

Zeitschrift: Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Skandinavische Studien
Band: 72 (2022)

Artikel: Aesthetic energieia : an outline
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-976337>

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Aesthetic *energeia* – An Outline

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Keywords: Aesthetics, circulation of social energy, courtly love lyric, Different Aesthetics, 'energeia', Morungen MF 25,19

What constitutes an 'aesthetic experience' or 'effect'? This question has occupied the arts since their emergence as a modern academic discipline, just as it did rhetoric, poetics, and philosophy in antiquity.¹ All artefacts – that is, artistic works – want to convey a specific experience. They want to have an effect in a specific way – but it is only when they affect, when they capture attention, that they have the chance to obtain the status of an 'aesthetic artefact' and invite an evaluation of their aesthetic quality. The phenomena of 'artefact', 'effect', and 'evaluation' are thus closely related to each other through the concept of the 'aesthetic', though this concept is itself even more difficult to grasp than the three phenomena individually. The situation is particularly complex due to the fact that the terms mentioned and the phenomena associated with them are historically and culturally variant, so that diachronic variance must be taken into account in systematic considerations – or, to be more precise, systematic considerations can only be valid on the basis of historical differentiation.²

In the following, I would like to pursue the question of the effect and the valuation of pre-modern artefacts. In the context of this short chapter, I can offer only a first impression, an experimental outline, a set of assumptions that links to the 'praxeological model' being developed by the *Sonderforschungsbereich* (collaborative research centre) 1391 *Andere Ästhetik (Different Aesthetics)* (see *SFB 1391* and Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2022). In recent years, Stefanie Gropper, in helping to develop the approaches of the research centre, has repeatedly supported and practised such experimental thinking; this paper is therefore dedicated to her.

In discussions about 'aesthetic effect', the term 'intensity' has often been invoked. Dieter Mersch (2004), for example, uses the term in the title of his *Intensität und Pathos ästhetischer Ereignisse*. Georg W. Bertram (2016: 3) argues that the 'intensity' of sensual experience can

1 This paper is dedicated to Stefanie Gropper as thanks and recognition for the tireless energy with which she has supported and advanced the research programme *Andere Ästhetik (Different Aesthetics)*. I would like to thank Susanne Held for her careful translation, and Almut Suerbaum, Alexander Wilson, and Anne Bornfleth for their advice on details. The paper relates to the thesis of the *SFB 1391*, which is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – Project-ID 405662736 – *SFB 1391*.

2 Stefanie Gropper's studies bear impressive witness to this; see, for example, Rösli/Gropper (2021).

become aesthetic experience, while from a medievalist perspective Hartmut Bleumer (2020: 27) takes it up as a category of the aesthetic ‘event’. The term also appears prominently in Stephen Greenblatt’s earlier *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988: 1–2: “But those who love literature tend to find more intensity in simulations – in the formal, self-conscious miming of life – than in any of the other textual traces left by the dead [...] I wanted to know how Shakespeare managed to achieve such intensity”). In the following, I will engage in detail with several aspects of Greenblatt’s work. Importantly, Greenblatt (1988: 5–6) incorporates the concept of ‘intensity’, as well as its synonym ‘force’, into that of ‘energy’, derived from the ancient Greek lexeme *energeia* (though Greenblatt uses the Latin form *energia*):

I want to know how cultural objects, expressions, and practices – here, principally, plays by Shakespeare and the stage on which they first appeared – acquired compelling force. English literary theorists in the period needed a new word for that force, a word to describe the ability of language, in Puttenham’s phrase, to cause ‘a stir to the mind’; drawing on the Greek rhetorical tradition, they called it *energia*. This is the origin in our language of the term ‘energy’, a term I propose we use, provided we understand that its origins lie in rhetoric rather than physics and that its significance is social and historical.

In my view, this understanding particularly suits diachronic analysis. Greenblatt’s concept of exchange relations, discussed below in more detail, also gives significant attention to the “circulation of social energy” (see Greenblatt 1988: 13), and is therefore closely connected to the specifications of the praxeological model of our research centre, which I detail in the final section of this chapter. Finally, the research centre has established perspectives which make it possible to address some of the deficits in Greenblatt’s approach, and thereby to give a more nuanced answer to his question as to how such aesthetic intensity can be achieved.

