The limits of polysemy: enantiosemy

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ABSTRACT
Starting with a brief overview of polysemy issues, the paper focuses on enantiosemy (or autoantonymy). Analysis of a sample of enantiosemy cases reveals that they can be divided into seven distinct groups, six of which exhibit a systematic motivated relation between the enantioseme and another polyseme. Some of the groups are analogous to subtypes of the sense relation of opposition (directionality and converseness). Hence enantiosemy complements the set of word-internal relations recognized in the literature as holding between polysemes (autohyponymy, automeronymy, and cohyponymy, in addition to semantic shifts, metaphor and metonymy). In concluding the paper discusses the overlap between the word-internal semantic relations between polysemes and the word-external sense relations between different lexical items and argues for considering this phenomenon the manifestation of a general cognitive mechanism.

KEY WORDS
polysemy, enantiosemy or autoantonymy, word-external and word-internal relations

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself, ...
Walter Whitman, Leaves of Grass,
“Song of Myself” (1855, section 51)

1. INTRODUCTION

Variation in associating form and meaning (of which polysemy is just one type) has been recognized for a long time. In his introduction to the theory and practice of the Linguistic School of Prague (1966, 31–32), Vachek draws attention to Sergej Karcevskij’s (1929) paper in which the author discusses the asymmetry between the phonic sign (signifiant), tending to have different meanings/functions in different contexts, and its content (signifié) that may be expressed by other signs. This ‘antinomy’ of form and content — when each sign is simultaneously homonymous and synonymous with others — is interpreted not as a (potential) hindrance to efficient communication, but as a source of the “inner tension found in a system of language and conditioning its development”, as something that allows for the sign to adjust to the needs of the concrete situation and that “makes it possible for language to develop at all” (Vachek, ibid.).
2. POLYSEMY

Polysemy, or multiple distinct yet related (motivated) senses of a form, is a complex phenomenon which has been studied from many perspectives. Among the key issues are the distinction between polysemy and monosemy and the relations between the distinct senses of a given word form. Renewed attention to polysemy has been paid by cognitive linguists who introduced some new perspectives and approaches. Although the focus of this paper is on the relations between polysemic senses, a few words about the other aspects are only appropriate.

The discussion of the monosemy/polysemy ambiguity has two sides: the borderline between monosemy and polysemy; and, depending on this, the issue of how many senses ought to be attributed to a word. Related to this is the dispute between the monosemic view which in contrast to the polysemic one holds that as few senses as possible should be associated with a single form in the mental lexicon and as many as possible readings should be derived from these. The reason suggested for this is that if one reading is a motivated extension of another, than only the one ought to be recorded inasmuch as the other can be left to the operation of lexical rules.

As regards the blurred boundaries between polysemy and monosemy, called by various authors underspecification, vagueness, generality or indeterminacy, one way of dealing with it is offered by Cruse (2004, 112), who points out that “there are many degrees of distinctness which fall short of full sensehood, but which are nonetheless to be distinguished from contextual modulation”. According to him these degrees fall under “facets” (such as book including the [TEXT] facet and the [TOME] facet), “perspectives” (his adaptation of Pustejovky’s qualia roles, involving constitutive, formal, telic, and agentive qualities), microsenses of subsenses (knife referring alternately to pocketknife, penknife, or table knife), and finally domain specific local senses (mouth of a person /river/cave).

Another way of disentangling the question of whether a particular reading is part of the underlying semantic structure of the word or the result of contextual specification, is by searching for criteria or tests for polysemy that would indicate either a general, inclusive sense compatible with different kinds of denotation or the presence of distinct senses. Basically, it boils down to the question (Geeraerts, 2006) “What does it mean for a reading of a word to be a different meaning?” Geeraerts examines three basic types of criteria (tests) for separating polysemy and vagueness, linguistic, logical, and definitional, and comes to the conclusions that they may be in conflict: “each of them taken separately need not lead to a stable distinction between polysemy and vagueness”, and that ultimately the “distinction between vagueness and polysemy is indeed unstable”. As a result he believes that “lexical meanings are not to be thought of as prepackaged chunks of information, but as moving searchlights that may variously highlight subdomains of the range of application of the lexical item in question” (Geeraerts, 2006, 141). These conclusions lead him to raise methodological issues and ask such questions as whether meanings are found or made, etc.

Geeraerts’ interest in polysemy is due to his cognitive orientation. As mentioned before, cognitive linguistics has paid a great deal of attention to polysemy. In fact,
cognitive semantics comes very early on with the claim that polysemy is conceptual in nature, i.e. a word form is associated with distinct underlying conceptual representations. Thus Brugman and Lakoff (1987, 1988) argue that the preposition over is stored as a set of distinct polysemic units, rather than a single abstract monosemic sense, and in this sense polysemy is not a surface phenomenon emerging from monosemy but reflects mental lexical organization. This has been countered by some recent cognitive linguistic approaches (e.g. Croft and Cruse, 2004) which maintain that the semantic input of words is construed in context. Words are envisaged not to have pre-specified meanings as presumed by Lakoff, but only a “meaning potential” or general “purport” activated by the context on the basis of the range of potential knowledge associated with the words and the previous use of the word. This would imply that in contrast to the Brugman-Lakoff account the underlying semantic structures are not stable and pre-determined (just as Geraerts concludes) and that the semantic input of words is a function of a contextualized interpretation specific to the actual use. As a consequence the word’s “sense-boundary”, to use Croft and Cruse’s (2004) term, is construed in context. Inevitably, such approaches make the theoretical dichotomy between polysemy versus monosemy redundant. Others still point out that the two positions are not necessarily irreconcilable: both conceptual polysemy involving stable units of semantic structure and the idea of a meaning potential involving interpretative processes whereby meanings are constantly construed in context are useful complementary notions.

