

Terrible Angels: Semantic Ambivalence and Polysemy

Alexandra Smirnova
sandy.86@inbox.ru
Independent Researcher

Igor Tolochin
itfipe@gmail.com
St. Petersburg State University,
Russian Federation

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the problem of ambivalence at the semantic level of word meaning. We argue that semantic ambivalence determines the whole structure of polysemy of certain English words and propose a method of establishing contextual markers indicating the presence of semantic ambivalence as the essential element of word meaning. Having studied a large variety of contexts for the word ‘angel’, we have identified three typical collocational patterns of its use in texts. Therefore, we suggest that this word has three main senses that are distinguished by their evaluative properties: ambivalent, positive and negative. In the ambivalent type of context ‘angel’ collocates with both positively and negatively charged words at the same time, which creates verbal sequences of high emotional tension. This fact proves the idea that certain words in the English language can convey simultaneously positive and negative aspects of human experience in a particular type of their usage as intrinsically inseparable from each other. Ambivalent word senses are referred to as archetypes, for they represent the legacy of the archaic syncretism of the human mind, which has been handed down to us in religion and poetry. Most modern monolingual English dictionaries do not take into account the distinction in the evaluative characteristics of collocational patterns when defining the word ‘angel’. This leads to a number of problems in their lexicographic descriptions of this word. Taking into account its semantic ambivalence would contribute to a more coherent picture of its sense structure.

Keywords: lexicography; polysemy; semantic ambivalence; archetype; collocational patterns

INTRODUCTION

*“For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror
which we are barely able to endure, and it amazes us so,
because it serenely disdains to destroy us.
Every angel is terrible.”*
Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*

Ambivalence pervades human nature manifesting itself at different levels of human existence – from opposing unconscious desires to explicitly stated value conflicts. This phenomenon, however, has not been studied properly yet and is now attracting growing interest among scientists (Craig & Martinez, 2005; Harreveld, 2015; Mladinic, 1998; Nohlen et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2013).

In psychology the term ambivalence is usually defined as simultaneous existence of conflicting evaluative attitudes towards the same object, person or situation. This is a general definition of ambivalence that can be applied to the study of this phenomenon at different levels of its existence. Nevertheless, speaking of ambivalence, psychologists tend to limit

themselves to the analysis of complex emotional attitudes arising from the presence of conflicting value judgments. In other words, the kind of ambivalence usually studied in psychology results from the opposition of different scripts or scenarios representing various possible modes of action in a problematic situation. Our research reveals, however, that evaluative polarity is already present at the more basic level of word meanings. We claim that ambivalence plays a very important role in semantics determining the whole meaning structure of certain polysemous words. Unfortunately, case studies of words with ambivalent meanings are still very scarce in linguistics. Several works, however, stand out in this respect and should be mentioned in this paper.

STUDIES OF AMBIVALENCE IN LEXICAL SEMANTICS

First of all, it should be pointed out that the few linguistic studies that deal with ambivalence at the semantic level come at this problem from slightly different angles. As a result, there is no unanimous understanding of the term in linguistics. Some scholars, for example, tend to confound it with ambiguity. Thus, Jasmina Milićević and Alain Polguère (2010) state that semantic ambivalence, being the property of particular word senses, relates to the presence of at least two distinct central components in their lexicographic descriptions. According to the authors, the French word ‘xenophobie’ is thus ambivalent between a particular negative emotion and an attitude associated with this negative emotion (Milićević & Ploguère, 2010: 1030; see also Dattamajumdar, 2007 who considers ambivalence as a case of intentional ambiguity in advertising discourse).

Ambivalence is treated here as mere non-distinction between two or more referents in certain types of context. It is possible, however, to draw a clear-cut distinction between the two aspects of the word’s meaning by looking at its use in texts:

- 1) *Les polonais victimes de la xénophobie post Brexit. Le meurtre d’un polonais à Harlow, dans la banlieue de Londres, suscite la crainte dans sa communauté* (Tribune de Genève <https://www.tdg.ch/monde/polonais-victimes-xenophobie-post-brexit/story/25917790>).
(The Poles are victims of the post-Brexit xenophobia. The murder of a Pole in Harlow, in the outskirts of London, triggers fear in his community.)
- 2) *Dans l’acception courante du mot “extrême-droite”, avec sa connotation... de xénophobie absurde, d’antisémitisme insupportable* (L’observatoire de la christianophobie <https://www.christianophobie.fr/vie-de-lobservatoire/question-aux-lecteurs-lobs-est-il-un-blogue-dextreme-droite>)
(The common usage of the word "far right", with its connotation... of the absurd xenophobia, unbearable antisemitism...)

In (1) the word ‘xenophobie’ clearly describes a particular kind of violent behaviour which resulted in murder. Its ‘emotional’ sense is definitely not compatible with the word ‘victimes’: one cannot be the victim of someone’s emotion, rather of his/ her behaviour motivated by the emotion. Speaking of an ideology, as in example (2), we, on the contrary, focus on the negative emotion which underlies the decision-making process in a particular political framework and not on a specific instance of aggressive behaviour. It means that two metonymically related senses is dealt with. In such cases, ambiguity may be experienced only as an incomplete perception of polysemy with regard to the word in question.

Therefore, it is important to distinguish ambiguity from ambivalence. Ambiguity exists in speech as the inability to determine which of the specific senses of the word is relevant for the given context. Ambivalence, on the contrary, presupposes not only non-distinction, but also strong evaluative polarity: “the mere fact that an individual holds two separate feelings about an object at the same time does not mean that he or she is

ambivalent... ambivalence would seem to involve a state of mind in which the existence of those two feelings are in opposition to one another – a state of mind that would presumably make it difficult for a person to evaluate the object” (Albertson, Brehm & Alvarez, 2005: 29). This statement made by psychologists is also applicable to semantics – a word meaning can be considered ambivalent only if it represents certain aspects of human experience that are in stark contrast to each other and yet are present within the meaning of the word as its intrinsically inseparable components.