1. “There can be no art without social energy.”

The title of this section belongs to a group of seven ‘abjurations’, which, according to Greenblatt (1988: 12) in his programmatic introduction “The Circulation of Social Energy”, must be followed if one truly wants to understand the source of an artefact’s ‘intensity’. It is equally necessary to realise, as another of these statements has it, that “there can be no autonomous artifacts” (Greenblatt 1988: 12). That is, autonomous artefacts cannot exist because no genius can be identified “as the sole origin of the energies of great art” (Greenblatt 1988: 12). Artistic representations do not arise spontaneously, but are integrated into historically variable circumstances; they are dependent on the respective social reality of life and social energy, and are therefore their products. For this reason, he argues, there can be no production without function; no “expression” can do without “an origin and an object, a *from* and a *for*” (Greenblatt 1988: 12). The seven statements set out in Greenblatt’s introduction not only contradict the New Criticism widely practised in the research landscape of the USA in the 1980s, but also the underlying idea of the ‘aesthetic’ as an autonomous property that developed as a consequence of the idealistic aesthetics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This idea of aesthetic autonomy has proved to be discourse-determining in the sphere of idealist aesthetics until this day,

oscillating between the ideal and anti-ideal (see Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2019: 16–19; Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2022).

Rather than seeing aesthetic artefacts as being defined by their ‘freedom from’ external factors, Greenblatt’s approach emphasises “the collective dynamic circulation of pleasures, anxieties, and interests” (1988: 12);³ and argues that these are reflected in the artefact in its historical form, and that the artefact consists of each of these. Instead of privileging the isolating view of the contingent work of art, which corresponds to the demand of the autonomous work, Greenblatt was concerned, from the perspective of literary criticism, with returning artefacts to a network of references that could not be surveyed comprehensively, let alone be dissolved, within the framework of a culture consisting of social processes of exchange and the resultant negotiations about those processes. In contrast to approaches such as Deconstruction or New Criticism, this ensured the return of artefacts to historical contextualisation, but not in the sense of traditional historicism, hermeneutics, or the social history of the 1970s – that is, as a relation of fact and fiction, of passive influence and active-uniform design, of background and foreground. It was rather – as articulated later by the New Historicists, who consolidated Greenblatt’s insights gained specifically from Elizabethan theatre into a wider-reaching theory (see Baßler 1996) – a matter of demonstrating the involuntary, contingent intrusion of social energies into aesthetic formations, a participation that Greenblatt (1988: 19) assessed as “partial, fragmentary, conflictual”, and which could not be smoothly captured and domesticated in an artefact. Artefacts thus revealed themselves as heteronomously determined sub-members of social negotiations, as variously threaded and intertwined nodes in the network of comprehensive exchange processes.

The reference to the collective social energy in which artefacts participate is central as a countermovement to notions of aesthetic autonomy, genius-based spontaneity, and propagated purposelessness, especially for understanding pre-modern artefacts. Yet one crucial point remains blurred in Greenblatt’s work: What effect, and what scope for effect, is attributed to the artefact in the ‘circulation’ to which it itself belongs? The direction of description that Greenblatt presents runs primarily from social practice towards the artefact; in the opposite direction, the argumentation remains sparse, more forced than meaningful. In his introduction, Greenblatt grapples with this question himself, taking up the metaphor of the mirror, popular at the time of Elizabethan theatre, to posit an answer: “The purpose of playing, in Hamlet’s conventional words, is ‘to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure’” (Greenblatt 1988: 8). In doing so, however, Greenblatt seems to efface the passivity of such images, consistently conceived from the approach of circulation and exchange processes. This passivity, mediated ‘outwards’, served as a protective screen that thereby made certain freedoms possible. Greenblatt (1988: 8) further emphasises:

Yet even in Hamlet’s familiar account, the word *pressure* – that is, impression, as with a seal or signet ring – should signal to us that for the Renaissance more is at stake in mirrors than an abstract and bodiless reflection. Both optics and mirror lore in the period suggested that something was

3 Greenblatt (1988: 12 n. 12) notes that his use of the term “collective dynamic” is derived from the work of Michel Foucault (1984: 52–53).

actively passing back and forth in the production of mirror images, that accurate representation depended upon material emanation and exchange.