Also, cognitive linguistics, in keeping with its generalisation commitment, goes beyond the traditional understanding of polysemy as being restricted only to multiple distinct yet related meanings of a single lexical unit, and views polysemy as a fundamental feature of human language. It claims that different areas of language exhibit polysemy; that polysemy reveals important features in common between lexical and grammatical organisation of language. For instance, Goldberg (e.g., 1995) argues that the ditransitive construction exhibits polysemy in the same way as words. In the area of cognitive lexical semantics there is a vast number of detailed studies of lexical items (especially on the preposition over) which, it is claimed, show that polysemy patterns indicate the systematic differences and patterns whereby lexical items are organized and stored in the mind.

Given that the question of whether polysemy involves more or less stable units of semantic structure or whether a word exhibits only a meaning potential resulting in contextual construals is still unresolved, and given the corpus-based evidence that one and the same word displays different collocational and colligational sets (presumably corresponding to a distinct and relatively stable range of senses), it is arguably legitimate to ask what the relations between these distinguishable senses of the word are like. Hansen et al. (1982, 202) mention the following semantic relations that systematically obtain between the senses of polysemic words: (conceptual) hyponymy, hyperonymy and cobyhyponymy on the one hand, and (figurative) metonymy and metaphor on the other. More recently, Cruse (2004, 108–111) distinguishes several varieties of polysemy or relations that can hold between polysemes. First of all he speaks of linear polysemy, i.e. relations of specialization (or generalization) between polysemic senses which include autohyponymy (dog: animal species, male of this species)
and autosuperordination (i.e. autohyperonymy; man: human male, human race) and a parallel part-whole relations, automeronymy (door: the whole structure, the leaf of the door) and autoholonomy (hand: the whole limb, the non-hand part). He does not mention cophonymy. The second variety is non-linear polysemy and includes metaphor and metonymy. Finally he introduces systematic polysemy (Apresjan’s [1974] regular polysemy) where the same relation between the readings recurs over several words. This type of polysemy, however, only draws attention to the recurrence of some kind of relation but does not involve any new type of relation between polysemes. The outline of polysemic variation presented by Hansen et al. and Cruse sets the scene for the focus of investigation of this paper. It would seem that between them these authors have exhausted the range of possible relations between polysemes, but there is another candidate.

3. ENANTIOSEMY

However wide is the polysemic variation suggested by Hansen et al. and Cruse, their accounts are apparently not complete. Cruse (2004, 110), for instance, seems to hesitate over the relationship between the calendric and non-calendric readings of month. There is one rather unusual phenomenon which this paper sets out to investigate in order to determine whether it can be subsumed under polysemy. It is called ‘enantiosemy’ and it seems to hold a particular interest for Slavic semanticists, who appear to favour this term. It is mentioned by Czech sources (Filipeč, Čermák, 1985), more recently by Čermák (2010, 66) as ‘enantiosemy or autoantonymy’. Further references to it can be found in Slovak (Pisárčíková, 1980; Benkovičová, 1993; Böhmerová, 1997), Russian (Šmelev, 1977), and Bulgarian authors (Balkanski, 1979). Although enantiosemy is definitely marginal in terms of incidence, the phenomenon is interesting because of its apparently counterproductive nature and, even more, as a potential extension of the form-meaning range of relations. The paucity of references to enantiosemy in the literature is due not only to its limited distribution, but perhaps also to its somewhat dubious standing. Filipeč and Čermák’s monograph (ibid., 132) on Czech lexicology defines it as “opposition of two different senses of a polysemic lexeme”. Enantiosemy is documented by the Czech verb brát, which means ‘dispossess’ in brát někomu peníze (take money [away] from someone), while in brát od někoho peníze it means ‘accept, receive’ (money from someone). The monograph further points out the contradictory senses in the prefix na-, as in the combinations nalomit hůl (inceptive meaning: to break a stick partially) and in nasolit maso (completive meaning: to cure meat with salt). It concludes by the observation that “Semantic opposition within one lexeme is a rare phenomenon in contemporary languages and is justly regarded as undesirable”. Böhmerová (1997, 11) defines it as a “coexistence of a lexia (meaning) and its opposite within one polysemantic lexeme of lexical unit”. Presumably the term enantiosemy was chosen to distinguish this type of opposition from antonymy (for lack of space the rather complex issue of what is the nature of antonymy or (binary) opposition will not be discussed here, as it may be found in Cruse, 1986, and elsewhere).
3.1 ENANTIOSEMY IN ENGLISH LINGUISTIC LITERATURE

