

# Chapter 10

## Burning down the phrase and heating up the head: The interjectionalization of German *von wegen*

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While bare prepositional heads usually do not develop into interjections in German, the interjection *von wegen* is an exception, it traces back to the complex preposition *von wegen*. In this paper it will be shown that *von wegen* arose substantially from dialogic language use as a verbal means to reestablish prior speech acts in order to react to them. While its semantic and pragmatic development followed the common diachronic path from a descriptive meaning to a text-/discourse-structuring and affect-/stance-related meaning, its structural development was less usual since it involved the structural reduction of an exocentric phrase to its head. This paper suggests that some aspects of this change might be addressed as head-status change, head-category change and head-feature change.

### 1 Introduction

In German, lexicalization of complete PPs is a common outcome of linguistic change, cf. entrenched PPs such as *zum Beispiel* ‘for example’, *auf gut Glück* ‘happily’, *vor Freude* ‘for joy’ and *zwar* ‘indeed, admittedly’<sup>1</sup> as some random examples. The lexicalization of PPs can also lead to de- and recategorization as an interjection, cf. deprepositional interjections such as *um Himmels willen* ‘good heavens’, *in Dreiteufels Namen* ‘in three devils’ name’, *bei Gott* ‘by Jove!’, *am*

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<sup>1</sup>*Zwar* is a fused and decategorized descendant of *ze wāre* ‘for real’ (cf. Kluge 2002: 1020).



*Arsch* ‘my ass’, *zum Kuckuck* ‘dash it!’ and *fürwahr* ‘forsooth!’<sup>2</sup>. Following Fries’ (1992, 2002) approach of interjections as heads of interjection phrases (INT<sup>0</sup>, INTP), this pathway of “interjectionalization” (“Interjektionalisierung”, Nübling 2001) can be reconstructed in terms of PP > INT<sup>0</sup> (see also Ehlich 1986, Reisigl 1999, Nübling 2004 on interjections).

At first sight, only full-fledged PPs with nominal complements (preferably from specific lexical domains, e.g., sacral and profane nouns) seem to be qualified to be reanalyzed as interjections in German. The reanalysis of prepositional heads alone in terms of P<sup>0</sup> > INT<sup>0</sup> seems to be blocked instead. However, even though the path PP > INT<sup>0</sup> is certainly much more common in German, there is at least one remarkable exception that reflects a development along the path P<sup>0</sup> > INT<sup>0</sup>: The present-day German interjection *von wegen* ‘my foot’ did not arise from a full PP but traces back to the Early Modern High German prepositional head *von wegen*. In this paper, I will look at the forms and functions of present-day German *von wegen* in spoken data in Section 2 before reconstructing the diachronic steps of its development in Section 3 and arriving at some observations and considerations on why a development along the path P<sup>0</sup> > INT<sup>0</sup> is less frequent in German in comparison to the alternative path PP > INT<sup>0</sup> in Section 4.

In particular, it will be argued that the reanalytic steps leading to the emergence of *von wegen* arose essentially from peculiarities of dialogic language use such as the necessity to reestablish accessible speech acts in order to react to them. Accordingly, this study is substantially based on examples from dialogic contexts.<sup>3</sup> The present-day *von wegen* examples are taken from the “Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch (DGD)” (‘Database for spoken German’) and are transcribed according to GAT 2 conventions (cf. Selting et al. 2009).

The historical examples come from the “Corpus der altdeutschen Originalurkunden bis zum Jahr 1300” (‘Corpus of Old German Original Charters up to the year 1300’, 13th century, mainly Central and Upper German)<sup>4</sup> and from Early Modern High German letters. The examples from letters in this study are primarily taken from “Actenstücke und Briefe zur Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg im Zeitalter Maximilian’s I” (‘Records and Letters Pertaining to the History of the House of Habsburg in the Age of Maximilian I’, 15th century, Upper German) and from “Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation in den Jahren 1519 bis Anfang 1534” (‘Collection of Records Pertaining to the History of the Basel

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<sup>2</sup>*Fürwahr* traces back to the Middle High German PP *vür wār/vür wāre* ‘for real’ (cf. Grimm & Grimm 1878: 927).

<sup>3</sup>Methodologically, the study is qualitative.

<sup>4</sup>It contains the oldest instances of the circumposition *von – wegen*.

Reformation in the Years 1519 until Early 1534', 16th century, Upper German), but the study is also based on an analysis of examples from the corpus "Frühneuzeitliche Fürstinnenkorrespondenzen im mitteldeutschen Raum" ('Early Modern Correspondences of Princesses in Central Germany', 16th – 18th centuries, Middle German) and from letters by Hildebrand Veckinchusen (15th century, Low German). All examples mentioned in this paper will contain references to the corpus or edition they are taken from.