Another interesting study of ambivalence in language brings forward an important aspect of words with ambivalent meanings and is a little closer to our understanding of the phenomenon in question. It deals with enantiosemey; this term “refers to any case in which a single sign acquires ‘opposite’ meanings in different contexts...” (Shmelev, 2012, p. 838). According to the French author Josette Larue-Tondeur (2009), enantiosemey stems from psychological ambivalence, or copresence of opposed tendencies or desires. It does not mean, however, that all cases of enantiosemey are ambivalent. A close look at the examples given by the author allows us to conclude that the instances of enantiosemey can be subdivided into two distinct groups based on the type of opposition between their senses.

One group consists of words whose senses are in logical opposition to one another: “*L’énanteosémie évidente de “louer” et “hôte” repose sur l’inversion des relations actantielles (on donne ou on reçoit, on accueille ou on est accueilli)*” “The evident enantiosemey of ‘louer’ (to lend and to borrow) and ‘hôte’ (a host and a guest) is rooted in the inversion of actantial relations (we give and we take, we receive and we are received)” (Larue-Tondeur, 2009, p. 71). If we stick to the psychological definition of ambivalence as simultaneous existence of conflicting evaluative attitudes, these words can hardly be considered ambivalent. The opposition between their senses is entirely logical and does not bring forth any emotional contradictions. In each of these senses the word has a clear non-ambivalent and non-ambiguous meaning.

The second group of words implies evaluative rather than logical opposition: «*Le mot polynésien “tabou” comporte deux significations opposées: sacré et interdit-impur. Il est utilisé en psychanalyse pour désigner le caractère à la fois sacré et interdit de la sexualité. Un personnage sacré, considéré comme saint et intouchable, est chargé de protéger la société qui le vénère tout en le torturant d’interdits. Il est donc à la fois vénéré et agressé.*» «The polynesian word «taboo» has two opposed meanings: sacred and impure - forbidden. It is used in psychoanalysis to describe sacred and at the same time forbidden character of sexuality. A sacred person considered to be saint and untouchable is responsible for the protection of society that venerates this person while torturing him or her with prohibitions. Thus the person is venerated and assaulted at the same time.” (Larue-Tondeur, 2009, p. 72).

Such words convey strong positive and negative emotions, and can be regarded as carriers of mixed feelings. In this respect they correspond to the psychological definition of ambivalence representing this phenomenon at the semantic level of word meanings.

To distance ourselves from the cases of ambiguity and enantiosemey based on logical opposition of the senses we would like to propose the following definition of *semantic ambivalence*: *it is the capacity of a word to convey simultaneously positive and negative aspects of human experience in a given type of context as intrinsically inseparable from each other.*

The idea that “an ambivalent feeling/ attitude can become coded as a lexical meaning, i.e., it is not generated and attributed in a context-sensitive way like irony” has already been put forward by a Bulgarian scholar Maxim Stamenov, who points out in his article that we definitely face here a particular “semantic phenomenon that still awaits its systematic conceptualization and detailed analyses and description” (Stamenov, 2011, p. 104). Unfortunately, an adequate description of this “semantic phenomenon” has not been

developed yet. The following case study presents such an attempt. We will provide some evidence to prove that certain words in the English language can have ambivalent senses – the fact that is largely overlooked by modern dictionaries – and propose a methodology for their lexicographic description.

ANGELS: COMFORTING OR TERRIBLE?

Are angels always comforting? This question often arises in modern religious texts bearing on angels. The problem is that the word ‘angel’, which originally comes from the Bible, was assimilated by modern mass culture and in the process was deprived of all the negative aspects of its meaning. Nowadays, when thinking about an angel people tend to imagine a benevolent human-like creature of striking otherworldly beauty. However, if we examine the way this word functions in religious texts, we will find a slightly different picture than the one we are used to in our common daily usage.

- 3) And, behold, there was a **great earthquake**: for the *angel* of the Lord **descended from heaven**, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.
His **countenance was like lightning**, and **his raiment white as snow**:
and **for fear of him the keepers did shake**, and **became as dead men**.
And the *angel* answered and said unto the women, **Fear not ye**: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified...
And they departed quickly from the sepulchre **with fear and great joy**; and did run to bring his disciples word.
(**Matthew 28: 2-8**)
- 4) I’m not sure who’s responsible for the idea that *angels* are **either mild-looking, effeminate, and emaciated or else chubby and about 15 months old**. I am sure that neither of these pictures is consistent with scripture... even the *angels* who “**look like a man**” routinely start out by saying, “**Fear not!**” Daniel **trembled** in the presence of the *angel* Gabriel, and Zechariah was **outright afraid** (<http://www.daily-bible-study-tips.com/Angels/Angels-Say-Fear-Not.htm>).
- 5) To see the *angel* of God is **an awe-inspiring sight**; it left Gideon **in fear for his life**. Luke describes Cornelius **as being terrified**, which implies as much a sense of being **awe-struck** as of being **scared or afraid**. (R. Strelan Strange Acts: Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles)
- 6) He had been up most of the night with sweating, nausea, and chest pains: classic heart-attack symptom... Suddenly Eric felt someone else in the room. He looked up and saw what he described as “**the angel of death**” hanging in mid-air: the classic, **faceless, hooded figure**. Even without a face, the thing looked at him and he looked at it. He said he was **startled** at first—a **kind of mild shock** and surprise—“Oh!” he thought. But after the **initial shock** of seeing the thing, there was **a feeling of recognition and acceptance**. Eric thought, “Oh. It’s YOU.” And that **it would be all right to go now**. Things would get along just fine without him.
At that acceptance - that willingness to die—the figure disappeared. He was checked by a doctor the next day and he had not had a heart attack. He **formerly had been afraid**, not so much of death, but of the process of dying. He says **he no longer fears death**.
<http://hauntedohiobooks.com/news/fearing-reaper-fight-death/>
- 7) I’ve seen an *angel*... **A very big tall figure wearing long robes** looking over our house... **Huge. The light was radiating from him**. I don’t remember facial features or hair, and **he didn’t have wings**. **Awestruck**, I went straight to my parents’ bedroom and

woke them up, telling them of a tall man outside. Mom thought I had a **bad dream** and I got into bed with them and slept further... The **experience has definitely changed my life**. I **can't imagine anything that could beat that angel in a fight**. https://www.reddit.com/r/Christianity/comments/2qm7yt/serious_have_you_ever_seen_a_n_angel_or_a_demon/

These examples show that the lexeme 'angel' collocates with words that have different evaluative properties. On the one hand, we found words and expressions which describe positive feelings and attitudes: *great joy* (example 3), *a feeling of recognition and acceptance*, *he no longer fears death* (example 6), *the light was radiating from him* (example 7). On the other hand, there are a lot of negative lexical markers highlighting certain aspects of human experience connected with strong fear: *a great earthquake*, *lightning*, *became as dead men*, *fear* (example 3), *trembled*, *outright afraid* (example 4), *terrified*, *scared*, *in fear for his life* (example 5), *death*, *startled*, *shock* (example 6), *a bad dream* (example 7).

