phoneme³⁶ stemming from the paradigm for ‘hollow hand’. However, *goufa* and *goufe* were unmotivated in Old and Middle High German. There is no evidence for a corresponding word family.³⁷ Remember, like the ‘flat hand’ the ‘hollow hand’ is a stereotype of “Hand” in New High German.

3 Comparison with Modern High German

If one has a look at the list of meaning features for the older words for “hand” in Germanic that were gained by the etymological links, the abundance of synonyms for “flat hand” catches one’s eye. The contrast between the lot of synonyms for “flat hand” and the less for the antonymous counterpart “hollow hand” is certainly due to the fact that the flat hand was used as a measure of length.

However, in Modern High German different measuring units occurred so that the loss of a matter also caused a loss of lexemes.³⁸ Therefore, no new words appear in present-day language for the hand as a measure of length. Parts of the hand, like the palms, do not get new names. The only word that survived from the older group of words for “hand” is the *fist*. Today, it plays a role in expressing emotions; cf. *clench one’s fist*, or it can be found in medicine or sports.

However, whenever there are new words for the concept “hand” in German, they are part of the linguistic register. These words are semantically or phonetically motivated:³⁹

<colloquial>, <comparing with extremities of animals>

<often derogatory> *Flosse* ‘fin’, *Klaue* ‘claw’,⁴⁰ *Kralle* ‘clutch’, *Pfote* ‘paw’

<jokingly> <big> <rude, hefty> <casual> *Pratze* ‘paw’, *Pranke* ‘paw’/
Brante (hunterlike expression for *Pranke* ‘paw’, especially of the bear),
Tatze ‘paw’, MHG *tæpe*

³⁶ Lühr 1987: 69f.; 1988: 338f.; cf. further Meid 1967: 106.

³⁷ Cf. Latin *vola* ‘curve, hollow of the hand or the bottom of the foot’; to Old Norse *valr* ‘round’.

³⁸ The semantic field sections of *arm* and *foot* as neighbors in the semantic field show other conceptions (Bock in Bock/Zeifelder/Ziegler 2012: 190–197).

³⁹ Cf. DWEE s.v. *Hand* (Bock), esp. the rubric “synonyms”.

⁴⁰ Pommeranian (contemptuously) *klauje* for ‘nails’ or ‘hands’ (DW s.v.).

<children's speech> <denoting a slapping hand> *Patsche* 'paw', *Patschhand* 'paddy',

Patschchen, *patschendes Händchen* 'slapping hand(s)'; to *patschen* 'to slap')

Also see the dialect variant: *Datsch* (Swiss German, Swabian, Bavarian also *dätsch*, *dotsch* 'hard strike with the flat hand [sound imitating word], a slap')

Apart from that other distinct "Benennungsmotive" in German can only be found in Rotwelsch, namely in thieves' cant; cf.

Greifling, *Griffiling* 'hand';⁴¹ to NHG *greifen* 'to grasp'⁴²

Klammer 'hand'; to NHG *Klammer* 'hook, handle to hold on to'.

We already discussed the etymology of one word which belongs to this semantic domain: MHG *neve* is related to Old Icelandic *-hneppa* 'to press'.

4 Semantic parallels from other Indo-European languages

But these are ancient and widespread "Benennungsmotive" as the language comparison shows, for example:

'the bent'

Greek *γρόνθος* 'clenched fist, breadth of a hand' (**gromd^ho-*), cf. Old Icelandic *krumma* 'hand'⁴³

Modern Welsh *anghad* 'grasp, hand', to *craf-anc* 'claw' (Old Irish *ēcath* 'fish hook') < **ankato-* (Old Church Slavonic *okotъ* 'hook')⁴⁴

Lithuanian *krailỹs*, Latvian *kreĩlis* (dissimilated from **kreiris*) 'left hand'; to Latvian *kreĩss* 'left, leftside', Old Church Slavonic *razkriviti* 'to bend'⁴⁵

Lithuanian *rankà* 'hand' (Lithuanian *renkù*, *riñkti* 'to pick up, to collect'), Latvian *rùoka* 'hand, arm', Old Church Slavonic *rōka* 'hand', Russian *ruká* 'hand, arm' < Balto-Slavic **urañkã* 'hand', Late Latin *branca* 'paw'

⁴¹ Günther 1905: 61.