Yet the question of what exactly this “back and forth” means remains open. Above all, it is unclear how the specific materiality and mediality of the artefact – that is, all that belongs substantially to its aesthetic facture – co-determine precisely that effect in the sense of circulation, with the concrete examples that Greenblatt provides helping to clarify matters only to a limited extent.⁴

While Greenblatt is correct in asking how the intensity of Shakespeare’s plays came to be, his answer, however convincing it may seem at first glance as a response to the literary-critical approaches of his time, appears ultimately to be fragmented and one-sided. Social energy has a decisive role in generating such intensity, but it is not the only dynamic effect at play, in that, as I argue, it is not until the social exchange processes enter into the ‘incubator’ of the artefact with its specific constructedness that they first gain the *energeia* which constitutes the effect emanating from the artefact. My understanding of *energeia* is discussed in detail below, in order to provide a basis for the final section’s modification of Greenblatt’s approach to fit the praxeological model of *SFB 1391*.

2. “Saget mir ieman, waz ist minne?”

“Can anyone tell me what love is?”, Walther von der Vogelweide asks around 1200, and it is this question around which the remarkable upswing of German vernacular poetry in the twelfth century revolves. Walther continues: “weiz ich des ein teil, sô west ich gern ouch darumbe mî” (L 69,1; Kasten/Kuhn 1995: 438; “If I know this in part, I would like to know more about it”). What is it that Walther knows in part?

In a small study from 2004, Walter Haug compiled different discourses on love from around 1200 in their socio-cultural contexts: the feudal marriage discourse functionally oriented towards securing power; the ecclesiastical canonistic marriage discourse that accepts marriage merely as a pragmatic, second-best option; the Platonic discourse on *eros*; the medical discourse; and so on. Literary models of loving relationships – such as the Ovidian ‘*Passio minne*’, *Minne* as *sexus* in so-called ‘Goliardic lyric’, love of God in crusading songs, Marian models, and so on – were transmitted and discussed in the German-speaking environment as well. What the vernacular texts since the end of the twelfth century contribute to this panorama, thus the scholarly consensus, is the attempt to understand *Minne* (“courtly love”) as a personal address which goes beyond mere functionality. It does not only signify affect, *sexus*, or *passio*, but expresses itself in a multitude of nuanced emotions, which must be modelled and mastered, but above all suffered through (see Gerok-Reiter 2020), in order to guarantee identity and an increase in status. German-language *Minnesang* (“courtly love lyric”) can thus only be understood as part of wider epistemic, socio-cultural and literary exchange processes and negotiations, the dynamics of which increased dramatically in the twelfth century. The fascination that *Minnesang* must have conveyed in the *imaginaire* of literary representation – evident in the at times lavish

4 This may be due to the fact that Greenblatt (1988: 8–10) argues primarily on the level of semantics, evident also in the ‘types’ of his “modes of exchange”: ‘Appropriation’, ‘Purchase’, and ‘Symbolic Acquisition’.

manuscript transmission – is thus based emphatically on the idea of ‘social energy’, documented in many ways, with which the theme of ‘correct loving’ may have been charged in the areas of securing power, religious lifestyle, or everyday norms (see, for example, Schnell 1999) and which reached the poetic artefacts of the time from there. It is not *whether*, but *how* this social energy is found in the *Minnesang* – in affirming, negating, adapting, transferring, and subverting forms (see Peters 2021) – that is being increasingly discussed again in research today (see, for example, Mohr 2019). Heinrich von Morungen’s attempt in his “In sô hôher swebender wunne” to describe the feeling of being personally affected by *Minne* as a kind of pure happiness (see MF 125, 19) needs to be seen in this context:⁵

In sô hôher swebender wunne
 sô gestuont mîn herze an frôiden nie.
 ich var, als ich fliegen kunne,
 mit gedanken iemer umbe sie,
 sît daz mich ir trôst enpfie,
 der mir dur die sôle mîn
 mitten in daz herze gie.

Swaz ich wunneclîchez schouwe,
 daz spil gegen der wunne, die ich hân.
 luft und erde, walt und ouwe
 sulnt die zît der frôide mîn enpfân.
 mir ist kommen ein hügender wân
 und ein wunneclîcher trôst,
 des mîn muot sol hôhe stân.

