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Manuela Caterina Moroni* and Ermenegildo Bidese

A modal account of syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* in contemporary German

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Abstract: This study aims to account for the German expression *von wegen* (literally ‘of ways’) when used outside of the sentence structure. Drawing on corpus data for written and spoken German, we show that there are two types of syntactically non-integrated *von wegen*: (i) illustrating/exemplifying *von wegen* and, (ii) opposing *von wegen*. By combining both a formal and a functional perspective, we claim that these two types can be analyzed as modal expressions. In fact, from a formal point of view based on Werner Abraham’s classification in lexical and grammatical forms of modality, both illustrating/exemplifying and opposing *von wegen* encode a quotative/evidential meaning, whereas only the second type expresses an epistemic modal value. Nevertheless, *von wegen* does not belong to the prototypical forms of modality described by Abraham as it does not occupy a structural position within the sentence and therefore does not fall into any of the classes proposed by Abraham. For this reason, we also need to integrate the formal perspective with a functional one by defining modality not only structurally but also semantically. In doing so, we account for the modality of *von wegen* in that we assume the existence of a third strategy of modalization that is specific to syntactically non-integrated expressions and operates at the discourse level.

Keywords: modality; quotative marker; evidentiality; epistemicity; formalism; functionalism

For the formal definition of scholarly responsibility, as required by the Italian academic system, we declare that Manuela Caterina Moroni is responsible for Sections 1, 2, and 4, and Ermenegildo Bidese for Sections 3, 5, and 6.

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1 Introduction

In contemporary German, *von wegen* (literally ‘of ways’), as a causal adposition, has restricted use, and typically appears either as a preposition in formal and literary texts (1) or as a circumposition in phraseological collocations, for example in legal documents (2):

(1) *Ich auf genagelten Stiefeln, von wegen des Schwemmkieses*
 I on nailed boots of because the.GEN alluvial.gravel.GEN
 ‘I was wearing hobnailed boots because of the alluvial gravel.’
 (dwds.de; Mann, *Herr u. Hund*, 9,581)

(2) *In den nachstehenden Fällen endet der Arbeitsvertrag von*
 in the following cases ends the contract of
Rechts wegen:
 laW.GEN because
 ‘In the following cases, the employment contract shall end by operation of the law.’
 (dwds.de)

As a non-prepositional element, *von wegen* is syntactically non-integrated and has a quotative function (see Bückler 2008: 26). It can illustrate a previous utterance like *Und bitte keine Ausreden* in (3), exemplifying this with a reference to prototypical claims, which refer to common knowledge or common state of affairs. Furthermore, in specific contexts, *von wegen* expresses the speaker’s negative assessment¹ of the reported content, as in (4):

(3) *Und bitte keine Ausreden von wegen* “*ich weiss auch nicht immer alles, was an der Türe passiert*”.
 ‘Please don’t make excuses like “I don’t always know what’s going on at the door”.’
 (*St. Galler Tagblatt*, 27.09.1999; cited from Bückler 2008: 2)

¹ For the purposes of the present paper, we use the terms “negative assessment” and “disagreement” interchangeably. Nevertheless, they emphasize two different aspects of the same phenomenon. With the term “assessment”, we capitalize on Abraham’s modality theory (see Section 3 below), assuming that modality can be described as the expression of different types of speaker’s assessment. By extending the category of modality to *von wegen*, we claim that this expression also encodes a modal evaluation. The term “disagreement”, on the other hand, refers to the pragmatic effect conveyed by *von wegen* at the functional level.

- (4) *Nur die Innerrhödler können feiern? Von wegen!*
 ‘Only the Innerrhödler can celebrate? No way!’
 (St. Galler Tagblatt, 04.09.2000; cited from Bucker 2008: 2)

When used as a non-prepositional and syntactically non-integrated item, see (3) and (4), *von wegen* does not have a causal meaning but seems to convey a modal value. Syntactically non-integrated expressions do not traditionally belong to the linguistic expressions of modality, and thus pose a crucial challenge to grammar theory. In what follows, we argue that both a formal and a functional approach can help in grasping the linguistic nature of elements like *von wegen*. By formalism in modality research, we understand structural descriptions such as Abraham’s (2020), which focuses on hierarchical relations between grammaticalized and structurally integrated categories, such as modal verbs and modal adverbs (see Axel-Tober and Gergel 2016 and also Narrog 2009: 7). By adopting a functional view, we take the semantics of modality as a starting point for our analysis. This allows us to extend the notion of modality to syntactically non-integrated forms, which have so far been neglected (see Aijmer 2016: 496–497). Expressions like *von wegen*, which are outside the sentence structure, belong to those forms; their modality crucially operates at the discourse level. In the present paper, we intend to investigate the use of *von wegen* as a non-canonical modal expression and show how it can fit into the formal account by Abraham (2020), thus helping to refine our understanding of modality in language. Furthermore, our aim is to shed light on how modality can be expressed differently depending on the context, speech activities and text types (cf. Aijmer 2016; Newmeyer 2010, 2017).

Our contribution is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a general overview of the different usages of *von wegen*, both as an adposition and as a syntactically non-integrated item, based on previous research and lexicographic resources. In addition, historical data are discussed and related to *von wegen* in present-day German. In Section 3, we introduce Abraham’s (2020) theory of modality; we also clarify our understanding of evidentiality as a dimension of modality for the present study. In a further step (Section 4), data from written and spoken German are presented and discussed with the aim of proposing a general account of *von wegen*. In Section 5, we explore the question of how our description of *von wegen* can be integrated into Abraham’s theory. Finally, we propose the hypothesis that a theory of modality also needs to take syntactically non-integrated items such as *von wegen* into account. In contrast to prototypical modal expressions, the modal value of *von wegen* is pragmatic in nature, because it is triggered by the information structural environment in which *von wegen* is embedded (Section 6).

2 State of the art and objectives

2.1 Prepositional *von wegen*

According to lexicographic resources (dwds.de, dudn.de), the adposition *von wegen* can have two different meanings. The first is typically causal. In this case, *von wegen* appears either as a preposition, cf. (1) above, here repeated as (5), or as a circumposition, cf. (2) above, here repeated as (6). In both sentences, it takes the genitive case.