⁴² Avé-Lallemant 1862: 107. Cf. Rotwelsch *Nibbel* 'hands', literally 'the hand which is put together with the finger tips'; to NHG *nippen* 'to sip'.

⁴³ GEW I: 327f.; EDG 287.

⁴⁴ To **h₂enk-* 'to bow' (LIV 268f.).

⁴⁵ IEW 936; LATEV I: 446.

< Gaulish **urankā*;⁴⁶ to Scottish-Gaelic *frōg* ‘cave, swamp, hideout’,⁴⁷ Old Norse *rá* ‘angle, corner’ < **uranχō*,⁴⁸ actually ‘bent’⁴⁹

Latin *laeva* ‘left hand’, Greek *λαία* ‘the left’; to Latin *laevus* ‘bent’ (Serv. georg. 3,55 *laevī* (sc. *bovēs sunt*), *quōrum cornua terram spectant* (opposite to *licinī* ‘with horns bent upwards’), Lithuanian *iš-laivóti* ‘to make bends’⁵⁰

Modern Swedisch dialectal *kroka* ‘hand’; to Modern Swedish *kroka* ‘bending, hook’

However, the meaning ‘the grasping, collecting, clutching, pushing’ is documented more frequently:

Old English *gripa* ‘handful, sheaf’, Middle Dutch *grepe* ‘open fist’, Old Norse *greip* ‘hand (with splayed out thumb)’, Modern Icelandic, Norwegian Bokmål, Nynorsk *greip*, Older Modern Dansk *greb* ‘inside of the hand’, Old English *grāp* ‘to grasp, grasping hand’; to OHG *grīfan* ‘to grasp’⁵¹

Old Norse *krumma*, *krymma* ‘hand’ (**gr̥mh-*); to OHG *krimman*, *kram* ‘to tear, maul’, Old English *crimman* ‘to cram, stuff’, MHG *krammen* ‘to grasp with the claws’; Lithuanian *grūmti* ‘to stuff inside, to cram’⁵²

Greek *δράξ*, *-δρακός* ‘hand’, pl. *δράκες* *δέσμαι* Hesych (with metathesis), *δράγμα* ‘handful, especially of corn stalks, sheaf’, *δράγμις*, *δράγμη* ‘small handful’; to Greek *δράσσομαι*, Attic *δράττομαι* ‘to grasp with the hand’⁵³

Old Church Slavonic *grъstъ* ‘fist, handful’, Old Russian *grъstъ*, Serbo-Croatian *gr̂st* ‘inner palm, handful’, Polish *garść* ‘hollow hand, handful’, Russian *gorstъ* ‘hollow hand, handful’, Upper Sorbian *horšć* ‘hollow

⁴⁶ For further connections cf. Schaffner 2001: 420.

⁴⁷ Marstrand 1910: 362f.; Pokorny 1940: 50; IEW 1155.

⁴⁸ Old Norse *rá* might be a rhyming word with *vá* ‘angle, corner’ (Lühr 1988: 178).

⁴⁹ Specht 1944: 131; Buck 1949: 239; IEW 1155. For the semantics cf. Old Indic *vrís-* ‘finger’ (only RV 1,144,5) which stems from the root IE **ureiǵ-* ‘to twist, crook’ (Avestan *ruuaēs-* ‘to twist, turn’, Greek *ρικνός* ‘bent, crooked, shrivelled (of age, dryness, cold), stiff’ (KEWA III: 281; EWAia II: 597; EDG 1285f.).

⁵⁰ Cf. Old Church Slavonic *lěvъ*, Russian *lěvyj* < Proto-IE **lh₂iǵo-*, Illyrian PN *Laevicus*, *Levo* etc.; According to GEW (II: 73) a basic meaning ‘crooked’ is uncertain.

⁵¹ de Vries 1962: 186; Jensen 1952: 54.

⁵² Lühr 1976: 82.