Stories of angel encounters as they are represented in religious texts – let it be the Scripture (example 3) or more modern accounts of such visions (example 6), (example 7) – communicate an overwhelming experience of contact with supernatural powers that, perhaps, can be best described by the word 'awe': *a feeling of great respect and admiration, often combined with fear* (Online MacMillan Dictionary https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/awe_1). It is no coincidence that 'awe' and its derivatives (*awe-inspiring* (example 5), *awestruck* (example 5), (example 7)) often appear in this type of context along with the word 'angel'. As Macmillan definition shows, the word 'awe' is ambivalent (respect, admiration ↔ fear). It is often used to describe complex contradictory emotions that arise when entering in contact with the incomprehensible divine will. In such situations human beings are so overpowered by the divine presence that they fear for their own life.

The word 'angel' is used to structure one of the possible scenarios of the transcendent divine presence in the human realm – the apparition of an anthropomorphic agent that carries out God's will. This apparition is of great importance to the human subject, for it announces a significant change in his or her life (*He formerly had been afraid* → *He says he no longer fears death* (example 6), *The experience has definitely changed my life* (example 7)). The outcome of such an encounter can be either beneficial or destructive (in case of punishment) for the human being:

- 8) In 1601, an *angel* was sighted upon an altar in England **bearing a naked sword**, which it **'glitteringly brandished up and down**, foyning sometimes, and sometimes striking; **thereby threatening... an instant destruction** to this Kingdome'... The story of this strange apparition... was... recounted ... as a **sign of divine anger** at the infection of the English nation by heresy. The vision of this **avenging angel** was a **clear warning** that **the lord** would very soon **intervene to punish the country** for abandoning the faith of its forefathers in favour of a false, new-fangled, and upstart religion (J. Raymond Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication).
- 9) The air is **bright** with *angels*. Their faces are the faces of statues, **their eyes like eagles' eyes fierce and just**. https://books.google.fr/books?id=sgj7AWAAQBAJ&pg=PT202&dq=angels+like+eagles&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwittpmy7_nRAhUh04MKHbqYCoU4ChDoAQg2MAQ#v=onepage&q=angels%20like%20eagles&f=false

The apparition of an angel can be regarded as '*a sign of divine anger*' (example 8). In these cases, negative lexical markers prevail over the positive ones (*bearing a naked sword*, *threatening an instant destruction*, *avenging*, *a clear warning*, *to punish* (example 8)).

Nevertheless, positive elements are also present – despite its destructive force, God’s wrath is always righteous (**to punish the country for abandoning the faith of its forefathers in favour of a false, new-fangled, and upstart religion** (example 8)).

The divine will is incomprehensible to humans and, as a result, is perceived as both ‘fierce and just’ (example 9). It is no coincidence that in (example 9) angels are likened to eagles – birds of prey whose magnificent power inspires both admiration and fear. They are remote, pitiless and just.

Positive and negative elements of the situation interact with each other, creating verbal sequences of intense emotional tension:

10) —An *angel* has no nerves.

Far richer they! I know the senses' witchery

Guards us like air, from **heavens too big to see;**

Imminent death to man that barb'd sublimity

And **dazzling edge of beauty unsheathed** would be.

(C. S. Lewis On Being Human)

The word ‘angel’ evokes an instance of transcendental excellence. Even positive characteristics traditionally attributed to angels, such as ‘*beauty*’ and ‘*sublimity*’, acquire in this context (example 10) negative evaluative properties, representing angels’ beauty as a dangerous weapon that threatens those people that try to transgress the sacred boundary between the human and the divine realms. The fact that the word ‘*beauty*’ collocates in this text with such lexical items as ‘*edge*’ and ‘*unsheathed*’ indicates that it is likened to a sword that will bring ‘*imminent death*’ to anyone who ventures to enter in contact with it. From our point of view, such occasional combinations of lexical items with opposite evaluative potentials (positive ↔ negative: *dazzling edge of beauty unsheathed, barb'd sublimity* (example 10)) are possible due to the initial ambivalence of the word ‘angel’ which, being one of the central elements of the given situational model, determines the choice of specific verbal sequences with a particular type of evaluative characteristics.

We have demonstrated that the word ‘angel’ collocates with a large variety of words that convey opposite emotional attitudes and tend to co-occur in the same context, which means in our opinion that we face here a case of lexical, or semantic, ambivalence. In the contexts we have discussed above this kind of ambivalence appears to constitute the essential element of its meaning as it determines word-sequencing patterns. The semantic ambivalence of the word ‘angel’ revealed in the examples above contributes to the structuring of such texts according to a particular model (“An Awe-Inspiring Instance of Divine Apparition”). Thus, the presence of the following lexical items along with the word ‘angel’ is highly probable: *dazzling, blazing, fire, flame, fierce light, fear, terrible, afraid, glory, sun, thunder, lightning, earthquake, rainbow, apocalypse, tremble, awe, avenging, death*.