Whereas in Slavic languages enantiosemy is given a relatively large amount of attention by semanticists and ignored by the lay public, the situation in English is precisely the reverse. Although the fact that some words harbour opposite meanings has not passed unnoticed — OED lists the term *countersense* defined as ‘co-existence of opposite senses in the same word’ and illustrated by an example from 1884, search through the literature on English lexicology and semantics (e.g. Lipka, 1990; Lyons, 1977; Cruse, 1986) and monographs on antonymy (Mettinger, 1994) has not revealed any mention of a technical term corresponding to enantiosemy. We do find, however, the following observation in Ullmann (1957, 120):

“A special case of bisemy is that of *antonymous senses* attached to the same name. ... Neutral expressions, ‘voces mediae’ like ‘fortune, circumstance, etc.’ often specialise in a pejorative or ameliorative sense in the course of history ...”.

A good example of this is the verb *to smell* where the vox populi tends to pejorative meaning. Incidentally, the combining form *enantio-* (from the Greek ‘enantíos’), meaning ‘opposite’, ‘opposing’ is not unknown in English: it is found in such words as ‘enantiomorphism’ or ‘enantiotropy’. Moreover, OED gives such expressions as ‘enantiodromia’ (process by which something becomes its opposite, and the subsequent interaction of the two) and ‘enantios’ or antiphrasis used in rhetoric and defined as a “figure of speech in which the opposite is meant to what is said; irony”. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference between a rhetorical figure of speech and antonymous polysemy, a trope being a contextual use based on ad hoc interaction which expresses the intended meaning by an implicature, while enantiosemy presupposes the existence of two distinct lexical units. To my knowledge, the only linguistic source in English which labels the phenomenon directly is McArthur’s *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1996, 494), listing the term ‘Janus word’. It defines it as a “semi-technical term for a word with contradictory senses: *cleave* ‘to split sharply’ (*cleave a skull*), ‘to cling or stay close’ (*cleave together*). These usages arise from the convergence of distinct words: Old English *cleofan* and *cleofian* both developed into the single present-day form *cleave*. Sometimes, Janus words arise from diverging senses of the same word: *sanction* ‘to approve’ (*sanction payment*), ‘a punitive ban’ (*trade sanctions*). The Latin noun *sanctio* referred to a religious decree.” The basic difference between the concept of the Janus word and enantiosemy is in that the former extends the semantic opposition within one lexeme to semantic opposition between homonyms, and so the concept is effectively redefined as “opposition of senses of the same form”.

3.2 ENANTIOSEMY IN ENGLISH POPULAR SOURCES

By contrast, a book called *Mother Tongue* (1991) by a popular American writer Bill Bryson, intended for the general public, has this to say in connection with polysemy and homonymy (63–64):
“Generally, polysemy happens because one word sprouts a variety of meanings, but sometimes it is the other way round — similar but quite separate words evolve identical spellings. ... Sometimes, just to heighten the confusion, the same word ends up with contradictory meanings. This kind of word is called a contronym. Sanction, for instance, can either signify permission to do something or a measure forbidding it to be done. Cleave can mean cut in half or stick together. A sanguine person is either hotheaded and bloodthirsty or calm and cheerful. Something that is fast is either struck firmly or moving quickly. A door that is bolted is secure, but a horse that has bolted has taken off. If you wind up a meeting you finish it; if you wind up a watch, you start it. To ravish means to rape, but equally it means to enrapture. Quinquennial describes something that lasts for five years or happens once in five years. Trying one’s best is a good thing, but trying one’s patience is a bad thing. A blunt instrument is dull, but a blunt remark is pointed.”

While the meaning of the term “contronym” — used in the same breath as polysemy and homonymy — is clear (evidently it is co-extensive with that of the Janus word), its origin is not, at least until one turns to the Internet. Search for ‘contronym’ on the Internet has shown that the lay interest in this phenomenon is enormous. From the 40-odd references to contronym it follows, among other things, that the author of this neologism is apparently Richard Lederer, who introduced it in his book Crazy English (1989). Although the term is given various definitions on the Internet pages, basically they differ very little: a word that generates two opposite meanings; a word which is its own opposite; words with diametrical meanings; Janus-faced words; a word that has undergone semantic reversal, only the tension has not eased: the word still preserving its original meaning, along with a contradictory — if not exactly counterposed — meaning; words that, by some freak of language evolution, are their own antonyms. The greatest rival of the term contronym on the Internet is another neologism, ‘antagonym’, which was coined by another author of a vocabulary web page, Charles N. Ellis (see References). Ellis defines antagonym as a “single word that has meanings that contradict each other” and provides a list of examples. There are even more cross-references to antagonyms on the Internet — over a hundred — and, as in the case of contronym pages, they include lists of examples, mostly overlapping with the authors’ occasional supplements of their own. The reliability of the material varies a great deal and, needless to say, the value of the Internet information from a lexical-semantic point of view is limited.