⁵³ IEW 213; GEW I: 415; Schindler 1967: 82.

hand, bent palm, closed hand, handful’, Lower Sorbian *gjarsć* ‘handful’, Czech *hrst* ‘hollow hand, handful’ (Proto-Slavic **gъrstъ* < **grsti-*), Russian Church Slavonic *pri-gъrščа* ‘handful’ (< **gurstiā*); to Latvian *gūrste* ‘bundle of flax’ (**gursti-* < **gurt-sti-*), Belarusian *pry-hortáty* ‘to accumulate’⁵⁴

Old Indic *gābhasti-* ‘forearm, hand’; to Lithuanian *gabanà* ‘armful’, Old Irish *gabaid* ‘takes, grasps’, later ‘gets’, Latin *habēre* ‘to have, hold, possess’⁵⁵

Old Indic *grābhá-* ‘what can be grasped’, *ṛṇa-glābha-* ‘handful of grass’ (< **g^hrebh₂-*; to Hittite *kar(ap)-* ‘to lift’, Old Indic *grbhnāti*, Young Avestan *gərəβnāiti* ‘seizes’)⁵⁶

Young Avestan *gauua* acc. dual, *gauuō* acc. pl. ‘hands of daēvic creatures’; Greek *ἐγ-γνάω* ‘betroth’; medium ‘to vouch’, actually ‘to give one’s hand on something’, *ὀπόννος*, *ὀπόννιος* ‘imminent, suddenly’, actually ‘under the hands’, *ἐγγύς* ‘close’, *ἐγγύθι* ‘in proximity’, *ἐγγύθεν* ‘from, in proximity’, *μεσσηγύ*, *-γύς* ‘among’, actually ‘between the hands’, *ἐγγυος* ‘secured’, actually ‘in the hands’; to Avestan *gūnao’ti* ‘to increase’, *gaona-* ‘profit’, *xratu-gūt-* ‘gaining insight’; Lithuanian *gáunu*, *gáuti* ‘to receive’, Latvian *gūt* ‘to catch, grasp, gain’, Prussian *pogāuani* ‘receive’⁵⁷

Middle Irish *glacc* ‘half-opened fist, hand’ (< Pre-Proto-Celtic **gl^lknā* with phonetic change from **kn* > *kk* or sound-symbolic/expressive gemination), Modern Irish *glac*; to Modern Irish *glacaim* ‘to grasp’; Old English *clyccan* ‘to seize, grasp’⁵⁸

Polish thieves’ cant *grabcia* ‘hand’, *graby* ‘hands’, Russian dialectal *grabljuchi* ‘hands’; to Polish *grabie*, *grable*, Russian *grábli* pl. ‘rake’, Old Church Slavonic *grabljō*, *grabiti* ‘ἀράζειν’, Polish *grabić* ‘to rake, rob, carry off’⁵⁹

Greek Homeric *ἀγοστός* ‘the hand bent for grasping’ (only in the formulaic vers *ἔλε γαῖαν ἀγοστῶι* ‘take the earth with the hand (bent like a

⁵⁴ IEW 383; Klingenschmitt 1982: 101f.; Schuster-Šewc 1991: 328.

⁵⁵ Duchesne-Guillemin 1938: 219; IEW 408; EWAia I: 463f.

⁵⁶ EWAia I: 505f.; LIV 201.

⁵⁷ Schindler 1972: 61f., 82f.; Klingenschmitt 1982: 177; Neri 2013: 190; but cf. LIV 188f. (two different roots). Neri (2013: 190f.) mentions an alternative etymology: **g^(w)ouho-* ‘the crooked’ (to Greek *γύιον* ‘limb, hand’).

⁵⁸ Lühr 1985: 289f.