Based on the fact that here the word ‘angel’ establishes syntactic and semantic connections with a specific group of words in a type of context related to a distinct aspect of human experience (an awe-inspiring contact with a supernatural force), we suggest considering this type of its usage a separate sense that can be defined as follows:

SENSE 1: *an anthropomorphic agent endowed with supernatural power to convey and execute inconceivable divine will and whose appearance is perceived as an awe-inspiring miraculous experience.*

ARCHETYPE

We suggest calling ambivalent word senses *archetypes* and the term is borrowed from Jung’s analytical psychology. According to Jung, archetypes are “primordial images” (Jung, 1988:

67) that constitute our subconsciousness. “They are, at the same time, both images and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. When there is merely the image, then there is simply a word-picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity (psychic energy); it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some kind must flow from it” (Jung, 1988: 96). What is important in Jung’s definition is that the archetype is always charged with emotion; and although Jung does not state explicitly that archetypes are ambivalent, it comes across very clearly in the examples that he gives in his book. Describing specific archetypes, he always points out both positive and negative aspects of human experience related to them (i.e. ‘the loving and the terrible mother’ (Jung, 2003, p. 158)).

It is interesting that Jung (2003), uses the word ‘numinosity’ when speaking about the archetype. In the Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary ‘numinous’ is defined as “1. supernatural, mysterious; 2. filled with a sense of the presence of divinity” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/numinous>). Entering in contact with supernatural forces has always been one of the most awe-inspiring experiences for us as human beings. The presence of divinity is both comforting by its protective support and terrifying by its inconceivable perfection and unimaginable power. Thus, the usage of the word ‘numinosity’ points again to the ambivalent nature of Jung’s archetype. It is not only charged with emotions, but combines opposite evaluative attitudes, which creates such a strong emotional experience.

Another important word in Jung’s (1998), definition of the archetype is ‘primordial’: “a. first created or developed; b. existing in or persisting from the beginning” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/primordial>). According to Jung (1998), archetypes came down to us from our ancestors, being the legacy of the ancient states of mind of primitive people. One of the crucial features of the primitive mind, as suggested by H. Werner, was syncretism (Werner, 1948). Syncretism means low level of differentiation between different aspects of experience. The analyticity of modern languages has gradually developed throughout the centuries: the wholeness of the animal-like perception was slowly splitting up, distinct features of human experience being attributed to particular verbal sequences (Tolochin, 2014).

At the early stages of human development, low levels of analyticity resulted in non-differentiation of certain contexts. Our ancestors used to perceive their environment as imbued with the mysterious supernatural presence. For them the borderline between the human and the divine realms was fluid, which accounted for the dynamic interaction between the two worlds. Having studied the mentality of modern indigenous peoples, which certainly bears significant resemblance to that of our ancestors, Lévy-Bruhl (1923) points out that “The primitive makes no distinction between this world and the other, between what is actually present to sense, and what is beyond. He actually dwells with invisible spirits and intangible forces. To him it is these that are real and actual” (Lévy-Bruhl, 1923, p. 32). This interdependence of the sacred and the profane was regarded as the source of life and death, order and chaos contributing to the accumulation of ambivalent attitudes and the creation of ‘collective representations’ which were ‘always largely emotional’ (Lévy-Bruhl, 1923, p. 61). These representations manifested themselves particularly in religious and poetic texts, the most ancient genres of language.

It has been noted by anthropologists that important ‘cultural systems’, such as art, science and philosophy “have, over evolutionary time, developed out of that originally global and undifferentiated way of thinking” (i.e. religion) (Bellah, 2011, p. 96). Religious perception, which shaped primordial consciousness of our ancestors, is deeply rooted in rituals. A ritual as a performative act combines different aspects of human activity, often creating an emotionally intense fusion of music, dance and song. As R. Bellah puts it, “music

is an ever-present accompaniment to ritual and almost always involves dance and song” (Bellah, 2011, p. 92). Song, the earliest form of poetry, and religion are thus closely knit in the history of human evolution through ritual. Heidegger (2001), also pinpointed the existence of close ties between religion and poetry. Both genres originated due to the human urge to enter in contact with the sacred. In modern times poets still ‘bring to mortals the trace of fugitive gods’ (Heidegger, 2001, p. 138).

To sum up, the word ‘archetype’ is related to primordial evaluative ambivalence triggered by the feeling of awe at the contact with supernatural forces, which is in line with the results of our research. The type of word usage that we suggest considering as a separate word sense is ambivalent and is found mainly in religious texts and poems that depict different kinds of transcendental experience (for another example see the case study of the word ‘fire’ (Smirnova & Tolochin, 2016)). In our opinion, this type of word usage represents the legacy of the archaic syncretism of the human mind, which has been handed down to us in religion and poetry. Therefore, we suggest defining the term ‘*archetype*’ as a separate word sense common to words with an ambivalent integral category¹ that manifests itself in texts describing irresolvable psychological conflicts related to the experience of interaction with inconceivable supernatural forces.

It should be borne in mind that, despite a close functional similarity between our understanding of the term ‘archetype’ and its interpretation in the Jungian analytical psychology, there is an important difference concerning the treatment of its formal characteristics. For Jung (1998, 2003), archetypes are transcendental entities belonging to the collective unconscious that goes far beyond the limits of each individual psyche. Jung’s idealistic mysticism was criticized by some of his followers (Hillman, 1997); however, it has not been overcome by any of them.

Considering ‘archetype’ as a particular type of word sense allows for a better understanding of its form, the high level of ambivalence explaining its strong emotional impact. Words with ambivalent archetypal meanings develop a particular structure of polysemy.

THE STRUCTURE OF POLYSEMY OF WORDS WITH AMBIVALENT MEANINGS

The ambivalence of the archetype as a word sense is determined by the integral category (IC), i.e., features of human experience encoded by the root morpheme. In the case of ‘angel’ it can be formulated as follows:

INTEGRAL CATEGORY: *experiencing the presence of supernatural power executing the supreme will that can support and protect or terrify and destroy.*

This IC is ambivalent, for it reflects human awe in the face of incomprehensible supernatural forces. As we have already seen before, the IC fully manifests itself in a particular type of context, giving rise to the archetypal word sense (SENSE 1). In some cases, however, the ambivalence of the IC can be neutralized, which brings forth senses with either positive or negative evaluative characteristics. Let us have a look at the following examples:

- 11) **Angels** are neither male nor female, but they are often referred to as he or she. They do not have a human form because they are **made up of energy, love and light**. But **Angels** will project themselves to us in a manner we are **most comfortable with** which means we often see them as human. <http://www.angelfocus.com/angels.htm>

¹ In the linguo-anthropological approach it is considered that the evaluative potential of the word representing the functional features of human experience is associated with its root morpheme, which contributes to the stability of the word’s usage in different types of context. This functional core of the word is called its *integral category* (for more see Smirnova, 2016, Tolochin, 2014).