- (5) *Ich auf genagelten Stiefeln, von wegen des Schwemmkiesses*
 I on nailed boots of because the.GEN alluvial.gravel.GEN
 ‘I was wearing hobnailed boots because of the alluvial gravel.’
 (dwds.de; Mann, *Herr u. Hund*, 9,581)

- (6) *In den nachstehenden Fällen endet der Arbeitsvertrag von Rechts wegen:*
 in the following cases ends the contract of
 law.GEN because
 ‘In the following cases, the employment contract shall end by operation of the law.’
 (dwds.de)

In its second meaning, *von wegen* is a preposition of pertinence, very similar to *betreffend* ‘regarding’ or *bezüglich* ‘concerning’, as in (7):

- (7) *Ich rufe dich von wegen der Sache an*
 I call you of because the.GEN thing PRT
 ‘I am calling about that thing’
 (duden.de, item “wegen”)

Diachronically, *wegen* in *von wegen* is the dative plural of the Middle High German *wec* (see Modern German *Weg*, ‘street’, ‘path’), which, in Middle German/Middle Low German, can also refer to ‘place’, ‘spot’, ‘side’ (dwds.de). According to Vernaleken (1861: 249), the forms *von ... wegen* (circumposition) and *von wegen* (preposition) were used in the chancellery language of the German Empire with the meaning ‘on behalf of’, as in (8):

- (8) [...] *Solchs alles versprechen wir aufrichtig zu halten, darwider nichts zu thun gestatten. Friedrich herzog zu Sachsen etc. persönlich. Von wegen des erzbischofs zu Cöln, Johann von Reichenstein. Von wegen des erzherzogs v. Osterreich, Heinrich graf zu Hardeck. Von der prelaten wegen: Johann apt von Salmanßweiler von sein selbs wegen.*

‘We sincerely promise to keep all this and to not allow anything to be done against it. Friedrich duke of Saxony etc. personally. On behalf of the archbishop of Cologne Johann von Reichenstein. On behalf of the archduke of Austria, Heinrich count of Hardeck. On behalf of the prelates: Johann abbot of Salmanßweiler on behalf of himself.’

(Vernaleken 1861: 249–250)

In addition, *von wegen* can be found in historical legal texts with the meaning ‘with regard to’, as in (9), which is taken from a conciliar protocol from Bozen (today South Tyrol in Italy) drawn up in 1472. In this text, different provisions are listed, and *von wegen* is used at the beginning of a new paragraph to introduce a new provision.

- (9) *Dann von wegen des artzt ist furgenom(en) mit ratt mitsambt dem zusatz Sigmund Rom(er), Anthoni Mynig [...]*

*Dann von wegen des wassers runst, der nit gerawmbt sey, [...]*²

‘Then with regard to the medical officer, it is decided by the council together with the associated councilors Sigmund Rom(er), Anthoni Mynig [...]

Then with regard to the water channel that is not cleared, [...]

In a recent study, Bückner (2022: 320–321) has shown that both these usages of *von wegen* are attested from the 13th century onwards. Furthermore, he also provides an example of *von wegen* with a causal meaning (see also Vernaleken 1861: 249) going back to same period, cf. (10):

- (10) *f1 ift von beiden fvon götlich/vnd einmvtlich verzigen auf allen den fauf al der von def Chrieges wegen/biz auf difen tac hivte ift gifchehen*

‘so both sides amicably and consensually waive the compensation for the damage that has been done till this day due to the war’

(1284, *Corpus der altdeutschen Originalurkunden II*, Doc. No. 673, lines 19–20; cf. Wilhelm and Newald 1943: 86; and see Bückner 2022: 320)

² Conciliar protocol (*Ratsprotokoll*), 27.02.1472, <https://stadtarchiv-archivistorico.gemeinde.bozen.it/bohista/archivio/manoscritto/dettaglio/506-von-wegen-des-artzt-provision-und-gehorsam-a-von-wegen-des-wassers-undter-der-cappellen-trinitatis-zu-raewmen-b-von-den-die-an-der-uneee-sitzen-c> (accessed 14.03.2024).

To summarize, in German historical texts, *von wegen* means either ‘due to’, ‘on behalf of’, or ‘with regard to’. In contemporary German, prepositional uses of *von wegen* with a causal meaning, as in (5) and (6) above, appear to be related to the historical use illustrated in (8), ‘on behalf of’, and coexist as marginal forms together with the more common causal preposition *wegen*. According to Di Meola (2003: 210), the causal preposition *wegen* “is derived from the discontinuous prepositional phrase *von ... wegen* ‘on the part of’, with the loss of the preposition *von* ‘from’”. Instead, Bücken (2022: 320, Footnote 7, 2023: 406) argues that prepositional *wegen* could possibly be derived from the complex preposition *von wegen* due to the drop of *von*, and not necessarily from the circumposition. According to Bücken (2023: 406), *von wegen*, in turn, loses its productivity from the 17th through to the 19th century, and undergoes a reanalysis process, acquiring a quotative value or becoming an interjection (see below, Section 2.2).

2.2 Syntactically non-integrated (non-prepositional) *von wegen*

As already mentioned above (cf. Section 1), present-day German also has extensive use of non-prepositional *von wegen*, which is outside of the sentence structure. This syntactically non-integrated use of *von wegen* was first investigated by Bücken (2008, 2013, 2022, 2023), who classified it as a “quotative *von wegen*”, semantically connected with the old preposition of pertinence (see Bücken 2022: 321). In this case, *von wegen* is no longer a preposition, because it does not govern a phrase but introduces or refers to reported speech or to common knowledge. Two examples are presented in (11) and (12), taken from Bücken’s works:

- (11) *und ich hab da auch angerufen, von wegen, hören Sie mal, was soll das hier? Wie fangen Sie eigentlich Ihre Kunden? Hab ich gesagt, ne?*
 ‘and I called to say, like listen, what’s that supposed to mean? How are you trying to catch your customers? (That’s what) I said, right?’
 (Audio-Datenbank *lAuDa*; cited from Bücken 2008: 17–18)
- (12) **Von wegen** uralter Brauch: Der Adventskranz ist nach Überzeugung der wissenschaftlichen Volkskunde ein Paradebeispiel für falsche Vorstellungen rund um Bräuche.
 (Frankfurter Rundschau, 27.11.1999; cited from Bücken 2008: 21)
 ‘So much for ancient custom: according to the science of folklore, the Advent wreath is a prime example of misconceptions about customs.’

Example (11) is taken from a long narrative sequence in which the speaker restages a dialogue using *von wegen* to introduce a fictive example of what he actually said as

direct speech. In (12), *von wegen* introduces a quotation (*uralter Brauch* ‘ancient custom’) that refers to the common assumption that Advent wreaths go back to an ancient tradition. At the same time, *von wegen* indicates that the writer distances him/herself from the utterance and its meaning. In both examples, *von wegen* introduces reported speech and is syntactically non-integrated (see Bücken 2008).

Furthermore, the Duden Online Dictionary documents another use of the isolated *von wegen*, namely, as a substandard expression for *auf keinen Fall*, meaning ‘no way’. This usage is illustrated by example (4) above, repeated here as (13):

- (13) *Nur die Innerrhödler können feiern? Von wegen!*
 ‘Only the Innerrhödler can celebrate? No way!’
 (St. Galler Tagblatt, 04.09.2000; cited from Bücken 2008: 2)

In (13), *von wegen* also refers to an utterance (*Nur die Innerrhödler können feiern?*), thus characterizing this as a quotation, but here, unlike in (11), it constitutes a speech act in itself, expressing disagreement with respect to a supposed characteristic of the inhabitants of Innerrhoden in Switzerland. Bücken (2022, 2023) classifies *von wegen* in examples like (11) as a special kind of adverbial connective that introduces a quotation (Bücken 2023: 392–393) and in examples like (12) and (13) as an interjection which expresses the speaker’s distance or disagreement. According to this analysis, the interjection developed from *von wegen* as prepositional head without complement (see Bücken 2022).