4. TERMINOLOGY AND OTHER ISSUES

Before a brief outline of the examples and their types is offered, a few remarks on the theoretical aspects of the phenomenon are in place. First of all, it seems that of the three names applied to the phenomenon, enantiosemy is to be preferred: contronym is an unseemly hybrid term, antagonym, because of its closeness to ‘antagonism’, invokes unsuitable associations of hostility, etc., whereas the infrequent com-
bining form enantio- is free of any such encumbrance. However, it may be useful to introduce the derived term enantiosemi for the antonymous senses of a polysemic lexeme (on the analogy with Cruse’s polyseme for any distinct sense of a polysemic lexeme). Next, the extent of the term enantiosemi needs to be resolved: should it include both homonyms of opposite meaning and antonymous polysemes (as the concept of the Janus word in the OCEL suggests), or only the latter? In fact, there are good reasons to exclude cases of homonymy from enantiosemi. Antonymous homonyms, being by definition entirely accidental, are of no real interest semantically as there is nothing to relate them intrinsically (so much so that even the term ‘antonymous’ becomes debatable). By contrast, the relation between antonymous polysemes must in principle be semantically motivated, and so at least part of them may be expected to display recurrent features which should make it possible to divide them into different categories.

However, enantiosemi as an extreme case of polysemy raises another question. Do we still deal with one polysemic (hyper)lexeme or does the enantiosemi form a separate lexical item which has become so much detached from the hyperlexeme that it approaches the state described, for instance, by Arnold (1986, 188) as the ‘split of polysemy’ (“When the intermediate links fall out, some of the new meanings lose all connections with the rest of the structure and start a separate existence.”)? The arguments for the ‘split of polysemy’ interpretation can be found in the specific paradigmatic and syntagmatic features of the enantiosemi which typically exhibits different grammatical and stylistic characteristics, collocability, etc. The result of disintegration of polysemy is, of course, homonymy at the synchronic level, which would make any semantic analysis largely pointless. On the other hand, the possibility of finding a semantic connection between the enantiosemi and another polyseme and the intuitive feeling of unity which binds the different senses of a word together seem to argue for the hyperlexeme interpretation. When discussing ‘pathological’ aspects of polysemy, Ullmann (1957, 122) appears to prefer to speak of polysemy even in a pathological situation resulting

“whenever two or more incompatible senses capable of figuring meaningfully in the same context develop around the same name. The difference between this and homonymy is that the two or more conflicting senses are synchronistically apprehended as belonging to one word, whereas in homonymy two or more separate words are in action against each other”.

The polysemic interpretation certainly finds support from the current lexicographic point of view: most of the examples of enantiosemic senses are found under common lemmas. In the final analysis, however, the decision whether motivated enantiosemes are to be recorded and treated as the other senses or not may depend on our adoption of one or the other alternative approaches: the monosemic approach preferring the elimination of those senses of the lexeme that can be covered by the operation of lexical rules, and the polysemic one, allowing for the fact that only some of the potential extensions are in fact realized in language and consequently holding that all senses should be recorded (cf. Cruse, 2004).
5. SAMPLE ANALYSIS AND CLASSIFICATION

For the purposes of analysis a sample of 65 examples was collected. Most of them were extracted from dictionaries (particularly from their electronic versions, OED, COD, OALD, RHUD), a few others were added from other sources (such as the Internet contronym/antagonym lists; see, for example, the online source in References). The aim of the analysis was to examine the nature of semantic linkage between the enantioseme and its contrasting sense and consider whether it justifies subsuming both senses under one lexeme. It soon appeared that once homonyms were excluded from the sample it was possible to divide the examples into relatively distinct groups and establish an approximate typology of enantiosemes cases. In terms of quantity three types are particularly prominent; they were tentatively labelled directional enantiosemes, collocational enantiosemes and irony enantiosemes. In addition, three minor types could be distinguished, anti-irony, euphemistic and converse enantiosemes. On account of the recurrent connection between the opposite senses the six groups may be regarded as regular or systematic. The seventh group includes cases where the contrastive differentiation of the senses has evolved in a unique, individual way which is difficult to generalise.

The classification of enantiosemes cases:

i. **Directional enantiosemes**: the opposition results from ‘vectorial’ differentiation of the senses of the lexeme which then become ‘reversives’. They include verbs formed by conversion from nouns which function as the pivotal components of the activity concerned (e.g., bonnet, louse, milk, muck, pod, pulp, scale, seed, shell, skin, stone, string, tail, fleece). The most frequent type is the opposition **to remove/deprive of vs. to add/yield**” as, for example, in **to skin**: to strip or deprive of skin, to scrape skin from; to cover with or as if with skin (She skinned the rabbit/her knee. The wound soon skinned (over).); **to milk**: to yield milk, as a cow; draw milk from the udder of a cow etc. (How much does the cow milk? Farm-workers milked cows by hand.); **to tail**: provide with a tail (in the sense known from the children’s play ‘to pin the tail on the donkey’); dock the tail of (a dog, horse, lamb etc.); **to louse**: delouse/remove lice from; to infest with louse (OED Obs. rare). In the latter example the second sense fell into disuse, illustrating the operation of what Ullmann (1957, 122) calls diachronic ‘curative devices’ (others speak of ‘therapeutic changes’). In some of these verbs enantiosemes is associated with in/transitivity; the intransitive meaning of the cow milks / the wound soon skinned is connected with the absence of the object due to the incompatibility of the subject with the agentive role. The opposite meaning is associated with transitivity: this use primarily results from the meaning of the verb which determines what can function as the object. Except for the enantiosemic meaning there is a certain syntactic similarity with the mediopassive (she washed the clothes / the clothes wash well). A detailed analysis of these verbs is offered in Böhmerová (1997), for the related issues of semantics-transitivity interaction see Brůhová (2012).