## 2 The present-day German interjection *von wegen*

The present-day spoken German interjection *von wegen* is a common emphatic expression of disagreement.<sup>5</sup> The following example shows this use:<sup>6</sup>

(1) *Von wegen* as an interjection in spoken German (DGD, FOLK\_E\_00132)

- |       |         |   |
|-------|---------|---|
| 1     | JA:     | [einfach keine schönen Möglichkeiten,<br>'simply no nice possibilities'       |
| 2     |         | was zu MACHen.]<br>'to do something'  |
| 3     | AM, KA: | [((giggle)) ]   |
| 4     | PA:     | verHÖkere sie [an andere spieler (weiter). ]<br>'sell them to other players'  |
| 5     | AM:     | [ja weil WIR die ganzen (kart hent)?]<br>'yeah because we have all the cards' |
| 6     | AM:     | [((giggles)) ]  |
| 7     | → JA:   | [ja weil ihr HORTet.]<br>'yeah because you're hoarding'                       |
| 8     | AM:     | <<smile voice> ja,><br>'yes'  |
| [...] |         |   |
| 88    | AM:     | [wo::w. ]   |
| 89    | ?:      | [((claps her/his hands one time))]  |
| 90    | KA:     | [((laughs)) ]   |

<sup>5</sup>Note that present-day German *von wegen* can also be used to initiate direct speech in terms of a conversational "reporting frame" (cf. Bückler 2009, 2013, see also Androutsopoulos 1998: 307–310). Since the reporting frame *von wegen* is the outcome of a diachronic path of development in its own right (cf. Bückler 2022), this paper will restrict itself to the diachronic emergence of the disagreeing *von wegen*.

<sup>6</sup>For the sake of simplicity, the line numbering of the transcripts in this section starts with 1.

- 91 JA: nicht SCHLECHT.  
'not bad'
- 92 → KA: **von !WE!gen.=**  
'so much for'/'my foot'
- 93 → [=*wir* HORTen?]  
'we're hoarding'
- 94 AM: [triUMPH. ]  
'victory'
- 95 AM: triUMPH. ((laughs))  
'victory'

This extract is taken from a conversation between four friends who are playing the board game “Thurn und Taxis”. In the game, JA and PA on the one hand and KA and AM on the other are both trying to build up the most comprehensive network of post offices in a 17th century Germany setting. In the first segment of the extract (lines 1–8), JA complains that his possibilities to improve his situation in the game are restricted because AM and KA are “hoarding” (cf. line 7) a large number of city cards which are necessary to establish postal routes. About 50 seconds later, AM and KA make use of their city cards in order to finish a lengthy postal route (cf. the second segment of the extract, lines 88–95), and JA has to concede that this achievement was not bad at all (cf. line 91). In reaction to JA’s concession, KA reestablishes JA’s “hoarding” claim in line 7 in order to reject it by means of the emphatically stressed *von wégen* (cf. lines 92–93), whereas AM expresses her enthusiasm for the victory points they just gained (cf. 94–95).

In example (1), *von wégen* can be translated either as ‘so much for’ or as ‘my foot (eye, ass, ...)', ‘my foot’ probably being the better translation as *von wégen* clearly expresses disagreement. In example (2), *von wégen* is again used as an expression of disagreement, but this time it can only be translated as ‘my foot (eye, ass, ...)’:

(2) *Von wégen* as an interjection in spoken German (DGD, FOLK\_E\_00255)

- 1 → AG: jetzt geht der schöne winter (0.2) dem [ENde zu.]  
'now the beautiful winter is coming to an end'
- 2 BS: [hm:: ]
- 3 (0.4)
- 4 AG: HEUT ist [er pampig- ]  
'today he's snotty'
- 5 → PD: [von !WE!gen.]  
'my foot'

- 6 → PD: es wird noch [KÄLter wieder.]  
 ‘it will get even colder again’
- 7 BS: [also es ist ] GLATT im (.) bei uns in der;  
 ‘well it is icy in the – at our place in the’

Example (2) is an extract from a “coffee klatch” conversation between four women. The extract starts with AG claiming that the winter weather is about to come to an end (line 1). Since her conversational partners do not take over the turn after that (cf. the pause in line 3), AG tries to carry on with another topic (cf. line 4). PD, however, interrupts AG by means of an emphatically stressed *von wégen* and a counterclaim to her assumption of the winter weather ending (cf. lines 5–6). This keeps the focus on the weather topic for the subsequent turn (cf. line 7).

At first sight, the *von wégen* instances in example (1) and example (2) look very similar: Prosodically, *von wégen* has a strong emphatic accent on the trochee *wégen*; semantically, *von wégen* expresses disagreement with a prior claim by one of the addressees; syntactically, *von wégen* occupies an independent position right in front of a subsequent syntactic unit; functionally, *von wégen* has substantial weight as an action in its own right, it expresses a full-fledged challenge of a prior claim.

However, the sequential context and the relationship between *von wégen* and the subsequent utterance are actually quite different in the two examples:

- In example (1), *von wégen* expresses disagreement concerning a prior claim that is accessible but not contextually active anymore. Against this background, the subsequent *wir horten* ‘we’re hoarding’ serves as a quotative index that reestablishes a preceding speech act *von wégen* is reacting to.
- In example (2), *von wégen* expresses disagreement concerning a prior claim that is both accessible and contextually active. Against this background, the subsequent *es wird noch kälter wieder* ‘it will get even colder again’ is not a quotative index but a counterclaim reinforcing *von wégen* and making the propositional content of the disagreement explicit. This is the reason why *von wégen* cannot be translated as ‘so much for’ in (2).