- 12) My oldest daughter's angel is about 6-7ft tall and has **wavy blonde hair that comes down to his chin**. His **wings look like swans** and the **feathers are so soft**. He has **smiled at me** and I felt such a **sense of peace** that it blew me away totally. <http://www.holisticshop.co.uk/articles/true-angel-encounters>
- 13) I met **my guardian angel** today. She shot me in the face. # I'm not much for metaphor. So when I say "**guardian angel**", "I don't mean some girl with big eyes and swiveling hips who I put on a ridiculous pedestal. I mean that she was **an otherworldly being assigned by some higher power to watch over me**. (COCA: Brockway R. *The unnoticeables: a novel*, 2015).
- 14) You also said that sometimes it felt **like the touch of an Angel** when you managed to get **graceful pictures**. No kidding, even though it may sound **too poetic**. **It felt magical** when we got the very best pictures. Like *The Perfect Tomato*. I mean, how lucky were we that Virginia was making that little expression just as Jessie was stepping down into the light. That was just a **miracle**. <http://www.americansuburbx.com/2013/01/interview-sally-mann-the-touch-of-an-angel-2010.html>

In all these examples the presence of a supernatural being is perceived as a peaceful, comforting experience of contact with the divine. The divine here is not threatening; it assumes the form we as humans are "*most comfortable with*" (example 11): "*wavy blonde hair that comes down to his chin*", "*his wings look like swans*", "*the feathers are so soft*" (example 12). The word 'angel' is used in this type of context to describe protective aspects of supernatural forces: '*an otherworldly being assigned by some higher power to watch over me*' (example 13). It is no coincidence that one of its most typical collocates is '*guardian*' (example 13).

Here 'angels' are deprived of all their awe-inspiring negative characteristics. This fact enables us, for example, to compare sweet moments of creative excitement with '*the touch of an Angel*' (example 14). Positive emotions experienced by people in such situations are not overpowering; they remain under our conscious control and, therefore, are not perceived as a source of ambivalence.

As we can see, in this type of context the word 'angel' realises positive features of its IC, which allows us to conclude that we deal here with another sense of this word:

SENSE 2 *a superhuman benign being in a human shape whose presence is experienced as a sense of love, peace and joy.*

It usually collocates with such positively charged words as *guardian, protection, peace, comfort, help, love, the sweetest voice, beautiful etc.*

This sense gives rise to several figurative extensions attributing positive 'angelic' qualities to human beings. These extensions stem from typical similes (*like an angel* (example 15) → *we call her an angel* (example 16)):

- 15) He raised his club at her, but a young black man she did not know **stepped in between them and took the blow**. " I heard the crack. I heard the crunch," she said. "I still get chills 50 years later." "He was like an **angel** for me," she said. (COCA: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2015) – SENSE 2
- 16) JOHN-QUINONES# (Voiceover) She ended up winning and, with it, more than half a million dollars **for her beloved charity**. KAREN-PEARL# **She saved us**, in some ways, during the worst of the recession. The amount of money, number one, that she raised for us, really, we call her an **angel**. (COCA: Joan Rivers // ABC, 2014) – SENSE 2.1

In example 15 a young man who selflessly protects a woman is compared to an angel. As we have already seen, the main function of angels (sense 2) is to watch over human beings

helping them to get out of trouble. This feature of ‘angel 2’ is the basis for comparison in such cases and accounts for the further extension of the sense: the word ‘angel’ can be used figuratively to define a kind person willing to support others (example 16).

There are four figurative extensions according to the following features of experience that systematically serve as a basis for comparison between a human being and an angel:

- A. willingness to protect and help others → any person (SENSE 2.1)
- B. ability to impart the sense of deep love → a man or a woman (SENSE 2.2)
- C. physical beauty → a woman (SENSE 2.2.1)
- D. pure innocence and charm → a child (SENSE 2.3)

We present these sense extensions in Appendix A with definitions and examples.

In examples 11 - 16 the word ‘angel’ is absolutely positive. However, in a large number of cases it is stripped of its positive characteristics and is left only with the negative aspects of its IC.

- 17) **Satan told his angels** to make a special effort to **spread the lie** first repeated to Eve in Eden, "Ye shall not surely die." <http://www.preparingforeternity.com/sr/sr56.htm>
- 18) Some of these **pernicious angels** are self-sufficient beings with clearly defined and specific characters, **whose existence is**, in a certain sense, **eternal**, at least until such time as evil will vanish from the face of the earth. In addition, there are the **subversive angels** created by the actions of men, by the **objectification of malevolence**, i.e., the **evil thought, the hate-inspired wish, the wicked deed**. In addition to its visibly **destructive consequences**, every **act of malice or evil** creates an **abstract gnostic being, a bad angel**, belonging to the **plane of evil** corresponding to the state of mind that brought it into being. (Kabbalah Online http://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380705/jewish/Angels-3-BadAngels.htm)
- 19) Nathan is Lucifer’s, or **the devil’s, right-hand man**. Nathan has his own **demon angels—dark angels** or **dark shadows** that he uses to **tempt man and battle us**. <https://books.google.fr/books?id=051OBAAAQBAJ&pg=PA103&dq=dark+angel&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiRj6712ejTAhUCPRoKHazjD3Q4lgEQ6AEIXDAJ#v=onepage&q=dark%20angel&f=false>)

In these examples ‘angel’ is synonymous with the word ‘demon’ and collocates only with negatively charged words such as *Satan, lie* (example 17), *pernicious, malevolence, hate-inspired, wicked, destructive, bad, evil* (example 18), *devil, demon, dark, tempt* (example 19) etc. ‘Angel’ is used here to describe evil supernatural powers that try to corrupt human beings. This type of usage clearly stands apart from the ambivalent (SENSE 1) and positive (SENSE 2) types of context. It means that we deal here with another sense of the word ‘angel’:

SENSE 3 *evil supernatural agents, demons.*

SENSE 3 gives rise to several compounds: a contextual shift based on either figurative or metonymical relations leads to a significant change of meaning of certain collocations the word ‘angel’ (SENSE 3) is typically part of. Unfortunately, we cannot discuss them all in detail (see the dictionary entry that we have elaborated for the word ‘angel’ in Appendix A at the end of this article).