Wol dem wunneclîchen mære,
 daz sô suoze dur mîn ôre erklanc,
 und der sanfte tuonder swære,
 diu mit frôiden in mîn herze sanc,
 dâ von mir ein wunne entspranc,
 diu vor liebe alsam ein tou
 mir ûz von den ougen dranc.

Sælic sî diu süeze stunde,
 sælic sî diu zît, der werde tac,
 dô daz wort gie von ir munde,
 daz dem herzen mîn sô nahen lac,
 daz mîn lîp von frôiden erschrac,
 und enweiz von liebe joch,
 waz ich von ir sprechen mac.

In such high, hovering delight –
 never did my heart stand in such joy.
 I fare as if I could fly,
 all my thoughts ever surrounding her,
 ever since she gave me welcome hope,
 passing through my soul,
 entering the middle of my heart.

All that I behold that is delightful,
 let it gambol against the delight I possess.
 air and earth, wood and meadow,
 must at this time welcome my happiness.
 A hopeful illusion has come upon me,
 and a delightful consolation –
 which is why my mind stands high in joy.

Blessed be the joyous tidings,
 which resounded so sweetly through my ears,
 and the burden, that so gently
 sank with joy into my heart –
 causing delight to leap forth from me,
 which, from happiness, like the dew,
 pressed forth out of my eyes.

Blessed be the sweet hour,
 blessed the time, that honoured day,
 when that word went forth from her mouth
 which lay so close to my heart
 that I was shocked by joy,
 and still don’t know, for sheer delight,
 what I can say about her.

5 Quoted following Kasten/Kuhn (1995: 240 and 242). The German text is based here on manuscript C; the tradition in B, C, and Ca shows the same sequence of strophes. The English translation is taken from the *Minnesang* anthology by Cyril Edwards, which he left behind almost ready for publication after his death in 2018, and which is scheduled for publication with Taylor Editions in 2022. My thanks to Henrike Lähnemann, who kindly provided access to the translation.

In this song, the singer evokes a comprehensive, overwhelming happiness.⁶ The source of this happiness, a sign of hope for the lady's attention, is emphatically repeated in each strophe. Thus, the first strophe emphasises the hope ("trôst") that the lady has given and that has penetrated into the singer's heart (st. 1, ll. 5–7). The second strophe also emphasises this hope ("wân", "trôst") and the happiness that goes with it (st. 2, ll. 5–7). The fourth strophe names the concrete reason, content, and object of this hope, namely "daz wort" ("the word"), which lay so close to the heart of the singer that he "von frôiden erschrac" ("was shocked by joy") (st. 4, ll. 3–7). The third strophe also refers to the reason, but does so more emphatically in that the strophe introduces the cause of happiness at the very beginning and develops its potential effect idiosyncratically and in great detail throughout. The lady's message ("daz wunneclîche mære") is said to have sounded sweetly ("suoze") through the ear (st. 3, ll. 1–2) and to have descended, full of happiness and pain, into the loving heart (st. 3, ll. 3–4), from which in return a fountain of joy has sprung within the lover, bringing forth tears of joy (st. 3, ll. 5–7).

The actual impulse of hope, the effect of the "wort" and the "mære", is closely tied back to the lexeme *süeze* in the third strophe, more precisely to the "suoze" ("sweet") sound of the lady's message (st. 3, l. 2). Thus, at the level of semantics, a courtly-literary context of reference is invoked, for the perfect sweet joy that the lady – and only she – is able to give, the resulting appraisal of the lady as *summum bonum*, and the dependence in which the singer places himself in relation to this woman all belong to the repertoire of the 'Hohe Minne' song-type of the 'Ich-Lied'. The educated audience, however, will also have identified the decisive evocation of religious themes in the idiosyncratic formulations at this point (see Kellner/Rudolph 2021), especially since the entire song is interspersed with biblical or religious allusions. In the first strophe, for example, scholars have detected allusions to the first three verses of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–48); an association in the jubilation of nature in strophes two and four with the Easter hymns *Ite noctes, ite nubes* and *Salve, festa dies* respectively; and, in strophes three and four, a clear reference to the Annunciation (Luke 1:28–30) (see especially Kesting 1965: 96–98; Eikelmann 2015: 72–76; for a more cautious interpretation, see Henkel 2001: 14–15, n. 4). In the Middle Ages, the notion prevailed that in the Annunciation, Jesus was conceived through Mary's ear (Teervoren 2003: 151). Based on this idea, all these motifs – the emphasis on the ear in the strophe; the highlighting of the joyful descent of the conceived; the delight arising from this moment as love, which responds, as it were, to this act of love; the comparison of the tears of joy with dew – reveal themselves as a typological allusion to the event of the conception, frequently documented in medieval contexts.⁷ The blending of the 'sweet' message of the lady with the visual and lexical repertoire of the Annunciation is astonishing not only because it reverses the conventional gender roles of love in making the man the