The difference between the utterances immediately following *von wégen* in examples (1) and (2) is not only a matter of pragmatics but also a matter of syntactic positioning. Note that quotative indexes and counterclaims can easily combine after *von wégen*, but in such cases, the quotative index (e.g., *der Winter endet* ‘the winter weather ends’) has to precede the counterclaim (e.g. *es wird noch kälter wieder* ‘it will get even colder again’), cf. *von wégen der Winter endet, es wird noch*

*kälter wieder* ‘my foot the winter weather ends, it will get even colder again’. This is also reflected on the prosodic level: Just like in example (1), quotative complex anaphors tend to follow *von wegen* fast (“latching”) or are even a part of its intonation phrase. Counterclaims, in contrast, are usually separated from adjacent *von wegen* intonation phrases more clearly (cf. example (2) without “latching”).

In the next section, it will be shown from a diachronic point of view that the pragmatic relationship between *von wegen* and subsequent quotative indexes is a reanalyzed remnant of a former syntactic relationship between *von wegen* as a prepositional head  $P^0$  and its complement, while the pragmatic relationship between *von wegen* and subsequent counterclaims is a reanalyzed remnant of a former syntactic relationship between hanging topic instances of *von wegen* PPs and their subsequent host clauses.

### 3 The diachronic interjectionalization of *von wegen*

#### 3.1 The rise of prepositional *von wegen* in Early Modern High German

The complex preposition *von wegen* is syntactically derived from the circumposition *von – wegen* in terms of a linearization change beginning in the 14th century.<sup>7</sup> The change from *von – wegen* to *von wegen* did not affect the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of *von – wegen* but maintained them for the most part.<sup>8</sup> In the 13th century, *von – wegen* PPs were predominantly used as one of the following three adjunct types:

- (3) Causal adjunct (1284, Corpus der altdeutschen Originalurkunden II, Doc. No. 673, lines 19–20; cf. Wilhelm & Newald 1943: 86):

fo ift von beiden fiten gvtlich / vnd einmvtlich verzigen auf allen den  
fchaden 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*’

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<sup>7</sup>The earliest instances of *von wegen* can be explained both by an influence of the well-known positional shift of attributive nouns from pre- to postposition (cf. Demske 2001: 215–231 and Nübling et al. 2013: 100–101, among others) and by syntactic adaption to the prototypical head-initial pattern of German prepositions. See Paul (1995: 106–120), Bloomfield (1933: 404–124) and Becker (1990: 14ff) on analogy formation in language change.

<sup>8</sup>Structural and semantic changes that set the preposition *von wegen* apart from the circumposition *von – wegen* happened later.

- (4) Modal adjunct establishing a person or institution from whose side or under whose authority the action being expressed in the host clause proposition is carried out (1286, Corpus der altdeutschen Originalurkunden II, Doc. No. 841, lines 21–23; cf. Wilhelm & Newald 1943: 192):

dat men en geenrehande scade fal doen noch mit roue - noch mit brande - noch in geenre maniren - *uan des hertogen Wegen* - noch *uan unfer wegen* ‘that one shall not do any damage, neither with robbery nor with pillage nor in any other way, *on behalf/the part of the Duke or on our behalf/part*’

- (5) Domain adjunct establishing a domain of conceptual content with regard to which the validity of the host clause proposition is restricted (1297, Corpus der altdeutschen Originalurkunden IV, Doc. No. 2687, lines 34–36; cf. de Boor & Haacke 1963: 78):

vnde [wir, J.B.] verzihen vnf / vúr vnf / vnde vúr alle vnfere nahkomen / allef def rehtes / daz wir hatten an demme vorgeantent hove / *von der felben vorgeantent fúnzehen fchefol koren geltes wegen*

‘and [we, J.B.] abandon every of our and our descendants’ rights that we had on the estate mentioned above *regarding those above-mentioned fifteen bushels’ corn rent*’

The domain adjunct use (example (5)) is of particular importance for this study because it can be assumed to be the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic starting point of the diachronic development towards *von wegen* as an interjection of disagreement (see Subsections 3.2 and 3.3).

### 3.2 The increasing scope of *von wegen* in Early Modern High German

While the circumposition *von – wegen* dates back to the first half of the 13th century, the complex preposition *von wegen* emerges in the mid-14th century and becomes productive in the 15th century. This study assumes the restrictive *von wegen* to be the starting point of its diachronic development towards the disagreeing interjection *von wegen*. Let’s start with an Early Modern High German instance of *von wegen* as a head of a restrictive domain adjunct that looks quite similar to 13th century examples such as (5) – it provides a conceptual point of reference with regard to which the action or state being expressed in the proposition is restricted (example (6) is taken from a letter by Heinrich of Puchheim to the court chancellery of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I):

- (6) Restrictive prepositional domain adjunct with propositional scope (1477, Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg II, Doc. No. 116; cf. Chmel 1968a: 304):  
Als dann sein k. gnad *von wegen des umgeltz zu Liechtmwerd* ausrichtung und raittung begert, nun hab ich meinen brief und urkunnd damit ich sein k. gnad desselben handdels unterrichtung mocht yetz nicht bey hanndn  
'As then his Imperial Highness is asking for a notification and accounting regarding the dues of *Lichtenwerd*, as a matter of fact, I don't have my record and document at hand by which I intended to inform his royal grace about this business'

In example (6), the proposition of the host clause is restricted to all contextually relevant matters that relate to "the dues of *Lichtenwerd*", and the subsequent clause is oriented towards this restriction (cf. *desselben handdels* 'this business'). Just like in example (5), the grammatical shape of the complement of *von wegen* indicates accessibility (cf. the definite article *des* in *des umgeltz zu Liechtmwerd*). This is because (6) is part of a reply to a preceding letter by the court chancellery of Maximilian I that included the following passage:

- (7) Context of example (6) (1477, Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg II, Doc. No. 15; cf. Chmel 1968a: 302):  
Item so sol er [= Heinrich of Puchheim, J.B.] seinen kaiserlichen gnaden ierleich von ungelt zu Liechttenwerde 8 pfunt pfenning geben die er lanngzeit nit geraicht hat, begert sein kaiserlich gnad daz er dauon raittung tu und was er mit raittung dauon schuldig wirdet daz er das seinen kaiserlichen gnaden ausrichtte und gebe.  
'Item he [= Heinrich of Puchheim, J.B.] is obliged to give his Imperial Highness 8 pound of pfennigs of the dues of *Lichtenwerd* each year which he has not been doing for a long time now, his Imperial Highness asks that he gives an account hereof, and about what he is owing according to the account, he shall inform his Imperial Highness and give it to him.'

Example (6) and its context (7) show us the following:

- The restrictive *von wegen* can recycle linguistic material from the preceding verbal context in its complement position (cf. *ungelt zu Liechttenwerde* in example (7) and the repetition *umgeltz zu Liechtmwerd* in example (6)).
- The recycling can be done to identify an accessible speech act in the context (cf. the request by the court chancellery of Maximilian I in example (7)) in order to prepare a reaction to it (cf. the answer to the request by Heinrich of Puchheim in example (6)).



With regard to the addressee of example (6) (i.e., the court chancellery of Maximilian I), the prior speech act in (7) can be assumed to be accessible, but not active for three reasons. First, an exchange of letters is a temporally “stretched” way to communicate, i.e. the letter with the request and the letter with the answer follow each other with significant delay. Second, a reply to a big court chancellery has to take into consideration that the chancellery is concerned with a multitude of different issues and thus needs hints to the specific background of the reply. Third, the two letters do not only consist of the request and the answer that are cited in (6) and (7). They also deal with other topics and issues.

For these reasons, the request for the account has to be reactivated before it can be answered. This is achieved by the host clause of the *von wegen* PP, but not by the *von wegen* PP itself – note that the *was*-clause does not yet express a reaction but only prepares it, while the subsequent claim starting with *nun hab ich meinen brief und urkund* [...] is the reaction. Obviously, the *von wegen* PP does not establish its syntactic host as a speech act reacting to a preceding speech act but just modifies it with propositional scope in terms of a domain adjunct.

While the *von wegen* PP in (6) clearly has a propositional scope, the following example shows that specific contexts can allow for an interpretation of *von wegen* either with propositional scope or with speech act scope (cf. example (8) from a synopsis of a letter from the Styrian administrative district to the court chancellery of Maximilian I):

- (8) Restrictive propositional domain adjunct with ambiguous scope (1479, Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg III, Doc. No. 144; cf. Chmel 1968b: 331):

Item *von wegen der lehen* ist der lanndschaft antwurtt, daz sy getrawn seinen k. g. trew und gewerttig allzeit gewesen, und sich gehalten als die trewn unndertanen und auch lehenslewt.

‘Item *regarding the fiefdom* is the answer of the district, that they have always been loyal and subservient to his Imperial Highness and acted like loyal subjects and vassals as well.’

The answer that is referred to in this synopsis was a reaction to a prior inquiry by Maximilian I (cf. (9)):

- (9) Context of example (8) (1479, Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg III, Doc. No. 144; cf. Chmel 1968b: 330):

Und wolt sein k. gnad gern ain wissen von in [= the residents of the Styrian administrative district, J.B.] haben, was die dienst wern, die sy seinen k. gnaden von der lehen wegen zu tun schuldig sein.

‘And his Imperial Highness would like to know from them [= the residents of the Styrian administrative district, J.B.] what the services were that they owe his Imperial Highness regarding the fiefdom.’

Just like in (6) and (7), the *von wegen* PP in (8) recycles linguistic material from a relevant part of the context (cf. example (9)) in its complement position as a part of a relationship between an accessible prior speech act (a request) and a corresponding reaction (an answer). However, there are at least two important differences. First, the restrictive *von wegen* PP in (8) occupies the front field of its host clause and is preceded by the topic-changing Latin particle *item*. Second, the host clause of the *von wegen* PP in (8) is a reaction to the reactivated speech act. This is regularly the case with combinations of *von wegen* PPs with host clause matrix predicates denoting a verbal or mental activity that is or at least could be a reaction to a prior speech act (e.g., verbs of speaking or thinking and related constructions).

Taken together, this leads to ambiguity because *von wegen* can now be interpreted as providing a restrictive point of reference either for the host clause proposition (= [F [*von wegen* NP [p]]]) or for the host clause as a full-fledged speech act (= [*von wegen* NP [F [p]]]).<sup>9</sup> The latter interpretation is supported by the front field position of the *von wegen* PP after *item* that establishes it as a wide-ranging part of the background.

Example (8) shows that the use of *von wegen* as a head of a restrictive domain adjunct results in scope ambiguities when (a) its complement contains linguistic material that appears to be recycled from a prior speech act and (b) its host clause shows features of a full-fledged reaction to this speech act. In this respect, examples such as (8) represent an important “critical context” (cf. Diewald 2002) in which a new interpretation of *von wegen* – an interpretation as a head of a restrictive domain adjunct with an increased speech act scope – becomes available and plausible, albeit not obligatory yet.