In light of this variation, our aim is twofold:

- (i) to classify the different uses of syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* by drawing on corpus data of written and spoken German and
- (ii) to understand how *von wegen* can be explained by combining Abraham’s formal notion of modality with a functional/semantic perspective on it.

3 Abraham’s theory of modality

In line with Abraham (2020), we understand linguistic modality to be a universal semanto-pragmatic competence, which allows human beings to express an evaluation of a proposition by providing information about (i) its source and/or (ii) the speaker’s assessment of it. Evaluations about the source of a proposition usually pertain to the category of evidentiality, whereas those about the speaker’s assessment are considered to belong to the category of epistemicity.

As pointed out in the previous section, *von wegen* can (i) introduce reported speech, cf. (11), or (ii) refer to quotations, cf. examples (12) and (13). In both these cases, it refers to an external source of information and can thus be classified as an evidential marker. In linguistics, evidentiality is understood as a semantic-functional

domain which indicates that what the speaker is referring to is grounded in a specific source or piece of evidence (see Diewald and Smirnova 2010: 1). Prototypical high-grammaticalized evidential systems can be found in non-Indo-European languages, including, for instance, Tariana, cf. (14), a language of the Arawak family spoken in Amazonia (see Aikhenvald 2003), and Wanka Quechua, cf. (15), spoken in Peru.³

- (14) a. *Juse irida di-manika -ka*
 José football 3SGNF-play -REC.P.VIS
- b. *Juse irida di-manika -mahnka*
 José football 3SGNF-play -REC.P.NVIS
- c. *Juse irida di-manika -nihka*
 José football 3SGNF-play -REC.P.INFR
- d. *Juse irida di-manika -sika*
 José football 3SGNF-play -REC.P.ASSUM
- e. *Juse irida di-manika -pidaka*
 José football 3SGNF-play -REC.P.REP
 ‘José has played football (we saw it/we heard it/we infer from visual evidence/we infer this on the basis of what we already know/we were told)’
 (see Aikhenvald 2004: 2–3)
- (15) a. *Chay-cruu-mi achka wamla-pis walashr-pis alma-ku-lkaa-ña*
 this-LOC-DIR.EV many girl-too boy-too bathe-REFL-IMPF.PL-NARR.PAST
 ‘Many girls and boys were swimming (I saw them)’
 (Aikhenvald 2004: 43, see also Floyd 1999: 48)
- b. *Daañu pawa-shra-si ka-ya-n-**chr**-ari*
 field finish-PART-EVEN be-IMPF-3-INFR-EMPH
 ‘It (the field) might be completely destroyed (I infer)’
 (Aikhenvald 2004: 43, see also Floyd 1999: 48)
- c. *Acha-p-shi wa’a-chi-nki wamla-a-ta*
 too.much-GEN-REP cry-CAUS-2 girl-1.POSS-ACC
 ‘You make my daughter cry too much (they tell me)’
 (see Aikhenvald 2004: 43, see also Floyd 1999: 48)

As can be seen in (14) and (15), prototypical evidential markers encode the way in which the speaker has access to the proposition (= *p*) (see also Plungian 2010: 17). In

³ Grammatical labels used in (14) and (15): ACC = accusative, ASSUM = assumed, CAUS = causative, DIR = directive, EMPH = emphasis, EV = evidential, EVEN = eventive, GEN = genitive, IMPF = imperfective, INFR = inferred, LOC = locative, NARR = narrative, NVIS = non-visual, P = past, PART = participle, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, REC = reciprocal, REFL = reflexive, REP = reported, SGNF = singular non-feminine, VIS = visual.

contrast, reportive elements like the German verb *sollen* (see below, Table 1) and syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* refer to the source of *p*, indicating that it is different from the speaker, but without specifying its type. For this reason, *von wegen* does not represent a “proper evidential marker” in itself but needs to be regarded as an “evidentiality strategy” (see Anderson 1986: 289; Squartini 2008: 219; see also Aikhenvald 2003), which may have developed through an extension of the core meaning of the original preposition of pertinence.

Even though the modal status of evidentiality is still controversial in research (see, among others, Auwera and Plungian 1998: 86), in what follows, we classify modal linguistic expressions on the basis of evidentiality and epistemicity, as the two major dimensions of modality. In particular, we draw on Abraham’s (2020) classification of the types of modality expressions in German, which we summarize in Table 1.

Two main types of modality expression are described in Table 1, namely lexical and grammatical. In Abraham’s approach, they correspond to two different types of displacement/shifting from the speaker’s perspective, that is, his/her natural *origo* (i.e., the here and now), in Bühler’s (1934) sense. Lexical modality expressions are modal adverbs such as *offensichtlich* ‘obviously/as it can be seen’ and *vermutlich/*

Table 1: Types of modality expressions according to Abraham (2020: 65–69).

| | Modality expressions | Examples | Source of <i>p</i> (evidentiality) | Speaker’s assessment of <i>p</i> (epistemicity) |
|-------------|---|---|---|--|
| Lexical | <i>offensichtlich</i> ‘obviously’, ‘as it can be seen’ | Haider ist offensichtlich betrunken gewesen ‘Haider was obviously drunk’ | + | – |
| | <i>vermutlich/wahrscheinlich</i> ‘probably’ | Haider ist vermutlich/wahrscheinlich betrunken gewesen ‘Haider was presumably drunk’ | – | + |
| Grammatical | <i>sollen</i> ‘to be said to’ | Haider soll betrunken gewesen sein ‘Haider is said to have been drunk’ | + | + |
| | <i>ja</i> ‘as we know’ | Haider ist ja betrunken gewesen ‘Haider was drunk, as we know’ | + | ++ |

wahrscheinlich ‘presumably’. They can encode either the source of the information (such as *offensichtlich*) or the speaker’s own assessment (as in the case of *vermutlich/wahrscheinlich*). In the case of *offensichtlich*, the source of the proposition is characterized as available, that is inferable, while no speaker evaluation is expressed. Conversely, the epistemic adverbs *vermutlich* and *wahrscheinlich* express the speaker’s point of view regarding the truth of the proposition, without providing any information about its source or the evidence to support it. In summary, *offensichtlich* indicates evidential modality, while *wahrscheinlich* and *vermutlich* convey epistemic meaning. In both cases, the modal adverbs unfold a simple displacement from the *origo*.