6 I will not aim for a detailed analysis of this much-discussed song in the following, but will focus only on some key aspects. On praise-poetry of women in Morungen in general, see Hübner (1996: vol. 1, 141–196); on the song more generally, see Kasten (1995: 755–757), Teervoren (2002: 151–152), and Eikelmann (2015).

7 The reference to Judges 6:36–40 is central: just as the skin of Gideon's lamb is wetted with dew by the divine miracle, Mary conceives by the power of God or the Holy Spirit. Salzer (1967: 40–42) offers numerous other examples. My thanks to Marion Darilek for these references.

receiver, but above all because it now places the worldly lady, as it were, in a position analogous to Mary or even God, at least endowing her as a source of joy with dimensions of salvation-history and enriching her greeting of love with a redemptive potential.

This hypostasising dissolution of boundaries, in which secular and spiritual, social and religious energies come together and overlap, is the actual cause of the emphasis – an emphasis which, proceeding from the *süeze* that gives the third strophe its core impulse, pervades the entire song with semantic, tonal, and rhythmic references. This is apparent in the iterative mentions of the lexeme *wunne* (see Eikelmann 2015: 72), which is first introduced as a key word in the first strophe (st. 1, l. 1; “*wunne*”), is repeated three times in the second (st. 2, ll. 1, 2, 6; “*wunneclîchez*”, “*wunne*”, “*wunneclîcher*”), and finally leads to the poet’s response in the third (st. 3, ll. 1, 5; “*wunneclîchen*”, “*wunne*”). The dynamic use of *wunne* is trumped in the fourth strophe only by the imagery of the “*süeze stunde*” (st. 4, l. 1; “sweet hour”), in which the message sounded, becoming the occasion for beatitudes that circle around that hour – “*sælic sî diu süeze stunde, / sælic sî diu zît, der werde tac*” (st. 4, ll. 1–2; “blessed be the sweet hour, blessed the time, that honoured day”) – and the picture of the poet shocked by joy, in which the *tremendum* of election again appears in a religious figuration. Likewise, this emphasis pervades the variety of movements that the song invokes, such as hovering (st. 1, l. 1), flying (st. 1, l. 3), surrounding (st. 1, l. 4), gambolling (st. 2, l. 2), sinking (st. 3, l. 4), and pressing forth (st. 3, l. 7). The variety of movement demonstrates the exuberance triggered by the sweet message, especially at the moment when the happiness of receiving turns outwards, as it were, and in mutual reflection becomes the imprint of nature into which the singer’s unrestrained joy pours forth: “*luft und erde, walt und ouwe / sulnt die zît der fröide mîn enpfân*” (st. 2, ll. 3–4; “air and earth, wood and meadow, must at this time welcome my happiness”). The vowel amplitude of *u* and *i* dominating the song, the fourfold accumulation of the same rhyme within each strophe’s seven lines, the dactylic impulses that seem to break the alternating verse metre again and again (especially in st. 1) – all this finally transforms the emphasis performatively into rhythm and sound structures (see Eikelmann 2015: 74–75), which suggestively draws in not only the singer, but also the audience. In this way, the resounding *süeze*, thematised in the third strophe, seems reflexively to refer to the song itself, which in its persuasive design and in its hymn-like ductus wants to convey both the notion of a supreme, sweet happiness and simultaneously the idea that the claim staked by the new, poetically evoked ideal of *Minne* can convey precisely this happiness.