⁵⁹ Ułaszyn 1910: 201f.

claw) [Λ 425] probably < *ἄγορ-στός with ρ-loss like for example in παστάς, -ἄδος ‘extension, columned hall, atrium’ (< *παρ-στάς) and suffix -στο- like in Greek παλαστή ‘flat hand’, Old Church Slavonic *grъstb* ‘handful’; to Greek ἀγείρω ‘to gather’⁶⁰

Old Irish *dorn* ‘fist, hand’, Modern Welsh *dwrn* ‘hand’ (Modern Welsh *dyrnod*, Middle Welsh *dyrnawt* ‘slap in the face’), *dyrnaid* (Middle Welsh *dyrneit*) ‘handful’, Brythonic *dorn* ‘hand’, (Brythonic *dournek* ‘who has got big hands’), Latvian *dūre*, *dūris* ‘fist’; to Latvian *duru*, *dūru*, *dūrt* ‘to stab, push’⁶¹

Latin *pugnus* ‘fist’; to Latin *pungō* ‘stab, push’

Following meaning features are more general:⁶²

‘the doing’

Old Indic *kará-* ‘hand, elephant’s trunk’; to Old Indic *kará-* ‘doing, making’⁶³

‘the working’

Middle Irish *scíp* ‘hand’ (Middle Irish *cíp* probably < *deisscíp* ‘right hand’) (with *bb* in expressive function or < **skēb^hni-*); to Proto-Germ. **skapja-* ‘to work’ (with secondary **p?*)⁶⁴

Meaning features that actually correspond to our word for “hand” today:

Gothic *handus*, Old Norse *hǫnd*, Old Saxon *hand*, Old Frisian *hand*, *hond*, Old English *hand*, *hond*, OHG, MHG, Old Low Franconian, Middle Dutch *hant*, OHG Isidor *hant-griffa* ‘pugillus’, Modern Dutch *hand*, NHG *Hand*; to Gothic *fra-hinþan* ‘to take prisoner’, Old Swedish, Modern Swedish *hinna* ‘to reach’, Gothic *hunþs*, Old English *hūð*, OHG *-hunda*, *-hunta* ‘prey’, Greek *κεντέω* ‘to stab’ < Proto-IE **kent-* ‘to

⁶⁰ Solmsen 1909: 1ff.: *ἄγορ-στός ‘collector’. For another opinion cf. Brugmann 1905/1906: 129f. (to Greek ἄγρη ‘hunting, way of catching; prey’, Avestan *azrō-daði-* ‘hunting’ < Proto-IE **h₂(g)er-* ‘to collect, take’); but see EDG 15.

⁶¹ IEW 203 (to the connection with the root **d^her-* ‘to hold’; Mühlenbach/Endzelin I: 529; Buck 1949: 239.

⁶² Cf. further Old Icelandic *hreifī* ‘wrist, a seal’s fin’; to Old Icelandic *hreifa* ‘to swing’, Lithuanian *kreipiù*, *kreipti* and *kraipað*, *kraipyti* ‘to twist, turn’ (IEW 937).

⁶³ To Proto-IE **k^wer-* ‘to make, shape’, originally ‘to cut’, perhaps to denote a no longer determinable craft activity.

⁶⁴ Lühr 1985: 318; but IEW 931 to Latin *scabō*, *-ere*, *scābī* ‘to shave, scrape, rub’, Old Icelandic *skafa* ‘to scrobe, shave, plane’.

stab’,⁶⁵ Old English *hunta* ‘hunter, spider’, *hentan* ‘to pursue’ (with the continuant of secondary Proto-Germ. *t)⁶⁶

These Germanic cognates as well as the function of the human hand as a grasping organ indicate that the Germanic source word for the naming *hand* changed its meaning from *‘to stab’ to ‘to grasp’. The hand would then be characterised as ‘the grasper’. It would be based on a *nomen actionis* ‘grasping’ (**k̑ont-*), that developed into a *nomen agentis* metonymically.⁶⁷

Moreover, the hand as an expression for a concrete grasping gesture is the meaning aspect that is applied for the very oldest word for “hand” in Indo-European:

Proto-IE **ǵ^hes-ōr/t-*: Hittite *kessar* (commune, neutrum), dative-locative *kisri*, *keššaraš* (with thematic extension),⁶⁸ Luwian *iššari-* ‘hand’, Lycian *iszri-* (with loss of the tectal in the onset),⁶⁹ Greek *χείρ*, *χείρως*, Armenian *jeṛn* (**ǵ^hesr-*), Tocharian A *tsar* (**ǵ^hesor* or **ǵ^hesēr*), B *šar* (*ǵ^heserV^o*), Armenian *jeṛn* (**ǵ^hesr-*), Albanian *dorë* ‘hand’⁷⁰ (rebuilt from an acc. sg. **d^hēran* (transponat **ǵ^hesr̥n*),⁷¹ **ǵ^hos -to-*: Old Indic *hásta-* ‘hand, upper

⁶⁵ LIV 326f.