The most widespread compound is ‘fallen angel’ which evolves from SENSE 3 in a particular religious framework. ‘Fallen angel’ as a compound always relates to the story of Lucifer’s fall. In this respect it clearly stands apart from ‘angel’ (SENSE 3), which can

signify any evil spirit and not only those who followed Lucifer in his rebellion (compare examples 18 and 20).

20) The Bible teaches that *fallen angels* are **invisible, supernatural, angelic, spirits created by God. Satan employs them as his immoral agents.** After one-third of the heavenly angels sided with Satan, they were cast out of heaven to the earth. <http://www.allaboutgod.com/fallen-angels-faq.htm>

DISCUSSION

In the present study, we have attempted to demonstrate that the word ‘angel’ is semantically ambivalent, which determines the whole structure of its polysemy. 1177 cases of its usage in 600 contexts obtained from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), www.books.google.fr, online journals such as the Independent, the Atlantic, the Washington Post and different religious websites have been studied. The overall breakdown of the contexts between the senses we have identified is given in Appendix B.

The analysis shows that this word has three distinct collocational patterns that can be distinguished by their evaluative characteristics, leading us to conclude that the word has three main senses (868 cases of usage). The rest of the contexts represent a variety of extensions of the three main senses (161 cases of usage) and compounds (148 cases of usage).

SENSE 1 (ARCHETYPE) is ambivalent and combines with positively and negatively charged words at the same time in texts describing high emotional tensions. This sense is archaic and takes its origin from the syncretism of ancient human mind still present in modern times. It is, however, restricted to specific areas of thought like religion and poetry.

The growing level of analyticity leads to the opposite evaluative attitudes gradually splitting apart, which creates a clear-cut borderline between the good and the bad and, therefore, between SENSE 2 and SENSE 3. Each of these senses in turn gives rise to a number of figurative and metonymical extensions and compound nouns.

Most modern monolingual English dictionaries don’t take into account this distinction in the evaluative characteristics of collocational patterns when defining the word ‘angel’.

1. *A spirit that in some religions is believed to live in heaven with God. In pictures, angels are shown as people with wings* (OMD);
2. *a spiritual being superior to humans in power and intelligence; especially: one in the lowest rank in the celestial hierarchy* (OMWD);
3. *a spirit who is God’s servant in heaven, and who is often shown as a person dressed in white with wings* (LDCE, 49)
4. *a. a messenger of God
b. a supernatural being, either good or bad, to whom are attributed greater than human power, intelligence, etc.* (OCED).

As illustrated, none of the aforementioned definitions makes a clear distinction between situations of contact with the overpowering incomprehensible supernatural force (SENSE 1) and its more comforting humanified positive counterpart (SENSE 2). These two types of usage merge here based on the simple fact that both are related to God, representing His servants and messengers. However, the way the situation of contact with them is perceived by the narrator is not taken into account. As a result, these dictionary entries fail to convey the feeling of ambivalence encoded by the word and manifested in religious texts, nor do they state the explicitly positive features of experience attributed to angels in mass culture (like kindness, physical beauty etc.). Therefore, certain logical connections with other types of

usage are not clear enough. Why, for example, a kind person or a beautiful woman can be called an angel?

As for the negative aspect of the meaning, only OCED (4) points out that ‘angels’ are ‘*either good or bad*’. Other dictionaries do not take into account the ability of the word ‘angel’ to collocate with a large variety of negatively charged words at all, ignoring a significant amount of contexts where ‘angel’ is synonymous with ‘demon’ and ‘devil’. However, even OCED fails to mention the ambivalent archetypal usage of the word ‘angel’, thus omitting an important link between ‘the good and the bad’.

In our opinion, taking into account the semantic ambivalence of this word would contribute to a more systematic description of its polysemy in the dictionary entry, explicating certain connections between different types of its usage that do not come across in traditional definitions.

The results of this study opens up new opportunities for further studies in lexical semantics and lexicography, for there are numerous questions that are still to be answered. First of all, we should define the exact scope of words that have ambivalent meanings. For the time being, we have studied in detail two English words ‘angel’ and ‘fire’ (Smirova, Tolochin, 2016). However, preliminary research allows us to conclude that there are quite a few of them in the English language, e.g., most colour terms and names of certain animals.

It is also to verify if all such words follow the same pattern of sense differentiation. There is a striking resemblance between the dictionary entries that we elaborated for the words ‘angel’ and ‘fire’. Both words have three collocational patterns distinguished by their evaluative characteristics: ambivalent, positive and negative. It should be clarified, however, if this model is applicable to all words with ambivalent integral categories. Theoretically speaking, there might be cases when the ambivalent evaluative potential of the root morpheme gives rise only to a negative or a positive word sense.

Moreover, it is important to understand what parts of speech can have archetypal word senses. Are there verbs or adverbs that present similar collocational patterns?

All these questions still await their answers.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to demonstrate in this study that ambivalence exists at the semantic level of word senses, being the legacy of the ancient syncretism of human mind, and manifests itself in typical collocational patterns, i.e., the capacity of the word to combine with positively and negatively charged words at the same time in texts that express complex emotional attitudes. There is no doubt that this kind of ambivalence is a semantic phenomenon and as such should be adequately described in lexicography. The suggested model of polysemy for the word ‘angel’ presents an alternative to traditional dictionary entries in this respect, creating a more systematic picture of its sense structure.

The analysis highlights the ultimate significance of contextual markers establishing variations within the evaluative potential of the word ‘angel’ and providing a reliable framework of semantic patterns, which in their turn make it possible to outline the boundaries between the senses in a way that allows us to identify typical contextual domains for the word ‘angel’ in modern English. In Appendix A, we have demonstrated how this approach can present the polysemy of the word ‘angel’ more consistently, taking into account the semantic links between the main senses of the word with its compounds and providing space for registering figurative uses of this word in all of its senses.