The consolation of the lady, the erotically charged, *süeze* happiness of *Minne*, the religious layer of meaning of a *süeze* salvific experience transcending the earthly, as well as the aspects of production and reception aesthetics of the *süeze* sound, thus all overlap in the core term of the *süeze* message; they suffuse the entire song with the tension of synaesthetic sensuality and transcending bliss that it evokes, and in the performative accomplishment of this tension transform into a further form of ‘sweetness’, that is, an aesthetically evoked knowledge of the nature and value of this *Minne*.⁸ Knowledge of this new ‘elevated courtly love’ (“*hohe Minne*”), the wide-ranging dimensions of which cannot be summed up in a

8 It is the task of subproject B3 of *SFB 1391* to work out the complexity of the lexeme *süeze* and its aesthetic potential; on the religious aspects of the term, see Ohly (1989) and Carruthers (2013: 80–107).

single concept or *argumentatio*, can thus only be adequately conveyed through the aesthetically extraordinarily dense texture of the song, precisely because it does not reproduce a propositional statement, but rather evokes this knowledge performatively as an experience in *süeze* song.⁹

3. The praxeological model of *SFB 1391*

There can be no doubt that the intensity of the song's effect largely consists in the social energy that the song captures as much as it produces. This intensity is carried out on two levels. On the one hand, it reacts to conceptions of partnership and of women as developed especially in the clerical-canonical and feudal discourse by means of a clear counter-concept that maintains the traces of an alternative precisely in its pointedly antithetical emphasis. The happiness of a non-functionally conditioned relationship based on *Minne* emerges as notably different, even surprising, against the background of feudal relationship practice; the hoped-for *süeze* of consolation in the act of love appears even more provocative against the backdrop of an ecclesiastical-canonical axiology; the idea of the worldly lady as being *summum bonum* and bringer of salvation becomes a source of fascination precisely because her actual social status is lower. On the other hand, such intensity is not simply an antithetical juxtaposition. In the overlapping of spiritual and secular, religious and profane lexemes and semantics lie interferences and ambiguities that create more daring and irritating references than mere antitheses *per se* (see Eikelmann 2015: 71–76). It is thus the difference and concurrently the correlation of ideas, their antithesis and concurrently their interference with one another, that creates the tension through which an energetic transfer of the social preconditions into the song, along with the accompanying potential for suffering, can occur in the first place.

It is crucial here to recognise that this energetic transfer is further increased – indeed, essentially first unleashed – by the coherence in the song's structure, by its playing with ideas of identity and difference in the word repetitions (see Deleuze 1994; Kellner 2018: 62–63), by its networks of metaphors and sequences of movement, by its vocal assonances, its rhyme formations, its rhythm. It is only through such compositional means and techniques that the text is able to persuasively transfer its social energy – saved and set aside in the song – into a new statement, to condense it into an emphasis and to convey that emphasis performatively (see Bleumer 2010: 27–34).

It thus becomes clear that it is only when both of these aspects work together – the social energy built up in the artefact's completely different historical interplay with various socio-historical discourses, as well as the creative means by which these discourses are negotiated through all manner of rhetorical and poetic refinement – that the song is able to generate the intensity that is likely to have ensured its survival to this day. It is on the basis of this double perspective that *SFB 1391* has designed its 'praxeological model' (see Fig. 1):

9 This is underlined once more in the *revocatio* at the song's end (st. 4, ll. 6–7), in which the singer claims that he is unable to fully know how to describe the woman – a claim that is of course undermined by the preceding demonstration of the singer's mastery of artificial presentation and performance.

