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THE AXIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THE AESTHETIC-COSMOLOGICAL DOMAIN OF EVALUATION IN OLD ENGLISH1

The article reconstructs the axiological profile of the aesthetic-cosmological domain of evaluation in Old English texts (7th–11th centuries) and explains its distinctive features. The domain is treated not as a theme or a stylistic genre but as a field of experience, an environment in which a language community regularly assigns a particular value profile to what is evaluated. The material comprises 283 positive and only 2 negative contexts of the aesthetic-cosmological domain, established within an author-compiled corpus of 2,953 contexts of 76 evaluative adjectives from 285 Old English texts; value concepts were attributed based on three independent principles: the dictionary profile, the etymology, and the collocational frame. Then they were classified according to the ten basic values of S. Schwartz (Tradition (TRAD), Power (POW), Achievement (ACH), Hedonism (HED), Self-Direction (S-D), Stimulation (STIM), Security (SEC), Conformity (CONF), Benevolence (BEN), and Universalism (UNIV)), with the dependence of their distribution on the domain tested by Pearson's χ^2 and Haberman's residuals. It is established that the domain displays the highest polar asymmetry in the corpus and possesses no systematic negative pole: beauty, light, and the order of the world are conceptualised as a self-evident good. Its core value concepts are Hedonism (28.6%; z = +20.18) and Stimulation (27.5%; z = +23.29), as sensory pleasure and radiance, followed by Universalism (27.5%; z = +10.72) as a background value of cosmic order and Power (14.6%) represented secondarily, as the grandeur of the cosmos. The domain is lexicalised above all by adjectives beorht (radiant), fæger (beautiful (abstract)), and wlitig (beautiful (concrete/sensory)), which remain sensory-aesthetic rather than ethical in this period. It is argued that beauty has a double nature of sensory pleasure (HED/STIM) and of ordered creation (UNIV), so that aesthetic perception is at once enjoyment and cosmological cognition. Compared to the religious and gnomic domains, the aesthetic-cosmological one possesses an exclusively positive pole of the axiological typology of Old English.

Key words: *Old English, evaluation, axiological profile, aesthetic-cosmological domain.*

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АКСІОЛОГІЧНИЙ ПРОФІЛЬ ЕСТЕТИКО-КОСМОЛОГІЧНОГО ДОМЕНУ ОЦІННОСТІ В ДАВНЬОАНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ

У статті реконструйовано аксіологічний профіль естетико-космологічного домену оцінності в давньоанглійських текстах (VII–XI ст.) і пояснено його вирізняльні риси. Домен потрактовано не як тему чи стилістичний жанр, а як поле досвіду – середовище, у якому мовна спільнота регулярно приписує позначуваному певний ціннісний профіль. Матеріал становлять 283 позитивні й лише 2 негативні контексти естетико-космологічного домену, виокремлені в авторському корпусі з 2953 контекстів уживання 76 оцінних прикметників із 285 давньоанглійських текстів; ціннісні концепти приписувано за трьома незалежними принципами: словниковим профілем, етимологією та колокаційним фреймом. Наступним кроком класифіковано за десятьма базовими цінностями Ш. Шварца (Традиція (TRAD), Влада (POW), Досягнення (ACH), Гедонізм (HED), Самостійність (S-D), Стимуляція (STIM), Безпека (SEC), Конформність (CONF), Доброзичливість (BEN) та Універсалізм (UNIV)), із перевіркою залежності їхнього розподілу від домену за критерієм χ^2 Пірсона та залишками Хабермана. Установлено, що домен виявляє найвищу полярну асиметрію в корпусі й не має систематичного негативного полюса: краса,

[1] Під час підготовки статті автор використовував системи штучного інтелекту Claude (версія 3 Opus, Anthropic) з метою стилістичного редагування окремих речень та створення зображення Рис. 1. Генерація цілісного тексту чи самостійне формулювання висновків за допомогою ШІ не здійснювалися