A crucial “isolating context” (Diewald 2002) in which *von wegen* can only be interpreted as a head of a domain adjunct with speech act scope is its use as a “hanging topic” in the sense of Altmann (1981). Example (10) from a letter to the mayor of Basel shows such a case:

- (10) Restrictive prepositional domain adjunct with speech act scope (1529, Geschichte der Basler Reformation IV, Doc. No. 36, lines 9–15; Roth 1941: 34):  
*Aber von wegen des Mertzen und anderer prediger munch, die sich zu Gebwyler und an andern orten inn unser verwaltigung enthalten sollen, des haben wir bitz auff das obgemelt ewer schreyben dheyn wussen gehept; [wir, J.B.] wussen auch noch nit, wa oder an welchen enden sich die*

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<sup>9</sup>“F” symbolizes the illocutionary force, “p” the propositional content of a given speech act (cf. Searle 1969: 31).

gemelten prediger inn unser verwaltung enthalten sollen. Das<sup>10</sup> aber der Mertz zû Gebwyler sein solle, das ist nit inn unser Verwaltung, deshalben wir uns auch desselben nit beladen.

‘But *regarding this Mertz and other preacher monks who are supposed to stay in Guebwiller and elsewhere in our district*, we had no knowledge of this up to your letter; [we, J.B.] also didn’t know where or in which parts the above-mentioned preachers are supposed to stay in our district. If this Mertz should be in Guebwiller, though, that is not within our district, therefore we will not deal with this issue.’

In example (10), the *aber*-prefaced *von wegen* PP reestablishes a request for administrative cooperation concerning the recovery of stolen goods in a prior letter (see *Geschichte der Basler Reformation IV*, Doc. No. 25, lines 40–27; cf. Roth 1941: 26–27)<sup>11</sup> in order to prepare its matrix clause as a reaction (= [*von wegen* NP [F [p]]]). An interpretation of *von wegen* with a narrow propositional scope over the subsequent clause (= [F [*von wegen* NP [p]]]) is not possible, in contrast. Example (10) also shows that the use of restrictive *von wegen* PPs as a hanging topic affects the referential characteristics of the complement: The NP *des Mertzzen und anderer prediger munch* [...] ‘this Mertz and other preacher monks [...]’ clearly contributes to the function of *von wegen* by means of its pragmatically established reference to a prior speech act in the context, not by means of its semantically established reference to a group of certain individuals. We should bear this in mind as it is important for the decategorization of the complement position of *von wegen* (see Subsection 3.3).

### 3.3 The isolation, decategorization and renewal of *von wegen* in Modern High German

The previous section has shown that in the 15th and 16th centuries, the restrictive *von wegen* underwent a scope extension and came to be used as a hanging topic in order to reestablish an accessible but inactive speech act for its host as

<sup>10</sup>The complementizer *dass* seems to be used conditionally here, which was possible in Early Modern High German (cf. Grimm & Grimm 1860: 821). If so, this would be an early instance of a so-called “relevance (speech act/utterance/pragmatic/biscuit) conditional” restricting not the propositional validity conditions of the matrix clause consequent but its relevance as a speech act in the given line of actions (e.g. Austin 1956, Sweetser 1990, Günthner 1999).

<sup>11</sup>Since the pragmatic operation of reactivating a speech act from a prior letter should have become obvious enough from the preceding examples, I will do without quoting the full context in the remainder of this paper.

a reaction to it. This already bears obvious resemblances to present-day German examples with *von wegen* reestablishing a non-adjacent prior speech act in order to challenge it (cf. example (1) on p. 317). However, there are still crucial differences between the Early Modern High German hanging topic *von wegen* on the one hand and present-day German *von wegen* as an emphatic interjection of disagreement on the other:

- The Early Modern High German preposition *von wegen* is restricted to case-governed NPs (e.g., *von wegen der lehen* ‘regarding the fiefdom’ in example (8)), while the present-day German interjection *von wegen* can be accompanied by linguistic material of any category (e.g., *von wegen wir horten* ‘my foot we’re hoarding’ in example (1)) and cannot assign a case to associated NPs anymore (NPs receive the nominative instead as a default case, cf. *von wegen tolles Wetter* versus \**von wegen tollem Wetter* or \**von wegen tollen Wetters*).
- The Early Modern High German preposition *von wegen* must come with a complement and a host clause, while the present-day German interjection *von wegen* is inherently independent of both (cf. the examples in Section 2).
- The Early Modern High German preposition *von wegen* establishes its host clause as a reaction to a preceding speech act, whereas the disagreeing interjection *von wegen* is a full-fledged reaction itself.

Obviously, we are still only halfway between the 14th century domain adjunct *von wegen* with propositional scope on the one hand and the present-day German interjection *von wegen* on the other. There are still some steps of change missing, in particular the structural loss of constraints on the prepositional complement position (up to the point where a complement position in a strict sense no longer exists) and the functional renewal as an emphatic expression of disagreement.