In contrast, grammatical modality expressions, such as modal verbs and modal particles, are semantically more complex in that they operate at both the evidential and the epistemic level. For example, the modal verb *sollen* in *Haider soll betrunken gewesen sein* ‘Haider is said to have been drunk’ indicates that the source of the proposition is the context, not the speaker, and that the speaker evaluates the truth value by relying on an external source. As a result, *sollen* instantiates a reportive function. In this sense, epistemic modal verbs such as *sollen* denote a double displacement from the speaker’s *origo*, “one according to the source of *p*, and another one according to the speaker’s assessment of *p*” (Abraham 2020: 67). Finally, modal particles are semantically even more complex than modal verbs because they also refer to the addressee’s perspective regarding the proposition *p*. For example, the modal particle *ja* in *Haider ist ja betrunken gewesen* ‘Haider was drunk, as we know’ invites the addressee to compare his/her knowledge about *p* to that of the speaker (see Abraham 2020: 222).

As shown previously in Section 2, cf. examples (11), (12) and (13), *von wegen* mainly refers to a quotation, and thus operates at the evidential level. As a result, it is semantically connected to evidential adverbs such as *offensichtlich* and the reportive modal verb *sollen*, according to Abraham’s classification. In contrast to these modal expressions, however, *von wegen* is syntactically non-integrated. Syntactically non-integrated elements such as *von wegen* have traditionally been neglected in research into the category of modality (see among others Abraham 2009, 2020; Dietrich 1992; Kratzer 1981; Portner 2009) for two reasons. In the first place, due to their syntactic disintegration, they do not operate at a propositional level but rather at the level of discourse, and secondly, their semantics (pertinence in the case of *von wegen*) is not properly connected in itself to the typical core modal meanings such as necessity/possibility and epistemicity. This is the reason why *von wegen* does not usually play a role in theories of modality such as that of Abraham (2020). As will become clear below, *von wegen* conveys epistemicity not in itself but in interaction with its information structural context. In the following section, we present a corpus analysis, based on which we will attempt to integrate *von wegen* into Abraham’s model.

4 Corpus data, analysis, and classification

Our data are derived from FOLK (*Forschungs- und Lehrkorpus Gesprochenes Deutsch* ‘Research and Teaching Corpus of Spoken German’), which is the largest digital corpus of contemporary spoken German, and from DeReKo (*Deutsches Referenzkorpus* ‘German Reference Corpus’), which is the largest digital corpus of written German. We analyzed all the occurrences of *von wegen* appearing in the conversations in FOLK (86 occurrences) and 100 occurrences in DeReKo taken from the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.⁴ All these occurrences are examples of non-prepositional, syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* and can be classified into two main types: (i) exemplifying/illustrating and (ii) opposing *von wegen*. This distinction is based on a semanto-pragmatic criterion, that is, the kind of relation present between *von wegen* and its context: whether it just introduces a quotation/common knowledge, or whether it also expresses disagreement regarding the quotation/common knowledge. In addition, the two main types of *von wegen* also differ in their information structural status and their role in the information flow, as we will show in this section. The two types of *von wegen* are also distributed differently in the written and spoken data.

4.1 Syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* in spoken and written data

In the spoken data, we observed that *von wegen* was mainly (75 out of 86 cases) used to introduce information that illustrates/exemplifies what has previously been said. This information can be encoded in terms of utterances that involve three different levels of syntactic complexity:

- (i) *von wegen* + XP without case and determiner, cf. (16),
- (ii) *von wegen* + subordinate clause, cf. (17), and
- (iii) *von wegen* + dialogic sequence, cf. (18).

- (16) RG: *Ja, ich glaub, ich muss mich hier eh'en bisschen äh WÄRmer AUSstatten so von wegen äh MÜtze und WEIß ja nich*
 ‘Yes, I think, I need to dress kind of a bit warmer, with a cap or I don’t know’

4 In our view, 100 occurrences are sufficient to detect how *von wegen* is used in journalistic texts. A more extensive data set does not seem to lead to further insights since other random samples from DeReKo show a similar tendency. Furthermore, we decided to rely on data taken from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* since this is one of the most important newspapers in Germany and its language can be considered representative of today’s Standard German.

- CS: *ja, is schon Unterschied glaub ich da von der Rheinebene und dann da hoch nach Berlin, des glaub ich schon echt en Temperatursturz also da is schon meistens glaub ich zehn Grad kälter als bei uns oder fünf mindestens*
 ‘well, I think there’s a difference from the Rhine plain and then up there to Berlin, I think it’s a real drop in temperature, so I think it’s usually ten degrees colder there than here, or five at least’
 (FOLK_E_00392 Telefongespräch)⁵
- (17) RW: *Soll ich die Sabine oder der Matze anrufen ähm von wegen dass ma einfach am Montag SCHLÜSselübergabe machen?*
 ‘Should I call Sabine or Matze, um, about simply handing over the keys on Monday?’
 TI: *äh ja, am Montag, na na ja, geht ja wahrscheinlich net anders*
 ‘well, ok, on Monday, there is probably no other way’
 (FOLK_E_00119 Tischgespräch)
- (18) AM: *Damit kann ich mich einfach nich äh anfreunden, nein, aber des sind einfach so die Voraussetzungen so irgendwie die bei euch da ganz anders sind, [...]*
Ich meine, einfach diese EINStellung dazu, von wegen: Wir zeigen dir, was du MACHen musst, und wir geben dir total die GeSETze vor, und wir erwarten, dass du dein ganzes Geld da REIN investierst
 ‘I just can’t get to grips with that, no, but that’s just the way the conditions are, which are completely different for you, [...]
 I mean, just that attitude sort of/like, we’ll show you what to do, and we’ll totally lay down the law for you, and we expect you to put all your money into it’
 (FOLK_E_00047 Tischgespräch)

In example (16), the speaker illustrates the fact that she needs to dress more warmly after moving from the Rhineland to Berlin; she mentions *Mütze* ‘cap’ as an example of warm clothing and adds the expression *weiß ja nich* ‘I don’t know’ to refer to other warm clothing in general (see Bergmann 2017: 148–149).⁶ *Mütze* is preceded by *von*

⁵ The examples taken from FOLK are reproduced in literary transcription for better readability, and not following the FOLK transcription conventions. In the *von wegen* utterances we mark accented syllables with capital letters.

⁶ Following Bergmann (2017), we argue that this expression marks the previous utterance containing *Mütze* as pragmatically irrelevant, in the sense that it should be taken as one example among others, since other warm clothing is possible.

wegen and constitutes a bare noun without any case marking. In this case *von wegen* introduces *Mütze* marking it as a quotation from common knowledge.

With regard to (17), *von wegen* illustrates what the speaker might say to Sabine or Matze with regard to handing over the keys. In this case, *von wegen* precedes a subordinate clause that exemplifies possible general statements in such a context. Example (18) stems from a long sequence in which the speaker criticizes the behavior of a private university (*Damit kann ich mich einfach nicht äh anfreunden* ‘I just can’t get to grips with that’). To reinforce her criticism, she gives an example of the typical attitude of private universities by reporting a fictional dialogue sequence that illustrates this kind of behavior. The exemplifying dialog sequence is crucially introduced by *von wegen*.