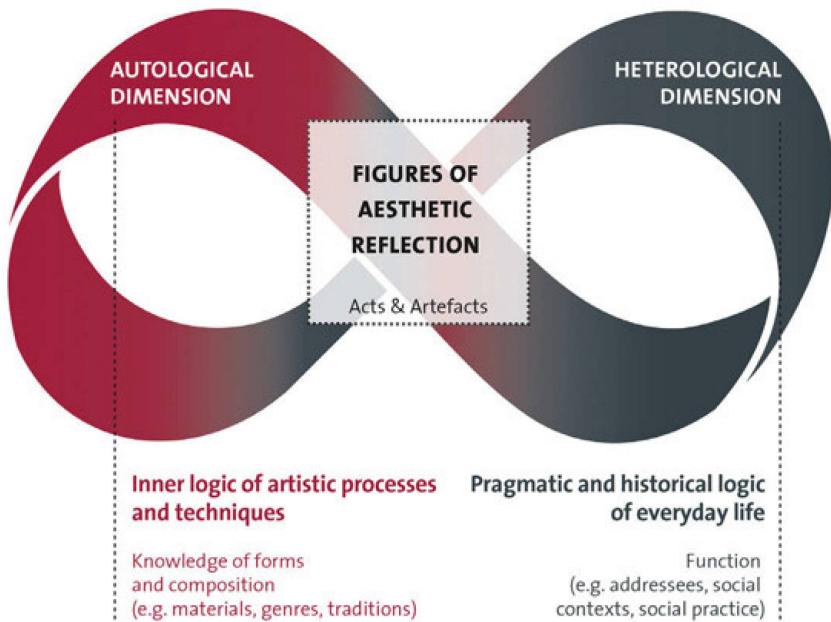


Fig. 1: The praxeological model of SFB 1391 (© SFB 1391 Andere Ästhetik).

On the one hand, the model, which is to be understood as representing a dynamic movement between formalistic and functional aspects, takes up in its heterological dimension those critical approaches that see artefacts once more and increasingly integrated into the exchange processes of social practice, which speaks against notions of aesthetic autonomy. On the other hand, in its autological dimension, the model simultaneously refers back to those factors that are determined by the respective constructiveness of the artefact, such as its material, its genre traditions, its choices of motif, its topoi-related demands and the conditions of its form – in other words, the special logic of *ars*-conditioned knowledge that is of fundamental importance for the emergence of the artefact – which expands the circulation of social energy.

Implicit in this model is a decided revision not only of approaches arguing for the autonomy of aesthetic artefacts, but also of Greenblatt's approach, for it becomes clear that, in order to determine the relations between the artefact, its effect, and its valuation, reference to autological guidelines is by no means sufficient: from this point of view, it is insufficient to equate the 'aesthetic' merely with its creative, formative means. Yet it seems equally insufficient to attribute the intensity of the aesthetic exclusively to the heterological social factors and their transfer. Like the formative means, these constitute a necessary condition of the generated aesthetic intensity, but not an entirely sufficient one on their own.

In order to adequately comprehend the effect of the artefact, then, it is not enough to speak of the 'circulation of social energy', to paraphrase Greenblatt. Rather, I suggest that it is more appropriate instead to use the term 'aesthetic *energeia*', which encompasses the build-up, the circulation, and the power of 'aesthetic energy' working *in actu*.¹⁰ The

¹⁰ Because of this triad, the Greek term *energeia* is here preferred to the German and English terms. See Aristotle, who defines *energeia* in the *Metaphysics* in terms of *energon*, or active function: "The fact is that a thing's active function [*energon*] is its end, and its actuality [*energeia*] is its active function.

essential component of such energy is the degree of integrated, and at the same time artificially mediated, social energies. With this new term, not only can the praxeological model of the CRC be developed and reconsidered, but a threefold advantage can also be gained. Firstly, the criterion of ‘aesthetic *energeia*’ opens up the possibility of being able to react to aesthetic qualities in a *scalable* way. Furthermore, it becomes considerably easier to capture artefacts in their transitions to becoming, for instance, objects of everyday use and components of functional rituals, both central prerequisites for historically appropriate pre-modern research. Finally, the conception of the aesthetic is ‘reframed’ in a way that resolutely turns against misleading oppositions in relation to the criteria of aesthetic valuation – a reframing that would not only necessitate further reflection by the members of *SFB 1391*, but which would be likely to remain highly relevant all the way into analyses of the aesthetic artefacts of modernity (see Rauterberg 2018).

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Hence, indeed, the very name, actuality [*energeia*], has an account based on the active function [*energon*], which is extended to its entelechy” (*Met* [1050 a]: 274). From here, the connection to theories of the performative in the aesthetic context can be found in the collaborative research centre (see Mersch 2002; Fischer-Lichte 2004).

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