світло й лад світу концептуалізуються як самоочевидне благо. Його ядрові ціннісні концепти – Гедонізм (28,6 %; z = +20,18) і Стимуляція (27,5 %; z = +23,29) як чуттєва насолода й сяйво, за якими йдуть Універсалізм (27,5 %; z = +10,72) як фонова цінність космічного ладу та Влада (14,6 %), представлена вторинно як велич космосу. Домен лексикалізований передусім прикметниками beorht «осяйний», fæger «прекрасний (абстрактне)» і wlitig «красивий (конкретне/сенсорне)», які в цей період лишаються сенсорно-естетичними. Аргументовано, що краса має подвійну природу чуттєвої насолоди (HED/STIM) та впорядкованого творіння (UNIV), тож естетичне сприйняття є водночас задоволенням і космологічним пізнанням. Порівняно з релігійним і гномічним доменами, естетико-космологічний володіє винятково позитивним полюсом аксіологічної типології давньоанглійської мови.

Ключові слова: *давньоанглійська мова, оцінність, аксіологічний профіль, естетико-космологічний домен.*

Introduction. Beauty, light and world order comprise a separate area of an axiological world picture in Old English: adjectives such as *beorht* "radiant", *fæger* "beautiful (abstract)" and *wlitig* "beautiful (concrete/sensory)" describe not the moral or heroic quality but an aesthetic-cosmological one like shining, harmony, and orderliness of creation. But there still exists a question whether this aspect has its own peculiar structure. For example, the negative contexts are not expected to be found within the aesthetic domain as it is usually treated as a stylistic embellishment. In our research we prove that this domain activates value concepts that are different from those of other domains such as religious or gnomic, and, thus, we should consider it a field of the realisation of evaluation and not a mere type of description. Hence the main aim of the article is to describe the specific axiological profile of the aesthetic-cosmological domain of the Old English world picture in terms of its structure, lexicalisation means and pole asymmetry as well as the peculiar features setting it aside from the religious and gnomic domains described earlier.

Theoretical Background. The axiological feature is realised in a context, which means that the same adjective will activate different value concepts depending on what it evaluates and its semantic environment. For example, *beorht* "radiant" used with celestial bodies activates the aesthetic impression of radiance and shining, used within the religious context – the sacred dimension, hence the axiological content of an adjective is determined by its dictionary profile and the thematic-communicative field in which it functions. This field is an environment in which a linguistic community regularly assigns a particular value profile to what is designated. We define it an axiological domain in our paper. R. Valdés Miyares treats the evaluative spheres of Old English poetry as fields that only partly coincide with genres (Valdés Miyares, 2019: 743), while M. Halliday grounds the notion of the "field of discourse" as a social action with a regular semantic correlate, through which a culture "assigns values to situations" (Halliday, Hasan, 1989: 46; Biber, Conrad, 2009: 16).

The theoretical framework of separating aesthetic-cosmological domain is set by U. Eco who describes the Medieval approach towards beauty as something proportioned, whole and bright "*there are three requirements for beauty… integrity or perfection… due proportion or consonance… and also clarity*" (Eco, 1986: 71), while the light was "*the principle of all beauty*" (Eco, 1986: 50). Equally significant is that beauty was perceived as an objective property of being, not as the viewer's experience, and it coincided with the good ontologically, differing only in orientation: "*Beauty… has to do with knowledge, and we call a thing beautiful when it pleases the eye of the beholder*" (Eco, 1986: 70).

Old English aesthetic vocabulary is well studied in philology. N. Unebe discusses the difference between *fæger* expressing a more abstract "beautiful" and wlitig a more concrete and visual (Unebe, 2019: 106, 112), while both being sensory ("*beautiful to the eye*"; "*beauty that appeals to the senses*") and closely connected to radiance "*the concepts of 'beautiful' and 'shiny' are closely related during the Old English period*" (Unebe, 2019: 111). S. J. Harris proves that Anglo-Saxon beauty was not a subjective emotion, but an objective property of the ordered world: "*fægernesse is asserted to be a property of the external world, not of the viewer… Fægernesse inheres in creation itself*" (Harris, 2012: 28). The denial of beauty directly lexicalises ugliness (Grendel's *leoht unfæger* "unlovely light") which indicates the embedded connection between light and beauty (Harris, 2012: 29). N. Cziganj developed a classification of Middle English aesthetic adjectives which can also be used as a methodological basis (Cziganj 2023).