We believe that this method can yield valuable information on the meaning structure of many English words with a complex evaluative potential. We also hope that our

observations could lead to a more in-depth discussion concerning the treatment of the archetype as a specific kind of word-meaning.

REFERENCES

- Albertson, B., Brehm, J. & Alvarez, R. M. (2005) Ambivalence as Internal Conflict. In S. Craig, M. Martinez (Eds.). *Ambivalence and the Structure of Political Opinion* (pp. 15-32). Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Bellah, R. N. (2011). *Religion in Human Evolution. From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Retrieved May-September, 2018 from <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>.
- Dattamajumdar, S. (2007) Ambivalence and Contradiction in Advertising Discourse. *The Asiatic Society*. 84-99. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <http://ut.pr/biblioteca/Glossa2/Journal/dec2007/Ambivalence%20and%20contradiction.pdf>
- Harreveld (van), F. et al. (2015). The ABC of Ambivalence: Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive Consequences of Attitudinal Conflict. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. Vol. 52, 285-324.
- Heidegger, M. (2001). *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- Hillman, J. (1997). *Archetypal Psychology: A Brief Account*. Spring Publications.
- Larue-Tondeur, J. (2009). Ambivalence et énantiosémie. Une thèse de doctorat. Science de l'Homme et Société. Université de Nanterre, Paris, France.
- Lévy-Bruhl, L. (1923). *Primitive Mentality*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE) (2003). Pearson Education Limited.
- Milićević, J. & Ploguère, A. (2010) Ambivalence sémantique des noms de communication langagière du français. Congrès Mondial de Linguistique Française. Conference Proceedings. Paris: Institut de Linguistique Française.
- Mladinic, A. (1998) Ambivalence and the Study of Attitudes. *Psykhē*. Vol. 7(1), 13-23.
- Nohlen, H. U. et al. (2014) Evaluating ambivalence: social-cognitive and affective brain regions associated with ambivalent decision-making. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*. Vol. 9, 924-931.
- Online Collins English Dictionary (OCED). Retrieved February 14, 2018 from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/angel>.
- Online MacMillan Dictionary (OMD). Retrieved February 14, 2018 from https://www.macmillan_dictionary.com/dictionary/british/angel.
- Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary (OMWD). Retrieved February 14, 2018 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/angel>.
- Schneider, I. K. et al. (2013) One Way and the Other: The Bi-directional Relationship Between Ambivalence and Body Movement. *Psychological Science*. Vol. 24(3), 319-325.
- Shmelev, A. (2012) Cognitive and Communicative Sources of Enantiosemy. Proceedings of the 10th World Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies (IASS/AIS). Spain: Universidade da Coruña. ISBN: 978-84-9749-522-6
- Smirnova, A. Yu. (2016) "Where is the bank?" or how to "find" different senses of a word. *Heliyon*. 2 (6). Retrieved June 27, 2016 from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844015300797>
- Smirnova, A. Yu. & Tolochin, I. V. (2016) Arkhetip v lingvistike: forma I soderzhaniye (na primere angliyskogo slova fire) (Archetype in Linguistics: its Form and Meaning (a

- Case Study of the English Word FIRE)). *The World of Science, Culture and Education. Vol. 4(59)*, 214-218.
- Stamenov, M. (2011) The Status of Ambivalent Meaning in Lexical Semantics. In K. Stoycheva, A. Kostov (Eds.) *A Place, a Time and an Opportunity for Growth. Bulgarian Scholars at NIAS* (pp. 97-104). Sofia: Faber.
- Tolochin, I. V. (2014). *Uchebnik po leksikologii (A Coursebook on Lexicology)*. Saint-Petersburg: Antologiya.
- Jasmina, Milicevic & Alain, Polguère. (2010). Ambivalence sémantique des noms de communication langagière du français. Institut de Linguistique Française (ILF). 2e Congrès Mondial de Linguistique Française (CMLF'10), Jul 2010, La Nouvelle-Orléans, États-Unis. pp. 1029-1050.
- Jung, C. G. (Ed.) (1988). *Man and his Symbols*. New York: Anchor Press, Doubleday.
- Jung, C. G. (2003). *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Werner, H. (1948). *Comparative Psychology of Mental Development*. Follett.

APPENDIX A

DICTIONARY ENTRY FOR THE WORD 'ANGEL'

ANGEL, N [C]

INTEGRAL CATEGORY: *experiencing the presence of supernatural power executing the supreme will that can support and protect or terrify and destroy.*

SENSE 1 (in sacred and religious texts; fiction; poetry; journalism (esp. reviews)) an anthropomorphic agent endowed with supernatural power to convey and execute inconceivable divine will and whose appearance is perceived as an awe-inspiring miraculous experience. (*collocates: dazzling, blazing, fire, flame, fierce light, fear, terrible, afraid, glory, sun, thunder, apocalypse, tremble, awe, avenging, death*)

Figurative use: (of people) (esp. in fiction and journalism) individuals perceived to be endowed with supernatural powers that make them appear remote, awe-inspiring and attractive (*collocates: supernatural, awed, unearthly – often accompanied by avenging/dark/fallen ...*)

EX: She is a **fallen angel--fallen, and yet sinless**; and it is only this **depth of sorrow, with its weight and darkness, that keeps her down upon earth, and brings her within our view even while it sets her beyond our reach** (N. Hawthorne *The Marble Faun* <http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/mf07.html>).

COMPOUNDS:

avenging angel – 1. (of people) (esp. in journalism and fiction) individuals who relentlessly pursue their sense of justice ready to cause potential harm to others;

EX: Salander is **more avenging angel than helpless victim**. She may be an expert at staying out of sight - but **she has ways of tracking down her most elusive enemies** (S. Larsson *The Millennium Trilogy*).

2. (of people) (esp. in fiction and journalism) criminals who are ready to kill others motivated by their perverse perception of ultimate justice (*collocates: psychopathic, revenge, murder, punish*).

EX: An Alaskan '**avenging angel**' is accused of breaking into the homes of convicted sex offenders and **attacking them in retribution for their crimes** (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>).