A similar vectorial differentiation takes place in other denominal verbs in which three types of opposition can be discerned: (a) **to transfer onto and away from**
**a surface** as in to dust (She dusted the furniture. She dusted her face [with powder].) or to brush (Potatoes are lightly brushed with oil. She brushed some crumbs off the Prime Minister’s chin.), (b) **to move towards a surface from opposite directions** (from above or from below as it were) as in to level (↓ The ground was levelled by bulldozers. ↑ He levelled the score.) and to surface (The submarine surfaced after four days. The paths were surfaced with tar.) and (c) **to move towards and away from a point** as in to dog (to follow or track like a dog; rare to retreat, flee: She was dogged by the media. The sponsor dogged it when needed most.) or to fuse (to melt with intense heat; to blend or amalgamate into one whole). No doubt other directional variants can be found. Directional enantiosemes are the most frequent type in the sample, forming some 34 per cent. As pointed out above, some of them are marked by different valency (e.g. the ‘pritive’ sense associating with transitivity and its countersense with intransitivity), others preserve the same valency.

**ii. Collocational enantiosemes:** the third largest group (about 26 per cent), but the most difficult to define unambiguously, includes lexemes in which a given sense typically lends itself to alternative interpretations depending on the semantics of the collocators (the object, the governing verb, etc.) they combine with. Unlike the other two large groups it is basically the same sense which receives a diametrical reading and so, in contrast with directional enantiosemes, even the valency of verbs tends to be the same. In fact, the dimetrical reading may be activated not only by collocation, but also by the wider context, culture-specific convention, etc. Examples: pole — north pole × south pole; to doctor — to doctor a drink (wine, whiskey etc.) × to doctor a play (the basic meaning ‘to treat’ in one case works out as “to debase (esp. foods) by adding other or inferior substances”, in the other as “to revise, repair, or improve”); virtual — virtual dictator/promise × virtual reality/memory (from Medieval Latin ‘virtualis’: effective, having the effect of being like, which allows the interpretation ‘giving the impression of’ (a) because that is what the referent more or less/actually is like, (b) although the referent is only seemingly so); first-degree — first-degree murder × first-degree burn (the contrary meaning ‘the lowest/the highest in a series’ is due to the arbitrary or conventional decision about the descending or ascending order of importance), fresh (sober in Scottish English; intoxicated), hemeralopia (day-blindness; night-blindness), dextrose (to the left of, to the right of) or progressive (progressive community vs. progressive disease; see Böhmerová 1997, 17). This category appears to cover even closed-class items, such as prepositions, adverbial particles and derivational suffixes (cf. the Czech prefix na- above), whose general and neutral meaning may be swayed by that of the collocating word (phrasal/prepositional/base verb) in either direction: the preposition with in to agree/sympathize with × to argue/fight with, etc. (expressing both agreement and disagreement); the adverbial particle in to bind up × to break up (the perfective up expressing union and disunion), and the prefix be- in to bejewel × to behead (with both a privative and an accretive force; viz. Böhmerová 1997, 20).

**iii. Irony enantiosemes:** the semantic shift based on irony may through repeated use become permanently associated with a given lexeme and subsequently appear
in dictionaries as one of the senses of the lexeme. The result of irony is the opposite of the literal sense of the lexeme: great (He’s been of great help to us indeed. You’ve been a great help, you have), fat (a fat (= big) cheque; a fat (= small) chance), hopeful (a person likely to succeed; a person likely to be disappointed), pretty (This is a pretty picture. This is a pretty mess.), like fun (much; not at all), some (That was some dinner! Some friend you are!), nunnery (convent; obs. brothel), and others (beautiful, big deal, big idea, egregious). The ironic sense is signalised pragmatically (by a contrast between the notional and the contextual meaning) and in most cases it will also be indicated by prosodic features. Irony is a relatively frequent source of enantiosemy in the sample, especially in combination with the closely related anti-irony type (see the following), with which it accounts for some 30 per cent. The fact that all of these examples are found in dictionaries may be taken as a sign of their lexicalization.