The axiological opposition of light and darkness is analysed by L. Kalytiuk who states that light is ontologically positive, the divine pole, and darkness is "*a dense, value-laden category*", while "*'light' and 'dark' function as non-equivalent axiological poles*", and the dark concept remains "*sporadic*" (Kalytiuk, 2026: 22, 24). This asymmetry correlates with the axiological parameter built into the conceptualisation (UP IS GOOD) (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980; 1999; Krzeszowski, 1997).

J. Neville examines the cosmological aspect of the domain showing that "the representation of 'the

natural world' is never an end in itself and is always ancillary to other issues" (Neville, 1999: 18), and its description manifests the order and power of creation (Neville, 1999: 142) and human helplessness before the forces of nature (Neville, 1999: 21, 51).

The point of view that beauty is inseparably morally loaded (kalokagathia) is upheld by F. Minaya Gómez (Minaya Gómez, 2019: 205); however, his own corpus data show the predominance of sensory uses and the contextual nature of moralisation (Minaya Gómez, 2019: 217, 219), which removes this counterargument.

Though the number of studies on aesthetic adjectives in Old English is considerable, the unified study of the aesthetic-cosmological domain based on a corpus of the period has not yet been offered. This constitutes a gap we aim to fill with our research.

Aim and tasks. The aim of the research is to reconstruct the axiological profile of the aesthetic-cosmological domain of Old English and explain its distinctive polar asymmetry. The tasks are: 1) to define the value core of the domain; 2) to characterise its lexicalisation; 3) to explain the Old English beauty in terms of its double nature – sensory pleasure and cosmic order; 4) to compare it to the religious and gnomic domains.

Methods. The material comprises 283 positive and 2 negative aesthetic-cosmological domain contexts collected from a larger corpus (N = 2,953 contexts, 76 evaluative adjectives, 285 texts) compiled by the author. The contexts were assigned certain value concepts according to S. Schwartz's model (Schwartz, 2012) based upon three independent grounds: dictionary profile of an evaluative adjective in a context, its etymology, and collocational frame of the context. The ten values of the model are Tradition (TRAD), Power (POW), Achievement (ACH), Hedonism (HED), Self-Direction (S-D), Stimulation (STIM), Security (SEC), Conformity (CONF), Benevolence (BEN), and Universalism (UNIV). As the negative pole is not represented in the model we added it to each value concept marking them ($^{-}$). The dependence between the value distribution and the aesthetic-cosmological contexts has been tested via Pearson's χ^2 test and Haberman's standardized residuals (z). The bearer of the evaluative meaning is the evaluative adjective (which we define as an axiodeterminant) together with the evaluated referent (which we define as a trajector after R. Langacker (Langacker, 1987)). Since a single usage may realize several values at once, the unit of counting is the value realization, not the context. A distinction has been drawn between overall frequency of realisation of a concept in the domain contexts and focality (the cases where the concept was the semantic center of the utterance).

To visualize the axiological profile the system of ten basic motivational values together with their counterparts are presented in a form of a circular continuum along two axes – Openness to Change versus Conservation, and Self-Enhancement versus Self-Transcendence – and four higher-order types. Additionally, L. Lebart's aksiosemiometric matrix is employed, with two orthogonal axes – "Duty – Pleasure" (Devoir – Plaisir) and "Mind – Matter" (Esprit – Matière) – onto which the circle of Schwartz's values is imposed (see Fig. 1).

To test the dependence of the distribution of values on the domain, the χ^2 test (Eq. 1) was applied together with Haberman's standardised residuals (z) (Eq. 2):

$$\chi^2 = \Sigma\,((O - E)^2 / E), \quad (1)$$

and

$$z_{ij} = (O_{ij} - E_{ij}) / \sqrt{(E_{ij} \cdot (1 - r_i/N) \cdot (1 - c_j/N))} \quad (2)$$

where O is the observed number of realisations of a value in the domain, E = (row total · column total) / N is the number expected under independence, r and c are the marginal proportions of the row and the column respectively, and N is the total number of realisations. A value of $|z| > 1.96$ corresponds to a significance level of $\boldsymbol{p} < 0.05$, and $|z| > 2.58$ to $\boldsymbol{p} < 0.01$; a positive residual indicates a statistically significant over-representation of a value in the domain, a negative one its under-representation (Перебийніс, 2002: 73).