The loss of categorial constraints on the complement position was probably a result of its functional reduction to a quotative link to a preceding speech act when the *von wegen* PP occupied the pre-front field as a hanging topic. Since this function did not require the referential semantics of a noun, other linguistic items than nouns became possible as heads of the complement (cf. the following 18th century example):

- (11) Restrictive semi-prepositional domain adjunct with an AdvP as complement (Goethe 1887: 120–121):

Du hättest immer schweigen können, daß du drüben zu früh angekommen bist, es hilft uns nichts und ärgert uns nur; besonders den Horn, dem es

unaufhörlich im Kopfe liegt daß du nicht noch hinunter gegangen bist. Apropos *von wegen unten*. Der Hr. Langer ist der Mutter und Tochter ums Tohr begegnet [...]

‘You should have withheld that you arrived too early over there, it does not help us but just annoys us; especially Horn, who constantly wonders why you did not come downstairs. Apropos *regarding downstairs*. Mr. Langer met the mother and the daughter at the gate [...]

In example (11), *von wegen* takes the AdvP *unten* ‘downstairs’ as its complement. *Unten* refers back to the verb in the preceding clause as its antecedent (cf. the past participle of *hinuntergehen* ‘to go downstairs’), and *apropos von wegen unten* can be analyzed as a “modificative complex” (“modifikativer Komplex”, Zifonun et al. 1997: 1167–1172) with *apropos* as the head and *von wegen unten* as a restrictive modifier (= [*apropos [von wegen unten]*]).

Example (11) shows that in the 18th century at the latest, the complement position of *von wegen* had lost its categorial restriction to NPs. This implies a substantial decategorization of *von wegen*: Since it can take phrases of all categories as its complement, it is not a core member of the class of prepositions anymore. However, the loss of the categorial restriction to NPs does not lead to the interjection *von wegen* directly. It instead took some time until the non-prepositional use of *von wegen* became common enough to result in a complete categorial split between a case-assigning prepositional *von wegen* on the one hand and a non-prepositional *von wegen* on the other that could not assign a case anymore. In fact, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that *von wegen* was mentioned in grammars and dictionaries as an independent non-prepositional expression of disagreement. For example, the “hennebergisches Idiotikon” describes *von wegen* as a stand-alone reply accompanied by emphatic dissent, cf. *ja, von wegen! dabei walten noch ganz andere Gründe ob, sind noch ganz andere Dinge zu bedenken, wenn’s wahr ist! das geht so nicht! das ist so nicht gemeint (mein Lieber!)* ‘well, my foot! there are also completely different reasons and issues involved, if that is true! that is not ok! that is not what I meant (my dear fellow!)’ (cf. Spiesz 1881: 271–272). Similarly, Meyer (1880) and Brendicke (1897) mention a spirantized stand-alone *von wejen!* as a common part of the urban vernacular of Berlin (“Berlinish”).<sup>12</sup> The fact that *von wegen* not only leaves the class of prepositions but simultaneously enters the class of interjections has at least two reasons: Interjections tend to occupy a syntactic position in the left periphery of utterances (e.g. Nübling 2004: 31), and they can combine with ca-

<sup>12</sup>Cf. *Na von wejen –!* ‘well my foot’ (Meyer 1880: 89) and *von wejen! ach so! das ist nichts.* ‘my foot! I see! that is nothing.’ (Brendicke 1897: 190). See also Schlobinski (1998), Schönfeld & Schlobinski (1998), Freywald (2017) on “Berlinish”.

sus rectus-NPs (e.g., *Oh diese Philologen!* ‘Oh those philologists!’; see Fries 1992: 321–322).

The reanalysis of *von wegen* as an interjection cleared the formal way for the functional renewal of *von wegen* as a full-fledged marker of disagreement. The relevant context of this renewal was the recurring use of *von wegen* as a means to reestablish a prior speech act in order to challenge it by means of a disagreeing reaction. Such constellations already occurred in the Early Modern High German period (cf. example (12)):

- (12) Restrictive prepositional domain adjunct with speech act scope (1532, Geschichte der Basler Reformation VI, Doc. No. 202, lines 22–25; cf. Roth 1950: 161):

*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 völlig 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.’

Example (12) shows a prepositional hanging topic with *von wegen* reestablishing a prior claim that had been raised in order to challenge its validity in the subsequent host clause. It arose in reaction to an attempt of the bailiff (*Hauptmann*) of Zurich to gain remaining payments from Basel.

In contexts such as (12), it became possible to reanalyze the contextually emerging expression of disagreement as an inherent function of *von wegen*. However, the inability of *von wegen* as a preposition to express a full-fledged stance blocked this reanalysis, until the interjection *von wegen* emerged that was independent enough to be resemanticized towards a full-fledged expression of disagreement.

After *von wegen* was fully established as a disagreeing interjection without a complement position that had to be filled for grammatical reasons, it could be used without accompanying quotative material in direct reaction to a speech act that was still contextually active (cf. (2) on p. 318). This was important for the final step of the development – the lexicalization of the strong accent on the disagreeing interjection *von wegen*. As we have seen in Section 2, the present-day disagreeing *von wegen* only forms a prosodic unit with quotative material occupying its former complement position. If such material is missing, there is a more or less clear prosodic “caesura” (Auer 2010, Barth-Weingarten 2016) between *von wegen* and the subsequent part of the utterance – a caesura that is inherited from the prosodically independent hanging topic use of its (semi-)prepositional pre-

decessor *von wegen* in the left periphery of their syntactic hosts.<sup>13</sup> Against this background, the extra-strong accent on *von wegen* probably emerged as follows:

- When used as a direct reaction to a prior action, *von wegen* forms an intonation phrase with a clear caesura after *wegen* and the initial syllable of the trochee *wegen* as the lexically and syntactically fixed position for a prominent emphatic accent of the phrase.
- As direct challenges of a prior action tend to be emphatic by nature, the accent on *wegen* was consistently intensified and finally reanalyzed as an inherent prosodic feature of *von wegen* (in terms of *von wégen*).