iv. Anti-irony enantiosemes: anti-irony relates to irony in a way analogous to the relation between euphemism and dysphemism. While irony uses a positive term to indirectly express negative, critical, etc., evaluation, anti-irony employs a negative term to convey positive assessment. The difference between euphemism/dysphemism and irony/anti-irony is that the former pair differs in intensity, the latter in semantic polarity. In the Czech literature anti-irony is used alongside the term cacophemism. Ullmann (1957, 225) speaks of the “use of abusive terms as endearments”, echoing Stern’s (1931, 323) formulation “abusive words as endearments”. The latter also remarks that an “abusive word may be used in a sense that is the opposite of its primary meaning ...”. The use of irony and anti-irony is covered by Leech’s (1983,142–145) Irony Principle and Banter Principle: “While irony is an apparently friendly way of being offensive (mock-politeness), the type of verbal behaviour known as ‘banter’ is an offensive way of being friendly (mock-impoliteness)”. As might be expected, anti-irony enantiosemes are typical of colloquial and slang language, and accordingly their life span tends to be limited. Examples: wicked (He’s a wicked man. He’s got a wicked habit. –He blows a wicked trumpet. Sophie makes wicked cakes.), bad (He’s a bad man and deserves to be punished. — (US slang) He’s a bad man on drums, and the fans love him.), shit (It’s a shit. It’s the shit!), or tough (severe, unpleasant; Slang. remarkably excellent; first-rate; great).

v. Euphemistic enantiosemes: it is possible to find a few isolated examples where the contradictory meaning comes about through the word being used as a euphemism. The first one is from OED, the second from RHUD: fair-trade (a. Trade carried on legally as opposed to dealing in contraband goods. b. In the 18th c. also applied (in popular language) in the precisely opposite sense; a euphemistic synonym for smuggling); exceptional child (a. being intellectually gifted; b. (US) being physically or esp. mentally handicapped to an extent that special schooling is required). Although they may be rather rare, the link between the two senses is indisputable.

vi. Converse enantiosemes: another rare, but distinct type is analogous to the Czech verb brát above. The sample includes two examples: to get — We got a kettle from her last year. She always gets us practical presents. While in the first sentence, illustrating the default use of the verb, the recipient is in subject position and the agent (giver)
has the function of an adverbial, in the second the verb is ditransitive, the agent has moved into the position of subject and the recipient is an indirect object. The two senses of the verb *to get* in these sentences thus roughly correspond to the pair *receive*-*give*. The second example is the verb *to learn* — *She’s learning to play the piano. We’ll have to learn you to milk cows/You’re no good at that, we’ll have to learn you.* The meaning of *to learn* can be described as A learns B (from C) in the first sentence, and as C learns A B in the latter sentences (the use considered archaic or informal, if not wrong), corresponding to the pair *learn*-*teach* respectively. There seem to be good reasons to regard this semantic differentiation as an instance of a converse shift and cases of this type as analogous to three-place converses, often treated as a subtype of directional opposites (see Cruse, 2004, 172). As in the directional enantiosemes, in addition to directionality they show different valency.

vii. **Non-systematic enantiosemes** — while in the previous types the rise of di- rectmetrical senses can be generalized and accounted for in a systematic way, the last group is comprised of words in which contrasting senses developed in a specific and highly individual manner. A case in point is the adjective *fast*, popular with the Internet collectors of lexical curios, which means (a) firmly fixed in place (*the anchor holds fast*); (b) rapid, moving quickly (*the horse is very fast*). OED explains the latter sense as having apparently developed first in the adverb and thence (via “stoutly, vigorously” through “close, very near” to “at once, immediately” and expressions like to “to run hard”) transferred to the adjective (see also Stern’s comment, 1931, 166–7). If anything, the polysemic character of such examples is somewhat dubious and they are very close to representing the split of polysemy.

5.1 **ENANTIOSEMIC MULTI-WORD EXPRESSIONS**

Interestingly, enantiosemey need not be confined only to one-word lexemes. There are examples of multi-word expressions with enantiosemes as well, such as *nothing less than*, meaning “quite equal to, the same thing as” as in *The report is nothing less than an indictment*, or rather less frequently “anything rather than, far from being” as in *[They], trusting to the laws ..., expected nothing less than an attack.* Another example can be the phrase *like fun*, meaning ‘much’, but also ‘not at all’. Nor is the phenomenon found only in lexical items, as shown by the quantifier *either*, which may express both conjunction — each of two (*house on either side of the road*) — and disjunction — one or the other of two (*you may have either book*), or by diamentrical grammatical structures such as *He condemned the shooting of the soldiers* (where *soldiers* may be the agent or the patient of the proposition), *Financiers bribe easily, The youngest waiter was the one to help*, etc.