In (16)–(18), *von wegen* precedes information of differing syntactic complexity to exemplify a previous utterance and refers to an inferential meaning based on a common ground (see Squartini 2001). In fact, the majority of examples of illustrating *von wegen* occur with deictic expressions such as *diese Einstellung* ‘that attitude’ or pragmatic markers such as *weiß ja nich* ‘I don’t know’, which suggest that the information is to be taken as an example only since both speaker and addressee can understand what is meant drawing on their common knowledge.

All these usages of *von wegen* can be defined as exemplifying or illustrating *von wegen*. It predominates in the spoken data and is mainly (53 out of 75 cases) used to introduce dialogic sequences. It also appears in the written corpus, as in (19):

- (19) *Also habe ich ein Praktikum in einem kleinen, renommierten Hotel in Blankenese gemacht und in den zwei Monaten, die ich dort war, alle Bereiche kennengelernt. Auch in den Restaurants, die zum Hotel gehören, habe ich ausgeholfen, oft im Schichtdienst, manchmal bis zwei oder drei Uhr nachts. Das war anstrengend, aber es gab immer Leute, die einem den Rücken gestärkt haben. Die Gäste haben mich oft gelobt von wegen: Toll, dass du da bist, man merkt, dass du das mit Freude und einem Lächeln machst.*
 ‘So I did an internship in a small, well-known hotel in Blankenese and got to know all the different areas in the two months I was there. I also helped out in the restaurants that belong to the hotel, often working shifts, sometimes until two or three o’clock in the morning. It was exhausting, but there were always people who had your back. The guests often praised me, saying things like: it’s great that you are here, you can tell that you do it with joy and a smile.’
 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 08.03.2019, p. 23; *Mit einem Plan B fange ich gar nicht erst an*)

Example (19) stems from an interview with a young girl, who after graduating from high school started an apprenticeship in a hotel. In this case, *von wegen* introduces

examples of compliments that hotel guests pay to the girl (*Toll, dass du da bist, man merkt, dass du das mit Freude und einem Lächeln machst* ‘it’s great that you are here, everybody can see that you do it with joy and a smile’). According to this interpretation, (19) is an example of illustrating *von wegen*.

With regard to the written data, two other uses of *von wegen* prevail, which we subsume under the label “opposing *von wegen*”. As it will become clear later, the main difference between the two uses regards the position of *von wegen* with respect to the utterance it refers to. In the first case, *von wegen* precedes the utterance (cataphoric), in the second one it follows it (anaphoric). The first use of opposing *von wegen* is illustrated in (20) and occurs in 58 out of 100 cases:

- (20) **Von wegen gefällt mir.** *Facebook steht derzeit wegen eines Datenskandals unter gewaltigem Druck.*

‘So much for liking it. Facebook is currently under tremendous pressure because of a data scandal.’

(*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23.03.2018, p. 16; *Facebook: Wie das Netzwerk seine Nutzer schützen will und welche Möglichkeiten sie selbst haben*)

Von wegen characterizes the following utterance, *gefällt mir* (literally, ‘I like it’), as being common knowledge. In fact, *gefällt mir* refers to the use of ‘likes’ on the social network site Facebook. From an information structural point of view, *gefällt mir* is an aboutness-shift topic (in the sense of Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007), as it introduces a new topic. In addition, *von wegen* signals that the writer distances him/herself from the utterance and its positive meaning. What follows, namely the reference to the data scandal concerning Facebook, explains why the speaker/writer distances him/herself from the expression introduced by *von wegen*, and assesses it negatively.

The second type of opposing *von wegen* encodes a negative assessment of the previous utterance, which is typically a question. This pattern is usually found in journalistic texts, especially in headlines and leads and cannot be regarded as typical of German everyday conversation. In our sample from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, we found 36 out of 100 occurrences of this pattern. An example is presented in (21):

- (21) *Alles gut also in der Währungsunion? Von wegen! Griechenland drücken noch immer hohe Schulden.*

‘So, all is well in the monetary union? No way! Greece still has a lot of debt.’
(*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24.05.2018, p. 15; *Euro*)

In (21), *von wegen* expresses a negative assessment of the preceding question, ‘So, all is well in the monetary union?’. The same holds true for the case in (22), which is derived from our spoken corpus.

- (22) PA: *Der Ischiasnerv, des was Ekliges, sag ich euch [...] Es tut richtig weh und du kannst, weißt, dann denkst du, du legst dich hin, dann ist es en bissle entspannt, dann tut es vielleicht nimmer so weh. Von wegen! [...] Das war wirklich unangenehm.*
 ‘The sciatic nerve, it sucks, I tell you [...] It really hurts and then, you know, you think you can lie down, then it’s a bit relaxed, then maybe it doesn’t hurt so much. No way! [...] That was really unpleasant.’
 (FOLK_E_0006 Gartengespräch unter Freunden)

Similarly to (21), *von wegen* here also refers to a preceding utterance, in which the speaker reports a common opinion, “if you lie down and relax you are going to feel better”, by distancing himself from it. In examples (21) and (22), not only does *von wegen* constitute a speech act in itself, but it also builds a focus-phrase, which refers to a topic that is retrievable from the preceding context.

4.2 Analysis

In what follows, we systematize our results by relating them to their information structure on the one hand and to prosody on the other. Drawing on our spoken data, we observe that opposing *von wegen* in occurrences like (22) always bears a pitch accent on the syllable *we-*, as can be seen in Figure 1, where the fundamental frequency displays a clear pitch accent in correspondence with *von wegen*.⁷

Examples such as (20) above (*Von wegen gefällt mir* ‘So much for liking it’) are attested just once (23) in the spoken data of FOLK:⁸

- (23) KA: *Von WEgen wir horten.*
 ‘So much for hoarding.’
 (FOLK_E_00132 Spielinteraktion zwischen Erwachsenen)

Extract (23) is part of a conversation in which the participants are playing the board game “Thurn und Taxis”. The aim of the game is to build postal routes connecting the highest number of cities. To do this, the players must collect city cards. Participant KA plays together with a friend (AM) against two other friends (JA and PA). At an earlier point in the game/conversation, JA complains that KA and AM are collecting (German *horten*) a lot of city cards and will probably win. However, later on in the game, JA

⁷ We found six further examples of this pattern in FOLK. In all these cases, the pitch accent seems to fall on *we-* in *von wegen*. However, this observation is based only on hearing, and cannot be verified with *Praat* because *von wegen* overlaps with another participant’s conversational turn.

⁸ For a more extensive description of this extract, see Bückler (2022: 317–319). Bückler also takes *von wegen* in the extract to be accented.