Accordingly, the prosodically prominent *von wégen* can be assumed to be the most recent innovation within the development of *von wegen*. Given that the earliest instances of the semi-prepositional *von wegen* occurred in the second half of the 18th century and that the stand-alone disagreeing *von wégen* is mentioned for the first time in dictionaries of the second half of the 19th century, the reanalysis of *von wégen* probably took place at some point in the first half of the 19th century.

#### 4 Complexity of change as the reason why $P^0 > INT^0$ is less common than $PP > INT^0$ in German

We have seen in Section 3 that the emphatic disagreeing interjection *von wégen* is the result of four major reanalytic steps. The first step affected the Early Modern High German restrictive preposition *von wegen*, extended its scope, and made it possible to use its maximal projection as a hanging topic in the pre-front field. The second step removed the restriction to case-governed NPs as complements (= semi-prepositional *von wegen*), while the third step removed the complement position entirely (= non-prepositional *von wegen*), yielding an interjection that adopted the function to express disagreement from a recurrent context of use. The final step brought out the stressed *von wégen*.

This development clearly does not represent a case of grammaticalization in the traditional sense (“grammaticalization I”, Wischer 2000) as none of the reanalytic steps increase the “grammaticity” of the item they affect (e.g., by means of

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<sup>13</sup>Cf. Selting (1993) on the prosody of hanging topics in everyday spoken German. Even though we do not have direct access to prosodic features of written historical data, the assumption that hanging topics had a substantial degree of prosodic independence not only in present-day Modern High German but in Early Modern High German and in earlier stages of Modern High German as well does not seem to be too daring.

attrition, paradigmaticization, obligatorification, condensation, coalescence and fixation; cf. Lehmann 2015: 174).<sup>14</sup> Instead, the development can be related to two tendencies of semantic-pragmatic change discussed in Traugott & König (1991) that are brought about by metonymy (contextual contiguity) rather than metaphor:<sup>15</sup>

- The first two reanalytic steps yielded an item that no longer contributes to the host clause proposition but to coherence in terms of the dialogical well-placedness of the host clause as a speech act. This corresponds to Traugott & König's (1991: 208) "semantic-pragmatic tendency II": "Meanings based in the described external or internal situation > meanings based in the textual situation".
- The last two steps yielded an item that expresses affect and stance concerning a contextually accessible and relevant speech act. This corresponds to Traugott & König's (1991: 209) "semantic-pragmatic tendency III": "Meanings tend to become increasingly situated in the speaker's subjective belief-state/attitude toward the situation".

Accordingly, we can consider the semantic-pragmatic development of *von wegen* a case of change along the frequently discussed diachronic path "propositional/descriptive meaning > text-/discourse-structuring meaning > affect-/stance-related meaning". Of course, this does not mean that the diachronic emergence of *von wegen* is a purely semantic and pragmatic change. As we have seen above, it involves substantial changes of the status, category and features of *von wegen* as a head over time (cf. Subsections 3.2 and 3.3). In general, heads and headedness can change in three different ways:<sup>16</sup>

1. The grammatical status of a linguistic item changes either from head to non-head (e.g. phrase) or vice versa (= head-status change). Recently,

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<sup>14</sup>See also Norde (2012) on Lehmann's parameters. Hopper (1991, 1996) proposes five alternative parameters (or "principles") of grammaticalization (layering, divergence, specialization, persistence, de-categorialization), while Himmelmann (2004) criticizes the "box metaphor" lying behind many traditional structural approaches to grammaticalization and lexicalization.

<sup>15</sup>In former studies, Traugott distinguishes between "propositional", "textual" and "expressive" aspects of meaning (cf. Traugott 1982), while in more recent studies, Traugott prefers the cline "non-/less subjective > subjective > intersubjective" and holds that subjectification and intersubjectification as processes of linguistic change are inherently independent of grammaticalization (e.g., Traugott 2010; see also Brinton 1996: 57–59).

<sup>16</sup>See Zwicky (1985, 1993), Hudson (1987), Croft (1996) on the concept of headedness in linguistics. It is understood that the details of the three types of change that are distinguished here will differ substantially depending on the grammatical theory that is assumed.



van Gelderen has argued in the theoretical framework of Minimalism that speakers tend to construct constituents as heads rather than as phrases due to processing economy (“Head Preference Principle (HPP)”, cf. van Gelderen 2011: 13–14). According to van Gelderen, this tendency can also be observed in grammaticalization.<sup>17</sup> In the case of *von wegen*, only head-status change from head to non-head played a marginal role because the reanalysis of *Wegen* (= dative plural form of *wec* ‘side’) as a part of the discontinuous complex head of the circumposition *von – wegen* – the predecessor of *von wegen* as a continuous complex preposition (cf. Subsection 3.1) – implies a loss of the head-status: As a noun in the complement position of *von*, *Wegen* was the lexical head of an NP, but as a part of the circumpositional head of *von – wegen*, it became a head segment that was not a head in its own right anymore. Of course, this holds for *von* as well when it was merged into the circumpositional head in terms of a head segment. However, since the emergence of the circumposition *von – wegen* is not directly linked to the diachronic emergence of *von wegen*, we can ignore this in the following.