5.2 **MOTIVATEDNESS**

Although it takes into account lists compiled by many Internet contributors, the sample on which the above typology is based is not very extensive, indicating that enantiosemey is a rather peripheral presence. Still, it is not an entirely accidental phe-
nomenon, but one involving a motivated, systematic relation between the opposing senses within polysemy, as the typology attempts to illustrate. Since the development of polysemy is a spontaneous rather than a planned and directed process, the occurrence of the occasional enantioseme, serving a specific purpose, apparently need not be an obstacle to efficient communication. From the psychological point of view, the paradoxical existence of opposite senses within one lexeme is illuminated by Talmy Givón (1984, 321) in his note on negation:

“Unlike formal systems, humans are capable of compartmentalization, whereby contradictory beliefs held at the same time are rigidly segregated in subparts of the cognitive system, under different personae, etc. Further, humans are also capable of change or faulty memory, whereby they can hold contradictory beliefs in temporal succession. Finally, they are also capable of contextualizing parts of or their entire belief system, thus making the truth of some propositions vary with the change of internal or external context.”

5.3 VIABILITY OF ENANTIOSEMES

A different question is what allows enantiosemy to survive. It seems reasonable to assume that its survival in language is due to the same factors which permit lexical polysemy. The fact is that cotext/context only rarely (some, as John Sinclair, claim that never) tolerates ambiguous interpretation of multiple-meaning units, acting as an “adequate guarantee” against it. When the choice from among potential readings is made, the mechanism of selection by activating a given meaning by contexts comes into operation “through the suppression of readings which give rise to some sort of semantic clash with the context” (Cruse, 2004, 118). The selection is made easier by the fact that different lexical units (including enantiosemes) within the polysemic lexeme are frequently possessed of different grammatical and lexical properties, such as different valency, different selection restrictions, or other distinguishing features (e.g. prosody in irony). Also, the differentiating factor may be a different dialectal and stylistic distribution, when one of the contrasting senses is marked by occurring only in BrE or AmE, technical language, slang, etc. It also seems that enantiosemy need not necessarily signal a “pathological situation” as described by Ullmann (1957, 122) and so call for diachronic “curative devices”. In other words, it may still be within the reach of mechanisms capable of handling ambiguity. On the other hand, we have seen that a number of the enantiosemes have indeed been phased out and are no longer in use. We may conclude that enantiosemy can legitimately be regarded as a special case of polysemy as at least some of its types exhibit a systematic relation to its diametrical default sense of the lexeme. Although it is not and cannot be the same as antonymy (or opposition) in different lexemes, on account of the limitations imposed by the identity of form subsuming the contradictory senses, it nevertheless exhibits similarities with antonymy, for instance in sharing some of the types of relation (directionality, converseness, etc).
6. WORD-EXTERNAL AND WORD-INTERNAL SEMANTIC RELATIONS

However attractive enantiosemy may seem especially to the layman because of its apparent and blatant paradoxicality, it is interesting for different reasons. If a word can be its own antonym (to use a somewhat simplified description), the semantic relation of opposition obviously operates at two levels.

Traditionally, the fundamental paradigmatic semantic relations of synonymy, oppositeness (antonymy), hyponymy and meronymy (part-whole relation) are viewed as relations between lexical items, i.e. different lexemes. These relations then lie at the root of the idea of the structured nature of the lexicon. However, Lipka (1990, 134–5) implicitly divides semantic relations into two categories, (a) sense relations (to use a term introduced by Lyons, 1968, 428), i.e. semantic relations between the senses of different lexemes (we shall call them word-external relations), and (b) semantic relations within a single lexical item, i.e. lexeme, which can be called word-internal relations. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, the (linear) polysemic variations described by both Hansen et al. (1982) and Cruse (2004) are based on the same semantic relations, i.e. the sense relations that hold between the senses of different lexemes. By the same token, enantiosemy as the analogy of antonymy at the level of a lexeme can be seen as extending the ranks of word-internal relations obtaining between the polysemes of a single lexical item and thus rounds off the set of word-internal relations analogous to the word-external sense relations. The fact that the same set of relations operate between and within lexical items is no doubt of cognitive significance.

Systematic polysemy in particular is a rich source of examples of sense relations (hyponymy, hyperonymy, meronymy and holonymy) operating as internal relations between polysemes. We may recall such types as tree-fruit (apple, apricot, pear, cherry), tree-wood (beech, oak, mahogany), plant-fruit (banana, blackberry, cranberry, cucumber, cumin, aubergine, strawberry), plant-flower (rose, tulip, magnolia, gardenia), animal-meat (rabbit, chicken), animal-fur (fox, mink), or whole-component (wheel-bicycle/potter’s wheel, ice skate-skate/shoe, window-window pane, strings-violins), body-body part (another mouth to feed, to count heads/noses), etc. An example of hyponymy within polysemy is the type animal-male/female (dog, lion, tiger), family-genus (cat-any of several carnivores of the family Felidae, lion, tiger, leopard), genus-species (lion-any lion-like cats, e.g. cougar) and similarly people (human beings-community, tribe-the persons of any particular group) or artist (in any of the arts-the fine arts-the performing arts), hardship (condition-an instance of this).