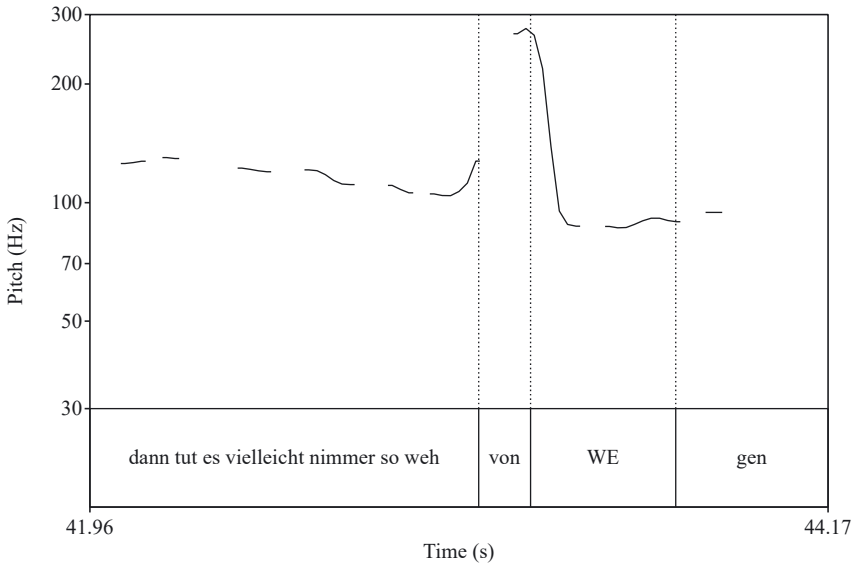


Figure 1: Praat graphic of the fundamental frequency of example (22).

and PA gain more points than expected. In reaction to this, KA refers back to JAs claim that he and his mate AM were collecting many cards (*Ihr hortet!*) and expresses his disagreement. Unfortunately, *von wegen* in (23) overlaps with the following comment by participant AM, meaning that we could not verify the presence of a pitch accent on *we-* in *von wegen*. Nevertheless, it seems plausible to us that *von wegen* also bears the focus accent of the utterance. Although a prosodic analysis of the written examples cannot be carried out, we can still observe that the written data display the same information structure as (23) with *von wegen* introducing an aboutness-shift topic, as shown in (20), repeated here as (24):

- (24) ***Von wegen*** gefällt mir. Facebook steht derzeit wegen eines Datenskandals unter gewaltigem Druck.
 ‘So much for liking it. Facebook is currently under tremendous pressure because of a data scandal.’
 (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23.03.2018, p. 16; Facebook: *Wie das Netzwerk seine Nutzer schützen will und welche Möglichkeiten sie selbst haben*)

In (24), the negative assessment conveyed by *von wegen* constitutes the informational focus, whereas *gefällt mir* belongs to the background of the information since it is part of the common knowledge and has a quotative nature. Thus, structures like (21), (22), (23) and (24) can be regarded as variants of the same information structure, with *von wegen* constituting the focus phrase. The only difference is that in the one case

the topic precedes the focus, while in the other it follows it, as schematically represented in (25):

- (25) Variants of *von wegen* as a focus phrase
- a. Examples (21)–(22) Topic [*Von wegen!*]_{Focus}
 - b. Example (23)–(24) [*Von wegen*]_{Focus} Topic

If we compare these results with the occurrences of exemplifying/illustrating *von wegen* in the spoken data, we can observe that *von wegen* displays a flat contour and is always part of the background of the information, cf. (17) above, reproduced here as (26). (26) is taken from a conversation about the participants moving to a new flat. In this context, the handing-over of the keys can be regarded as part of the common knowledge.

- (26) *Soll ich die Sabine oder der Matze anrufen ähm von wegen dass ma einfach am Montag SCHLÜsselübergabe machen?*
 ‘Should I call Sabine or Matze, um, about simply handing over the keys on Monday?’
 (FOLK_E_00119 Tischgespräch)

In this case, *von wegen* introduces a piece of information, which is characterized as belonging to the common knowledge of the participants. Figure 2 shows the fundamental frequency contour of the utterance in (26), in which *von wegen* is part of a flat segment. This kind of prosodic embedding is in line with the results in Bücken (2008) about those occurrences of *von wegen* that introduce dialogic sequences/reported speech. In these cases, the focus accent is assigned within the following utterance introduced by *von wegen*.⁹

4.3 Summary and interim conclusions

To summarize, there are two main types of syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* in our data: the exemplifying/illustrating *von wegen*, which introduces an utterance illustrating something previously stated, and an opposing *von wegen*, which can either precede or follow the utterance about which it is expressing disagreement. As described above, these two uses of *von wegen* are distributed differently in our spoken and written data. Exemplifying/illustrating *von wegen* dominates in spoken data from FOLK, whereas opposing *von wegen* is mostly used in written journalistic texts. It needs to be pointed out, however, that our sample of written data cannot be

⁹ Even though the pitch contour in Figure 2 has been smoothed in Praat, there still seems to be a miscalculation in correspondence with *Schlüsselübergabe*. This is due to the fact that the FOLK audio data is taken from spontaneous conversations, which can lead to unclear results. However, what is important here is the contour in correspondence with *von wegen*, which is undoubtedly flat.

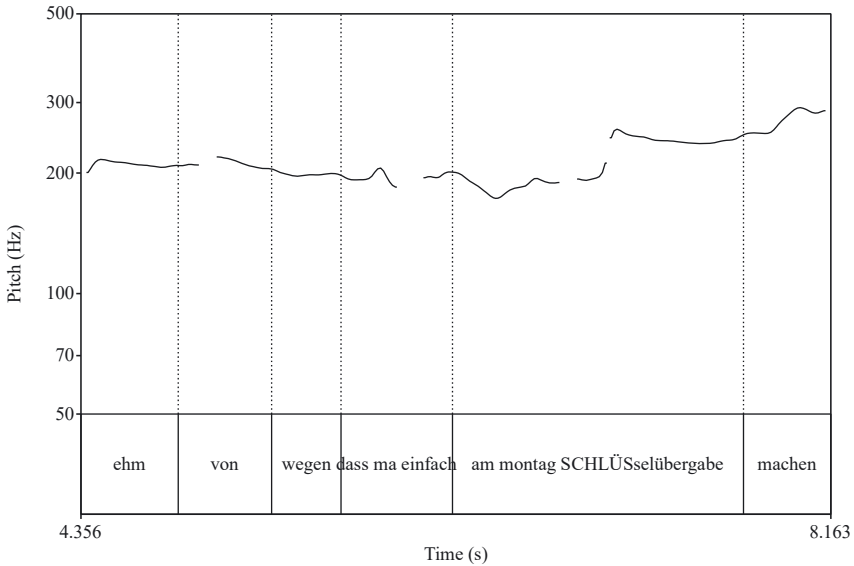


Figure 2: Praat graphic of the fundamental frequency of example (26).

regarded as fully representative of standard written German, as it is taken from a specific text genre (journal article and headlines/leads). In this respect, the analysis of more data from other text types would be relevant.

Table 2 gives a detailed overview of the distribution of our occurrences.