SENSE 2 (esp. in religious texts, fiction and journalism) a superhuman benign being in a human shape whose presence is experienced as a sense of love, peace and joy. (*collocates: guardian, protection, peace, comfort, help, love, the sweetest voice, beautiful*)

Figurative use: (esp. in journalism and fiction) of people whose presence provides a transcendent experience of love and safety (*e. g. in expressions: a guardian angel, an angel sent from God, an angel of peace/ mercy, an angel fallen from heaven*).

EX: The main duty of flight attendants is **to save you in an emergency**. Dasef writes: When things go south, that's when all that training they have spent hours at comes into play and they **become your guardian angels** (The Independent).

A. Figurative extensions

2.1 (esp. in journalism, fiction) a human being capable of supporting others selflessly and imparting the sense of peace and harmony (*collocates: save, rescue, inspiration, kindness, care, patience*)

EX: He considered her an **angel**. She **cared so much** for his outfit, fed them well, made sure they were all healthy, plus knew as much as any man about the land there and the people. (COCA: Richards D. Arizona territory, 2015)

2.2 (esp. in journalism, fiction, poetry) a person who imparts the sense of deep love and adoration, esp. romantic love (*collocates: marry, love, adoration, passion*)

EX: He says to her, he emails her and says, you're an **angel, much love...** She responds four minutes later by saying, you are quite an **angel** yourself (COCA: Two Journalists Shot Dead on Live TV. Aired 8-9:00p ET// CNN, 2015)

2.2.1(esp. in fiction) an attractive young woman whose irresistible attraction conveys the sense of exciting joy (*collocates: beautiful, pretty, dark/ blond hair, blue/ hazel eyes*)

EX: He fought the battle with his eyelids and won. A brown-haired **angel** leaned over him. **Doe eyes, silken hair. Pretty lips**, the lower one thick, almost buckling in the center. # " Thank God. I was afraid I killed you. " (COCA: Hunter D. *The Wishing Season: a Chapel Springs Romance*, 2014)

2.3 (esp. in journalism and fiction) a small innocent child as it provides others with a sense of exciting joy and admiration (*collocates: little, innocent, cute, sweet*)

EX: ...she just wanted to look at her; she wanted time to see her, carefully examine, and mentally remember every detail of **her precious innocent little angel** (E. Roy van Keulen The Winds of Fate: Micronesian Love Story)

B. Metonymical extensions

2.4 (esp. in fiction) an androgynous young figure representing Angel (Sense 2), esp. in paintings and sculptures (collocates: to make/ carve an angel, a marble/ paper/ ceramic/ snow angel, wings, halo)

EX: **Placing my angel on the tree became part of our family tradition** as cherished to me as being kissed good night on Christmas Eve by my father and Judy (COCA: Hilderbrand E. My Christmas Angel, 2014)

COMPOUNDS:

Angel investor (also angel) – (economics) an individual that invests in startup companies providing more favourable terms than other lenders in order to launch the business (collocates: invest, business, startup).

EX: **Angel investor** famously invested \$500,000 in Facebook in 2004, becoming the first major outside investor in the startup. (COCA: Lessons from Author// San Francisco Chronicle, 2012)

SENSE 3 (esp. in religious texts and fiction) evil supernatural agents, demons (collocates: angel of destruction/ evil/ torture/death/ the abyss, dark angel, demon, Satan, dangerous)

Figurative use: of people who are capable of transcending the boundary between good and evil and cause enormous pain and suffering (e. g. in expressions: angel of destruction/ lust/ violence, dark angel) .

EX: Gen. William T. Sherman, the Union red-headed **angel of destruction**, took 60,000 troops **slashing through** Georgia, South Carolina, and into North Carolina. He was not there to seize and hold territory. This was **the largest raid of the war** (R. W. Black Cavalry Raids of the Civil War)

COMPOUNDS:

angel of death – (of people) (esp. in journalism and non-fictional prose) criminals who have committed serial killings with extreme cruelty (collocates: kill, murder, a serial killer).

EX: Liam Taylor's death, on 21 February 1991, was to become the first in a **string of infanticides carried out by the soon-to-be-notorious 'Angel of Death'** (J. Askill, M. Sharpe Angel of Death: Killer Nurse Beverly Allitt).

fallen angel – 1. (esp. in religious texts, fiction, journalism and academic writing) supernatural beings punished by God after their rebellion against his authority and stripped of their connection to goodness (collocates: Satan, devil, hell, demons, sin, wicked, evil, corrupt);

2. (of people) (esp. in academic writing, journalism, fiction) individuals who have renounced the socially sanctioned principles of morality and persist in their conspicuous wickedness (collocates: prostitute, whore, outcast, villain);

EX: Word was the Callus Grill was open to **misfits, outcasts, runaways, bums**, and all other manner of **fallen angel**. A sure place to get a good hot meal (COCA: S. Elliott The Wheelbarrow Man, 2006).

3. (in business) a bond that has lost its previously high investment value.

EX: If the takeover target had bondholders, they **rage**, as their own **bonds turn from investment grade to real junk** -- "**fallen angels**" is the term the professionals use (COCA: J. Mysak Putting junk to rest/ American Spectator, 1990).

APPENDIX B

THE OVERALL BREAKDOWN OF CASES OF USAGE BETWEEN THE SENSES

TYPE OF USAGE		NUMBER OF CASES	TOTAL
SENSE I	D	381	1177
	F	23	
Avenging angel	1	27	
	2	12	
SENSE II	D	256	
	F	38	
2.1		46	
2.2		21	
2.2.1		15	
2.3		15	
2.4	D	61	
	F	3	
Angel investor		18	
SENSE III	D	162	
	F	8	
Angel of death		8	
Fallen angel	1	D	53
		F	3
	2		15
	3		12

D – direct usage
 F – figurative usage

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alexandra Yurievna Smirnova graduated from the English Department of St. Petersburg State University in 2008. In 2016 she defended her Candidate of Philology thesis on polysemy. In her research she develops the ideas of the linguo-anthropological school of linguistics founded by professor I. V. Tolochin.

Igor Vladimirovich Tolochin graduated from the English Department of St. Petersburg State University in 1984. In 1987 he defended his Candidate of Philology thesis and joined the English department as an assistant lecturer. In 1997 he defended his doctoral thesis. His current position is Professor in the same department.