⁶⁶ EWA IV 816f.; Lühr 2000: 186; Buck 1949: 239; Lehmann 1986: 184, 187; Seebold 1970: 255; 1975: 166f. (‘point’ > ‘fist’ > ‘hand’). Another remarkable etymology is suggested by Neri 2003: 226ff.: He connects Gothic *handus* to the root of OHG *diggen* ‘to implore’, *dīhan* ‘to thrive, adjust’ by reconstructing an aorist participle **tk-ónt-* (compare the word formation **h₁d-ónt-* ‘biting’), whereby the accusative **kónt-n̥* was transferred to an *u*-stem in Germanic. Compared with this Jensen’s (1952: 50ff.) derivation of Gothic *handus* from a compound formed with the numeral for ‘ten’ (**dekn̥*) and the root **h₁em-* ‘to take’ + suffix *-t-* ‘two handfuls’ is unacceptable as well as Kisch’s (1935: 137) reconstruction **kont-* ‘(one) hand’, literally ‘five fingers’ (as a counterpart to Hungarian *kéz* ‘hand’ etc.).

This also applies for Devleeschouwer’s (1974: 130ff.) assumption, that Gothic *-hinþan* and *handus* are a contamination of a Proto-Indo-European root **kent-* ‘to pierce’ (OHG *hantag* ‘sharp, acute’) with the family of Hungarian *kéz* ‘hand’ (< **käte* ‘grip’) or Wagner’s (1972: 76f.) connection with Uralic words. The Pre-Proto-Germanic alternation *-t-/-d-* in Gothic *handus* und *-hinþan* and Old English *hunta* ‘hunter, spider’ is not comparable to the consonant gradation found in Uralic languages. It is rather due to *n*-gemination in Germanic (Lühr 1988: 270).

⁶⁷ Bock in Bock/Zeilfelder/Ziegler 2012: 204.

⁶⁸ Fraenkel 1953: 93ff.; Schindler 1967: 246f.

⁶⁹ HEG 1983: 558ff.; 1990: 89.

⁷⁰ The connection with Greek *δῶρον* ‘palm, hand span (measure of length)’ (to Old Norse *tarra*, *terra* ‘to spread’, IEW 203) cannot be maintained.

⁷¹ Neri 2013: 186.

arm’,⁷² Old Avestan, Young Avestan *zasta-* ‘hand’, Old Persian *dasta-* ‘hand’; Latin *praestō* ‘present, at hand’ (**prah₂i-ġ^hos-tōd*), Lithuanian *žãstas* ‘upper arm’, Lithuanian *pa-žastis* ‘armpit, space under the arm’⁷³

Rix (1991) assumed that there used to be a verbal root with the meaning ‘to grasp (with the hollow hand)’, which only survived in nominal formations for individual languages,⁷⁴ in the Indo-European word for ‘thousand’, **ġ^hes-l-ih₂-* (Latin *mīlle*), **ġ^hes-l-(i)ō-* (Vedic in *sahásra-*, Young Avestan in *hazayra-* ‘thousand’ [with **sa- < *sm-?*], *χίλιοι* ‘thousand’). This word points to a term for the ‘hollow hand’, when it really meant ‘having a hand’, i.e. ‘to have an amount (of grains) that fits into the hollow hand’, in the connection **smih₂ġ^hes-l-ih₂*.⁷⁵ A further connection was suggested by Eichner (2002) referring to Latin *hostus* ‘quantity of oil which was obtained in one working day compared to the used quantity of olives’ < *‘compensation, substitute’, *hostia* ‘sacrificial animal’ < *‘female animal, that serves as a symbolic substitute’. As Neri⁷⁶ points out, the basic meaning of words for ‘hand’ formed by the root **ġ^hes-* would then be ‘the one who takes and gives’.⁷⁷ However, this meaning was not known to the speakers of Indo-European anymore because of the lack of a corresponding word family. With this we have come to the end of our etymological analysis of the word “hand” within its semantic field.