Discussion. The aesthetic domain shows the highest polar asymmetry in the corpus: 283 positive contexts against 2 negative ones. The domain has no systematic negative pole as beauty, light and order are conceptualised as obvious good in the texts. This accords with the findings of L. Kalytiuk about the inequality of light and dark poles where the negative pole remains sporadic and is expressed not through the negation of beauty but through other concepts such as "sin", "devil", "darkness" (Kalytiuk, 2026: 24).

The axiological profile of the domain (see Table 1 and Figure 1) is characterised by three segments.

The first one includes Hedonism (28.6%; z = +20.18) and Stimulation (27.5%; z = +23.29) which are the most focal values (164 and 106 focal cases): beauty is experienced as sensory pleasure and as an aesthetic impression of radiance and novelty. Universalism is similarly important for the domain (27.5 %; z = +10,72) – the cosmic order correlates with the beauty accompanying it. The second segment

is represented by Power (14.6 %; z = +2.49) which is conceptualised through the grandeur and awesome might of the cosmos. Finally, Tradition, Benevolence, Achievement and Security constitute the third segment. These value concepts demonstrate large negative residuals (all z < −9), which support the uniqueness of the domain as it barely intersects with the sacral-normative and heroic axes.

Table 1

The axiological profile of the aesthetic-cosmological domain

Value Concept	Number of Contexts	Focal Cases	Residuals
Hedonism (HED)	280 (28.6 %)	164	+20.18
Stimulation (STIM)	269 (27.5 %)	106	+23.29
Universalism (UNIV)	269 (27.5 %)	10	+10.72
Power (POW)	143 (14.6 %)	0	+2.49
Benevolence (BEN)	12 (1.2 %)	1	−12.95
Achievement (ACH)	2 (0.2 %)	2	−11.26
Security (SEC)	2 (0.2 %)	0	−9.74
Tradition (TRAD)	1 (0.1 %)	0	−12.57