Exemplifying/illustrating and opposing *von wegen* differ with regard to both (i) their information structural status and (ii) their role in Abraham's theory of modality. As for (i), we have shown that exemplifying/illustrating *von wegen* is always part of the background and refers to common knowledge. In contrast, opposing *von wegen* constitutes a focus phrase and refers to a preceding or following informational topic.¹⁰ However, more spoken data, especially for examples like (23), needs to be collected and analyzed to corroborate our analysis.

10 Like the present paper, Bucker (2022) proposed an analysis of opposing *von wegen* that also takes information structure into account. Furthermore, he pointed out that *von wegen* expresses disagreement and can be embedded in two different structures, which correspond to our examples in (20) and (21)/(22), respectively. According to Bucker (2022), opposing *von wegen* is nowadays an interjection that goes back to a former hanging topic. Our variants (25a) and (25b) are described in Bucker (2022: 319) as (i) *von wegen* followed by a counterclaim that reinforces and explains the disagreement and (ii) *von wegen* followed by "a quotative index that reestablishes a preceding speech act *von wegen* is reacting to". In our view, both analyses are compatible. However, we also consider the utterance(s) preceding *von wegen* in Bucker's variant (i), which we take to be a topic.

Table 2: Number of occurrences of *von wegen* types in spoken and written data.

| | Exemplifying/illustrating <i>von wegen</i> | | | Opposing <i>von wegen</i> (<i>von wegen</i> as a focus phrase) | | | Sum |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-------|---------------------------------------|-----|
| | <i>von wegen</i> + XP without case and determiner | <i>wegen</i> + subordinate clause | <i>von wegen</i> + dialogic sequence | [<i>Von wegen</i>] _{Focus} topic | Topic | [<i>Von wegen</i>] _{Focus} | |
| FOLK (spoken data) | 18 | 4 | 53 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 86 |
| <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> (written data) | 2 | 0 | 4 | 58 | 36 | 0 | 100 |

With regard to (ii), the relationship of *von wegen* to Abraham's theory of modality, both types of *von wegen* express a reference to a source of *p* that constitutes evidentiality. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the two types: while the exemplifying/illustrating *von wegen* introduces constituents/utterances of differing complexity without encoding any assessment by the speaker, the opposing *von wegen* expresses the speaker's negative assessment. This means that the illustrating/exemplifying *von wegen* does not encode any epistemic meaning, whereas the opposing *von wegen* does.

Table 3 provides an overview of the different types of *von wegen* in our data.

Table 3: Types of syntactically non-integrated *von wegen* and their modal content.

| Subtypes | Text/discourse structure Reference | Information structure Focus phrase | Modality | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| | | | Source of <i>p</i> (evidentiality) | Speaker's assessment of <i>p</i> (epistemicity) | |
| Exemplifying <i>von wegen</i> | (i) <i>von wegen</i> + XP | Cataphoric | – | + | – |
| | (ii) <i>von wegen</i> + sub. clause | | | | |
| | (iii) <i>von wegen</i> + dialogic sequence | | | | |
| Opposing <i>von wegen</i> | (i) <i>von wegen</i> + aboutness- shift topic | Cataphoric | + | + | + |
| | (ii) <i>von wegen</i> as speech act in itself | Anaphoric | + | + | + |

5 Discussion

As observed previously, two types of *von wegen* appear in our data. The first, the illustrating *von wegen*, introduces an example, which is characterized as a quotation. This type seems to recall the old use of *von wegen* with the meaning 'in regard to', as illustrated in the historical example in (9) (*Dann von wegn des artzt [...]. Dann von wegen des wassers runst*). With regard to its relationship to modality, it must be stressed that the exemplifying *von wegen* only expresses the availability of the

proposition, without any speaker's evaluation of it. With respect to Table 1, exemplifying *von wegen* only encodes a simple displacement from the natural *origo*.

In contrast, opposing *von wegen* is semantically more complex because it assesses a proposition negatively and thus conveys a judgment about its truth. In contrast to the illustrating *von wegen*, which in our view – as already pointed out – traces back to the preposition of pertinence, the connection between opposing *von wegen* and the other types attested historically (meaning 'on behalf of', 'due to', or 'in regard to') seems obscure at first glance. In this respect Bückler (2022) argues that opposing *von wegen* goes back to recurring hanging topic usages of *von wegen* as a preposition of pertinence, which occurred in negative reactions to prior utterances. One example in point is (27) from Bückler (2022: 328, ex. [12]):¹¹

- (27) *Aber von wegen der XXXII [Kronen, J.B.] solden, so dem hauptman sollen noch uszstan, daran tragend wir dhein schuld, dann wir haben alle monat unnserer XI. [Kronen, J.B.] sold abgericht, daran nut uffgeschlagen.*
 'But regarding the XXXII [Kronen, J.B.] pay that are to be due to the bailiff, we are not responsible for this as we delivered our XI. [Kronen, J.B.] pay completely every month, did not delay in that.'
 (1532, *Geschichte der Basler Reformation VI*, Doc. No. 202, lines 22–25; cf. Roth 1950: 161)

In (27), *von wegen* is used as a preposition of pertinence meaning 'regarding' and has an NP with a relative clause as a complement (*der XXXII [Kronen, J.B.] solden, so dem hauptman sollen noch uszstan*). It is a hanging topic (cf. Altmann 1981 and more recently Catasso 2022), that is, in German, a constituent (i) that is placed in the outer area of the left periphery of a sentence that is not affected by word-order restrictions such as V2 (cf. Catasso 2022: 12 and the works cited therein) and (ii) that is resumed by an element (in [27], *daran* 'for this') within the sentence.

After the *von wegen* hanging topic, which refers to a previously mentioned speech act (in [27], the request of the bailiff of Zurich to receive payments from Basel), a reaction of disagreement follows. Bückler (2022) maintains that through reanalysis, the negative meaning conveyed by the sentence following the hanging topic diachronically became part of *von wegen* itself. In addition, reanalysis also led to the removal of the restriction of *von wegen* to case-marked noun phrases, and finally to the possibility of using *von wegen* in isolation. According to Bückler (2022: 329), an accent on *von wegen* must have occurred very frequently as a typical feature of emphatic challenges to a prior speech act, meaning that it must have been reanalyzed as an inherent feature of *von wegen*. Thus, in Bückler's account, the accent derives

11 "J.B." in the example stands for Jörg Bückler himself.

from the role of the *von wegen* utterance in historical texts as an emphatic reaction, whereas the negative assessment comes from the recurring contexts of use.

