

angst:

a feeling of anxiety, especially one about the general state of things rather than anything specific ¹ .	a profound feeling of generalised anxiety or dread (origin 1920s: from Ger., 'fear') ²
---	---

- (German – fear) a term introduced into philosophy by existentialist thinkers. It denotes the state of mind produced when a person becomes aware of being finite in a world that is infinite. The source of this feeling of apprehension is ultimately the infinite nature of nothingness (or the void).³
- (German for: anxiety, anguish) In existentialist philosophy, the dread occasioned by man's realization that his existence is open towards an undetermined future, the emptiness of which must be filled by his freely chosen actions. Anxiety characterises the human state, which entails constant confrontation with possibility and the need for decision, with the concomitant burden of responsibility. (see also 'bad faith'; 'existentialism')⁴
- (existential anguish) The horrible feeling the existentialists suppose we have when we are confronted with our own complete and irremovable freedom and responsibility.⁵
- Various translated as anxiety, anguish, dread. It was first used in an existential sense by Soren Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), where he describes the terrifying reality of the state of splitness, indecisiveness and responsibility in front of choice. Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1927), freely paraphrases Kierkegaard and does not add anything significant to Kierkegaard's analysis. Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), again follows Kierkegaard but adds an element of determinism by making 'anguish' a state of 'bad faith' in which the conscious subject tries to renege on his unalienable freedom to choose⁶.
- A recurrent state of disquiet concerning one's life which Existentialists interpret as evidence that human life has a dimension which a purely naturalistic psychology cannot comprehend. The term was introduced by Kierkegaard, who held that angst (usually translated here as 'dread') concerning the contingencies of fortune should show us that we can only gain a secure sense of our identity by taking the leap of faith and entering into a relationship with God. Heidegger uses the same term (here usually translated as 'Anxiety') to describe a sense of unease concerning the structure of one's life which, because it does not arise from any specific threat, is to be diagnosed as a manifestation of our own responsibility for this structure. Sartre uses the term *angoisse* (usually translated as 'anguish') for much the same phenomenon as Heidegger describes⁷.

www.srds.co.uk/begin

¹ Collins Plain English Dictionary,

ISBN 0003750566

² Oxford Concise English Dictionary,

CN 4393

³ Collins Dictionary of Philosophy,

ISBN 0004343700

⁴ A Dictionary of Philosophy (Pan),

ISBN 0330283596

⁵ Robert M Martin (1991) *The Philosopher's Dictionary*,

ISBN 0921149751

⁶ The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought,

ISBN 0002558718

⁷ The Oxford Companion to Philosophy,

ISBN 0198661320