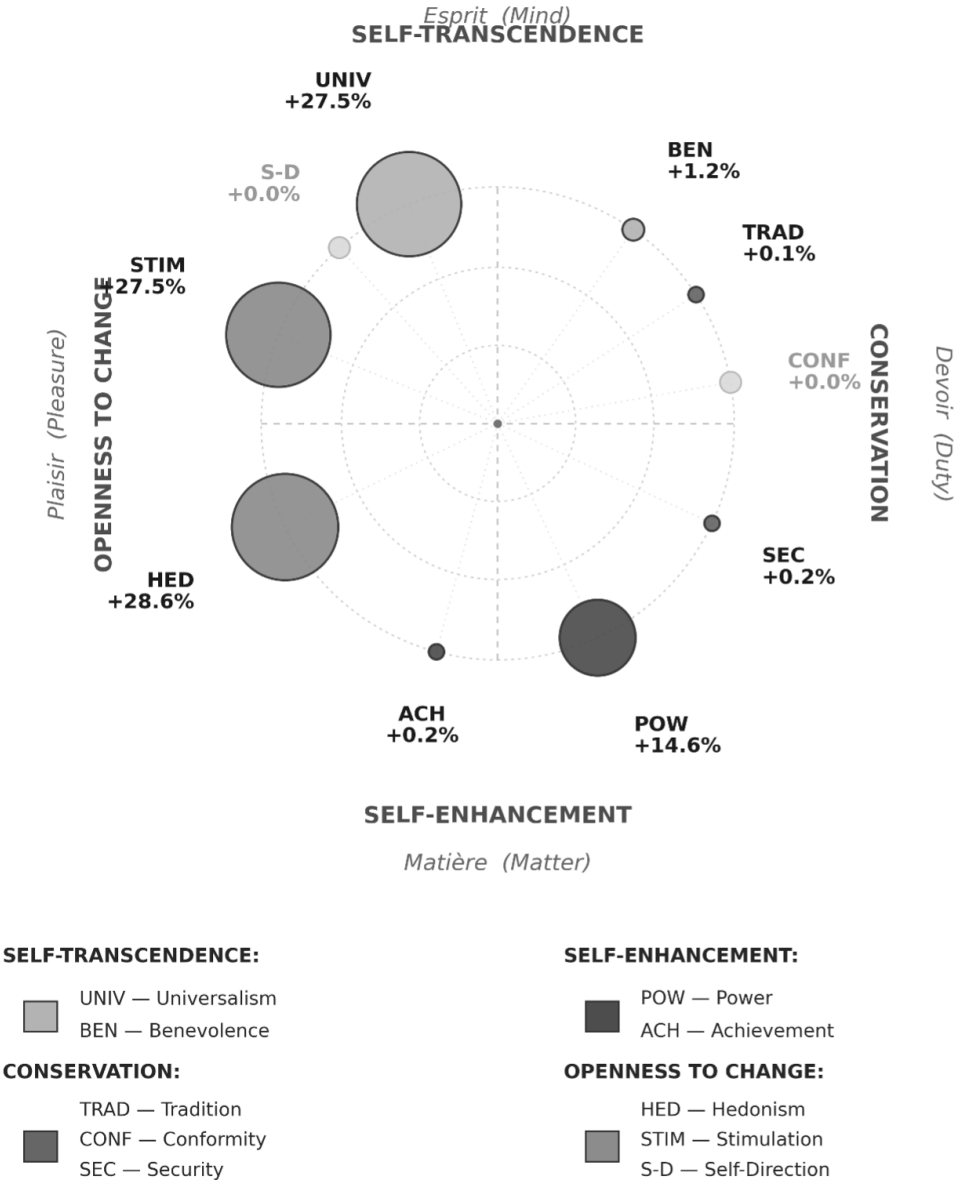


Fig. 1. The aksiosemiometric model of the aesthetic-cosmological domain: the circumplex of S. Schwartz's values on the axes of Lebart's matrix

The core of the domain is lexicalized by three groups of adjectives (see Table 2). The adjective beorht "radiant" (137 cases) denoting light and shining dominates in the domain realising Stimulation and Universalism. It is followed by *fæger* "beautiful (abstract)" (88) and wlitig "beautiful (concrete/sensory)" (44) which are different in the realization of the opposition "abstract – concrete". Both adjectives are sensory and connected to radiance thus showing the interconnection between "beautiful" and "radiant" in Old English (Unebe, 2019: 111). Less numerous adjectives of the domain include *swēte* "sweet", *gōd* "good" and līþe "lithe, gentle". According to N. Unebe the moral sense of fæger "free from blemish" develops only in the Middle English period (Unebe, 2019: 106–107), while in the Old English period it remains purely a sensory-aesthetic adjective. The adjective beorht extends aesthetic radiance to different trajectors:

(1) *bēaga ond* ***beorhtra*** māðma … þǣre ***beorhtan*** *idese āġēafon ġearoþoncolre*

"rings and bright treasures... were given to a bright, clever lady" (Judith),

where *beorht* denotes the radiance of the treasures and the beauty of Judith at the same time.

Aesthetic experience is realised beyond the visual channel in the olfactory and the auditory ones:

(2) ***swētum*** *stencum ond sweglwundrum … engla hlēoðres* " with sweet fragrances and heavenly wonders... with the singing of angels " (Guthlac A).

Table 2

The leading axiodeterminants of the aesthetic-cosmological domain

Axiodeterminants	Cases	Axiodeterminants	Cases
beorht "radiant"	137	swēte "sweet"	10
fæger "beautiful (abstract)"	88	gōd "good"	2
wlitig "beautiful (concrete/sensory)"	44	līþe "lithe, gentle"	1

The peculiarity of the domain reflects in the double nature of beauty and explains the co-existence of core values Hedonism/Stimulation with Universalism. On the one hand, beauty is a sensory pleasure (HED) and an aesthetic stimulus of radiance (STIM) which comprise the first sensory layer of the domain (Unebe, 2019: 106). On the other hand, beauty is inseparable attribute of an orderly world creation (UNIV): "*Fægernesse inheres in creation itself*" (Harris, 2012: 28), and natural beauty is the link between the process of creation, its object and God (Harris, 2012: 28). The same duality is discussed in U. Eco's research, where beauty unites radiance (claritas), that satisfies senses, and proportion and order, which are necessary for world existence (Eco, 1986: 50, 71). This dual principle is lexicalised by the adjective *beorht* in Old English. When it is used to denote the brightness of a dawn the value concept Stimulation is realised, when *beorht* describes the beginning of the World it triggers the value of Universalism and sacral order. Aesthetic perception in Old English is both pleasure and cosmological cognition as the contemplation of order that refers to the Creator/God. It is important to note that *beorht* activates the aesthetic impression of radiance not only in the sacred contexts, but also in the description of man-made structures:

(3) *Abraham maðelode, geseah Egypta hornsele hwite and hea byrig beorhte* "Abraham spoke, saw the white peaked palaces of Egypt and the lofty city bright" (Genesis A),

where the brightness of the foreign city is an object of aesthetic admiration.

Beauty, light and purity are often combined together by Old English texts to create an image of the paradise:

(4) þæt þū on lēohte siþþan wlitig, womma lēas, wunian mōstes " so that from then on you may dwell in the light, beautiful, unstained" (Guthlac A),

where *wlitig*, *lēoht* and negative adjective *womma* negated by lēas all together form the desired image of Heaven.

Another peculiarity of the domain that has been established is explained by the role of Power in the domain. POW (14.6%) realizes the power of natural forces such as storm and sea that highlight the helplessness of people in the world: "*Representing the natural world signals a preoccupation with power and human powerlessness*" (Neville, 1999: 51). That is why Power is an attribute of cosmic grandeur which people admire and accept without evaluating. It is supported by J. Neville who states that formidable, hostile nature (storm, winter, exile) lies outside the aesthetic-cosmological domain in the elegiac-existential sphere, where nature contrasts with human helplessness; the aesthetic domain describes a "delimited cosmos" of light, beauty, and harmony (Neville, 1999: 18–21).This differentiation explains the positive character of the aesthetic-cosmological domain.

Finally, all the above mentioned peculiarities create a unique axiological profile that differs from other domains (see Table 3).

Data in Table 3 show that three domains occupy different segments of Schwartz's circumplex: the religious domain is in the sphere of Conservation and Self-Transcendence (Tradition, Benevolence), the gnomic tends towards Self-Enhancement and Openness (Achievement, Self-Direction), and the

Table 3

Leading value concepts of three axiological domains: religious, gnomic and aesthetic-cosmological

Value Concepts	Religious Domain	Gnomic Domain	Aesthetic-cosmological Domain
Tradition (TRAD)	18.0 %	0.5 %	0.1 %
Universalism (UNIV)	13.9 %	13.6 %	27.5 %
Achievement (ACH)	5.3 %	32.2 %	0.2 %
Hedonism (HED)	3.6 %	8.2 %	28.6 %
Stimulation (STIM)	2.5 %	0.8 %	27.5 %

aesthetic-cosmological – towards Openness and Self-Transcendence (Hedonism, Stimulation, Universalism). Universalism provides a common ground for all domains, but it is realised differently – it is prominent in religious and aesthetic-cosmological ones, and marginal in the gnomic. The aesthetic-cosmological domain is also the only one without the negative pole.

Conclusions. The aesthetic-cosmological axiological domain in Old English is a separate axiological system with its own profile. First of all, this domain displays an almost exclusively positive character: 283 positive contexts against 2 negative. Beauty, light and order of the world are conceptualised as a self-evident good.

Secondly, the core value concepts of the domain are Hedonism (z = +20.18), Stimulation (z = +23.29) as realisations of sensory pleasure and radiance and Universalism (z = +10.72) as a background value of cosmic order. Thus, beauty has a dual nature in Old English: it is pleasure and order at the same time, aesthetic perception and cosmological cognition. The value concept Power is also considerably represented in the domain.

Thirdly, the domain is lexicalised by the epithets of light and beauty beorht, fæger, and wlitig, which in the Old English period remain only sensory-aesthetic without the moral component of meaning. Fourthly, beauty in the domain has a double nature – sensory pleasure (HED/STIM) and a sign of the ordered creation (UNIV) – so that aesthetic perception is at once enjoyment and cosmological cognition.

Finally, in contrast with the religious and gnomic domains, the aesthetic-cosmological one is the only pole with an exclusively positive character in the axiological typology of Old English, sharing Universalism with the religious domain as a common background.

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