In our view, an alternative account is possible according to which the negative assessment (i.e., the epistemic interpretation of *von wegen*) might be triggered by the presence of the focus accent and the status of *von wegen* as a focus phrase (cf. Figure 1), which never appear with the illustrating *von wegen* (cf. Figure 2). The accentuation of the functional element *von wegen* focalizes its basic meaning, namely ‘pertinence’/‘exemplification’, and characterizes it as a contrastive focus. In fact, the proposition introduced or followed by *von wegen* is revealed to be inappropriate in the given context. Through the focalization of *von wegen*, the speaker marks the proposition to which *von wegen* refers as being in contrast to the context. Let us now illustrate how the opposing *von wegen* operates by reconsidering example (20), reproduced here as (28), in contrast to (19), reproduced here as (29):

- (28) **[Von wegen]_{Focus}** *gefällt mir. Facebook steht derzeit wegen eines Datenskandals unter gewaltigem Druck.*
 ‘So much for liking it. Facebook is currently under tremendous pressure because of a data scandal.’
 (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23.03.2018, p. 16; *Facebook: Wie das Netzwerk seine Nutzer schützen will und welche Möglichkeiten sie selbst haben*)
- (29) *Also habe ich ein Praktikum in einem kleinen, renommierten Hotel in Blankenese gemacht und in den zwei Monaten, die ich dort war, alle Bereiche kennengelernt. Auch in den Restaurants, die zum Hotel gehören, habe ich ausgeholfen, oft im Schichtdienst, manchmal bis zwei oder drei Uhr nachts. Das war anstrengend, aber es gab immer Leute, die einem den Rücken gestärkt haben. Die Gäste haben mich oft gelobt **von wegen**: Toll, dass du da bist, man merkt, dass du das mit Freude und einem Lächeln machst.*
 ‘So I did an internship in a small, well-known hotel in Blankenese and got to know all the different areas in the two months I was there. I also helped out in the restaurants that belong to the hotel, often working shifts, sometimes until two or three o’clock in the morning. It was exhausting, but there were always people who had your back. The guests often praised me, saying things like: it’s great that you are here, you can tell that you do it with joy and a smile.’
 (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 08.03.2019, p. 9; *Mit einem Plan B fange ich gar nicht erst an*)

In contrast to (29), *von wegen* in (28) is a focus. Since it is a function word, it does not have any focus projection (see Uhmann 1991: 197–198) and establishes a narrow contrastive focus. According to current theories, focalization activates a set of

contextually given or retrievable alternatives (see Rooth 1992). As a focus, *von wegen* is marked as an unexpected choice among many other possible function words. The unexpectedness is interpreted as a negative assessment of the following utterance (in [28], *gefällt mir*). In many cases, the reason for the negative assessment can be made explicit through an explanation, such as *Facebook steht derzeit wegen eines Daten-skandals unter gewaltigem Druck* ‘Facebook is currently under tremendous pressure because of a data scandal’, as in (28). By comparing (28) and (29), it becomes clear that the negative assessment, that is, the epistemic value of *von wegen*, emerges due to an information structural factor (focalization), and is therefore pragmatic in nature.

The anaphoric opposing *von wegen* can also be analyzed in the same way as the cataphoric usage in (28). Let us reconsider example (22), repeated here as (30):

- (30) PA: *Der Ischiasnerv, des was Ekliges, sag ich euch [...] Es tut richtig weh und du kannst, weißt, dann denkst du, du legst dich hin, dann ist es en bissle entspannt, dann tut es vielleicht nimmer so weh. Von wegen! [...] Das war wirklich unangenehm.*
 ‘The sciatic nerve, it sucks, I tell you [...] It really hurts and then, you know, you think you can lie down, then it’s a bit relaxed, then maybe it doesn’t hurt so much. No way! [...] That was really unpleasant.’
 (FOLK_E_0006 Gartengespräch unter Freunden)

As in (28), *von wegen* also constitutes a focus phrase, triggering a negative assessment. Unlike (28), the utterance to which the negative assessment refers precedes *von wegen* in (30) (*dann denkst du, du legst dich hin, dann ist es en bissle entspannt, dann tut es vielleicht nimmer so weh* ‘and then, you know, you think you can lie down, then it’s a bit relaxed, then maybe it doesn’t hurt so much’).

To summarize, the epistemic *von wegen* always constitutes a focus phrase and encodes a negative assessment. In the first case, cf. example (28), it is cataphoric in that it modalizes the following utterance. In the other situation, cf. example (30), it is anaphoric in that it modalizes the preceding utterance.

In conclusion, our analysis reveals that opposing *von wegen* displays all the semantic dimensions of the grammatical modal expressions of German, namely modal verbs and modal particles (see Table 1 above), as it encodes both the source of *p* (quotation shared/inferable knowledge) and the speaker’s assessment.¹² Thus, opposing *von wegen*, like all grammatical modality expressions in Abraham’s model, denotes a double displacement from the natural *origo* by conveying two meanings: a quotative/evidential meaning and an epistemic one. However, unlike the other

¹² Whether *von wegen* displays the same modal complexity as modal particles, which also encode the hearer’s perspective, remains an open question, which we cannot deal with in the present contribution.

modality expressions (both lexical and grammatical), *von wegen* is a syntactically non-integrated element, which can be cataphoric or anaphoric.

In light of its syntactic disintegration, *von wegen* has some features in common with discourse markers, such as, for instance, German *ja* ‘yes’ and *äh* ‘uh’ at the beginning of a turn, or prepositional phrases like *zum Beispiel* ‘for example’ (see Blühdorn et al. 2017). While discourse markers typically encode procedural meanings (see Heine 2013) in that they contribute to the organization of the discourse (i.e., the interaction between speakers), modality expressions convey information about the speakers’ attitude regarding the proposition *p*. In view of the examples illustrated in this paper, we hold that *von wegen* should not be considered as a discourse marker, but rather as a modality expression, albeit not a prototypical one.

6 Conclusion

As a last remark, we would like to clarify to what extent we can capture the modal nature of *von wegen* by drawing on both a formal and a functional perspective, in the sense illustrated in the introduction (see Section 1). Through our analysis, we were able to show that both perspectives are needed in order to account for the complexity of modality. From a formal perspective, modality is rooted in the sentence structure and in a system of grammaticalized expressions, like that described by Abraham (2020; see also Axel-Tober and Gergel 2016). By adopting a functional perspective, we took as a starting point the semantics of modality, showing that modal meanings can also be conveyed by syntactically non-integrated items like *von wegen* in interaction with the information structure and pragmatic factors. This allows us to integrate the classification of modality expressions as sentence-internal lexical and grammatical items by suggesting the existence of a third strategy of modalization that operates at the discourse level. Moreover, the functional perspective makes it possible to discover how the two modal uses of *von wegen* are exploited differently depending on the type of communicative situation and the text genre. In this respect, we observed that exemplifying *von wegen* is typical of spoken interaction, while opposing *von wegen* seems to be used more in journalistic texts.

By exploiting the original meaning of pertinence, *von wegen* developed into two modal expressions: (a) exemplifying *von wegen*, which serves as a quotative and expresses evidential modality (simple displacement), and (b) opposing *von wegen*, which expresses both evidentiality and epistemicity (double displacement). From our perspective, it is the status of *von wegen* as a focus phrase that triggers the activation of possible alternatives with regard to the conventional meaning of the proposition, thus giving rise to a modality strategy. As to when and how this strategy

arose in the history of German, this remains, in our view (but see Bücker 2022), a matter of debate and needs to be further investigated in future research.

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