5 Conclusion

The focus was on the “Benennungsmotive” of the words for “hand” in Germanic and therefore the etymology of the semantic field of this multifaceted basic concept. The history of these words showed that new creations, with meanings that were not opaque, arose and replaced the synchronically unmotivated words. If

⁷² Old Irish *duais* ‘hand’ < **dous-ti-* ‘upper arm’, to Old Indic *doṣ-* ‘forearm’, Avestan *daoš-* ‘upper arm, shoulder’ (Neri 2013: 198).

⁷³ Cf. Latvian *paduse*, Old Church Slavonic *pazucha* ‘armpit, bosom’ (LITEW 560; Duchesne-Guillemain 1938: 211ff.; Markey 1984). For adverbial derivations and the function of the suffix **-to-* cf. Neri 2013: 191ff., 197.

⁷⁴ LIN 170ff.

⁷⁵ Rix 1991; Neri 2013: 188f.

⁷⁶ Neri 2013: 189.

⁷⁷ As Neri (2013: 198f.) convincingly shows, the word for “hand” originally was a root noun; cf. further the derivation **ġ^hestó-* ‘being in the hand’ → **ġ^hóst-i-* ‘the one who is in the hand, in the protection, guest’ (Latin *hostis*).

one starts with Proto-Indo-European, the opposing pole of present-day German, one can see that this language already possessed an unmotivated word **ǵ^hes-r-* ‘hand’, probably in the meaning ‘the one who takes and gives’ and in the word for ‘thousand’ for the denotation of the ‘hollow hand’. On the contrary, the etymologically transparent word IE **p^hh₂-mah₂-*, Greek *παλάμη*, Latin *palma*, and **p^hh₂-máh₂-*, Old Irish *lám*, stands for the ‘flat, open hand’ (cf. Latin *plānus*). However, the continuation OHG *folma*, used as a measure of length, is unmotivated in Germanic and has therefore been replaced by clearer words. Another archaic word is OHG Bavarian, Alemannic *tenar* ‘flat hand’, which is related to Hittite and Greek words. Competitors are the measure of length terms OHG *spanna*, *breta*, *fiazza* and *laffa*, *lappo*. While these words also did not survive in German in the course of time, the term for the ‘open hand’ prevailed in Bavarian *Gaufel* to date. Furthermore, there were also new namings of words that were concerned with the aspect of the right or left hand as the favourable or skilful as the unmotivated formations OHG *wini(s)star*, MHG *winster(e)*, Austro-Bavarian *tengge*, *tenke* ‘left hand’ as opposed to the motivated OHG *lenka* ‘left hand’ (MHG *link*, *lenk*), Bavarian, Alemannic *letze* ‘left hand’. However, there was next to no need for these words in present-day language, as well as for the metaphorically used OHG *munt* ‘hand, protection’. Special bearings of the hand are denoted solely by OHG *fūst* ‘fist’ or by constructions like NHG *flache*, *offene Hand*, *Handfläche*, which function as stereotypes for “hand” today. Functional aspects of the hand like in the cultural term ‘the grasping one’ are not relevant for people nowadays. Nevertheless, this still occurs in Yiddish and in other Germanic and Indo-European languages. In general, we are neutral towards the hand today. At most a certain feeling of the speaker finds expression in slightly derogatory words for the hand or in imitating the sounds as children’s speech, as can be seen in the comparisons with expressions stemming from denotations of body parts of animals like *Flosse* (‘fin’), *Pfote* (‘paw’) or the children’s speech *Patsche* (*Patschhand* ‘paddy’). All in all, the etymology of the semantic field shows the development of the hand as an existential instrument for mastering one’s surrounding world to a neutral limb, that finds little reflection in modern life.

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