7. ALL EXCEPT SYNONYM

Having identified hyponymy, meronymy and antonymy as semantic relations that operate at two levels, i.e. as both external and internal (or auto-) relations, we may turn to synonymy. However, synonymy is the only one among sense relations which by definition stands in diametrical opposition to polysemy. On the meaning-form association scale, it represents the one-meaning: several-forms pole of the scale unlike the several-meanings: one-form situation in polysemy. The only approximation of syno-
nymy in polysemic lexemes can be found in the close relationship between synonymy and hyponymy. The idea of a parallel between the hyperonymy-hyponymy relationship and synonymy does appear in the literature. Martin (1992, 300), for one, believes that “Closely related to hyponymy is the category of synonymy. Indeed, synonyms might well be defined as co-hyponyms for which differences in meaning do not matter”. Lyons (1968, 455–6) mentions the possibility to conceive of synonymy as symmetric hyponymy “…it is frequently the case that the situation context or the syntagmatic modification of the superordinate term will determine it in the sense of one of its hyponyms. This is the source of context-dependent synonymy”. Basically the same point is made by Cruse (2004, 118–120) when he describes sense modulation by context. Contextual modulation of a given sense of the lexeme may, according to Cruse, result either in the addition or the removal of a semantic feature due to context. Cruse calls the effect hyponymic enrichment (Our maths teacher is on maternity leave: teacher / female teacher), meronymic enrichment (The car has a puncture: puncture / tyre puncture) and its reverse impoverishment (he drew a circle / they formed a circle round him). Whether or not it is legitimate to argue (for the sake of completeness) that at the level of word-internal relations synonymy is represented by (contextual) hyponymy is a matter for debate.

8. CONCLUSION

Unlike the sporadic mentions of enantisemey in the literature based on limited evidence, the study confirmed the status of enantiosemy within polysemy using what may be regarded as a reasonable amount of data. Analysis of the sample of enantiosemy examples showed that they involve seven distinct types of which six can be described as systematic. Two of these correspond to subtypes of oppositeness found among the sense relation of opposition/antonymy, i.e. directionality and converse-ness. The important point is the systematic nature of most of the examples which suggests that enantiosemy or autoantonymy is a motivated relation between the units of semantic structure of a lexical item and can be legitimately added to the other semantic relations holding between the distinct senses of a word. Incidentally, the treatment of lexical units in the same way as lexical items is not unknown in lexicographic practice. Notably CIDE adopts this ‘one unit–one entry’ solution, which allows it to describe the unit’s grammatical, derivational, semantic and collocational features more fully than the one lexeme–one entry approach does.

The extension of semantic relations holding between polysemes by autoantonymy brings the number of these relations (at least those listed in the literature) to six: autohyponymy, autosuperordination, cohyponymy, automeronymy, autoholonymy, and autoantonymy (leaving aside semantic shifts, metaphor and metonymy). This makes the parallel between the word-external sense relations found with different lexical items and the six word-internal relations obtaining between polysemes even more conspicuous. In fact, it can be claimed that the same set of relations applies to lexical units regardless of whether they belong to the same lexical item or not. On a broader level, they are described as relations of inclusion, exclusion and opposition. There is one notable exception, of course, among the word-internal relations, the relation of identity (synonymy)
which is logically precluded between two units of meaning of the same form unless, of course, synonymy is conceived somewhat loosely as including cases of (co)hymonymy.

The overview of word-internal semantic relations draws attention to one other interesting point. If Hansen et al. (1982, 203–204) are correct in including the sense of exclusion, i.e. cohyymonymy, among the word-internal semantic relations (Hansen et al. exemplify this by two senses of man: ‘husband’ and ‘adult male person under the authority of another’), then the question arises whether the other form of the exclusion relationship, comerynomy, could not be found among polysemes as well. There is no mention of this possibility in the literature but, as there is no logical obstacle to comerynomous polysemes, this hypothesis could be worth exploring.

The fact that the same semantic relations appear to hold between polysemes and unrelated lexical units suggests two things. Firstly, the overlap between word-external and word-internal (or auto-) relations may be seen as supporting the idea that polysemy is a conceptual rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon in that the patterns of polysemy clearly reflect and indicate systematic patterns whereby both lexical units and lexical items are organised and structured in the mental lexicon. Secondly, the parallel between word-external and word-internal relations raises the question whether this may be due to the effects of the principle of economy in language, or more broadly, whether it can be seen as the operation of some general cognitive principles. For instance, such common organising principles are acknowledged in cognitive lexical semantics and include such conceptual mechanisms as metaphor or polysemy itself. The word-internal and word-external relations parallel is reminiscent of another interesting example of the presumably common conceptual mechanism at work in two different areas: association and coordination. The three commonly asserted principles of association of ideas in psychology are similarity, contiguity, and contrast, to which causal associations are sometimes added. They show interesting resemblance with the semantic categorisation of grammatical coordination: association through similarity and contiguity appears to correspond rather closely to copulative linking of linguistic units, association by means of contrast to adversative and disjunctive linkage, and causal association to causal and illative conjoining (Klégr, 1986). Both the principles of association and coordination are recognized as important principles, the former in learning, memory, thought and cognition, the latter as a universal feature of natural languages.

In effect, the investigation of enantiosemy established its status as a potential, although marginal, motivated relation between semantic units of a single lexical item and at the same time showed enantiosemy to be part of a general conceptual mechanism revealing commonalities at different levels of linguistic organisation.

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