2. The head-status of a linguistic item remains but its category changes (= head-category change). Head-category change has two aspects: In terms of its source (or linguistic input), it is decategorization as a certain head  $X^0$ , and in terms of its target (or linguistic output), it is recategorization as a certain head  $Y^0$ .<sup>18</sup> In this study, the de- and recategorization of the preposition *von wegen* as the interjection *von wegen* involves head-category change in terms of  $[_{PP} P^0 NP] > [_{INTP} INT^0 XP]$ , if we follow Fries’ (1992, 2002) concept of an interjection phrase (INTP). However, we have to bear in mind that  $[_{PP} P^0 NP]$  did not lead to  $[_{INTP} INT^0 XP]$  directly but via two intermediate steps – the semi-prepositional *von wegen* and the interjection *von wegen* without lexicalized stress (cf. Subsection 3.3). This shows that headedness can be a matter of degree (e.g., in terms of prototypical and peripheral types of  $P^0$  and  $INT^0$ ; see point 3 below) and that additional reanalytic steps can precede and follow head-category change (e.g.,  $P^0_{\text{prototypical}} > P^0_{\text{peripheral}} > INT^0_{\text{peripheral}} > INT^0_{\text{prototypical}}$ ; only the head-category change is marked bold). This leads us to the third principal type of change that can affect heads and headedness.

<sup>17</sup>Van Gelderen discusses the grammaticalization of the pronominal specifier *that* as the head of a complementizer phrase, for instance.

<sup>18</sup>This sets head-category change apart from head-status change, which can potentially lead to categoryless “junk” (Lass 1990, see also Simon 2010). Head-category change, in contrast, cannot lead into a linguistic wasteland of categorylessness just by definition.

3. The features of a linguistic item as a head change while its head-status and its category remain (= head-feature change). One case of head-feature change is the reduction of grammatical restrictions on the complement position that affected the preposition *von wegen* (loss of a restriction to NPs, cf.  $P^0_{\text{prototypical}} > P^0_{\text{peripheral}}$ ). When this reached the point where an identifiable complement position did not exist anymore, the category of the head changed from  $P^0$  to  $\text{INT}^0$  (see point 2 above). Another important head-feature change affected the scope of *von wegen* as a domain adjunct: As we have seen, the early instances had scope over the host clause proposition only and it took a reanalytic step to develop the capability to take scope over the host clause as a full-fledged speech act (in terms of  $[F [\textit{von wegen NP [p]]] > [\textit{von wegen NP [F [p]]}]$ , cf. Subsection 3.2). Furthermore, the lexicalization of the emphatic accent on the interjection *von wegen* can be regarded a case of head-feature change (cf. Subsection 3.3). At first sight, this feature does not seem to play a significant role for the headedness of *von wegen*. However, if we follow Nübling (2004: 18) and consider strong stress to be a feature of prototypical interjections, the lexicalization of the emphatic accent reflects development towards the core of the category “interjection” (in terms of  $\text{INT}^0_{\text{peripheral}} > \text{INT}^0_{\text{prototypical}}$ ), just like the reduction of grammatical restrictions on the complement position reflects development towards the periphery of the category “preposition”.

The head-feature changes mentioned here arose substantially from ambiguous contexts of use in which conventional and nonconventional meaning aspects of a linguistic item could not be separated from each other, and they resulted in semantic enrichment of this item (in terms of occasion becoming convention): The quotative reactivation of a prior speech act, the increased scope, the expression of disagreement and the presence of an emphatic accent all started as occasional side effects in certain contexts of use and became conventional parts of the *von wegen* items they are related to over time. This can be classified as hypoanalysis in the sense of Croft (2000: 126–130).

Considering now what we found out about the structural and semantic-pragmatic changes that led to *von wegen* and returning to our initial question of why the interjectional path  $\text{PP} > \text{INT}^0$  with head-status change is much more common in German in comparison to the path  $P^0 > \text{INT}^0$  with head-category change, the main reason seems to be the striking complexity of change it requires:

- Structurally, a prepositional head has to get rid of its complement position before it can become an interjection in terms of  $P^0 > \text{INT}^0$ . The case of *von*

*wégen* has shown, however, that it takes a massive reanalytic effort in very specific contexts (e.g., formal isolation as a hanging topic with a quotative complement) to remove the complement position of a fully grammaticalized prepositional head entirely (note that the semi-prepositional *von wegen* could not be reanalyzed as an interjection yet; cf. Subsection 3.3). If such contexts are not given (and they are by no means taken for granted), the complement position will not drop and the prepositional head alone cannot be de- and recategorized as an interjection. A PP such as *zum Teufel* ‘to the devil’, in contrast, is not inherently tied to fixed accompanying syntactic material that needs to be removed before it can be reanalyzed in terms of PP > INT<sup>0</sup>.

- Semantically and pragmatically, German prepositional heads do not have an inherent affective and stance-related meaning that is directly qualified for use as an interjection, while PPs – especially ones with nominal complements from sacral and profane domains of the lexicon – can be emphatic expressions of affect and stance in their own right. Since prepositional heads have to acquire a completely new meaning in order to become an interjection, they are maximally dependent on dialogical contexts providing the possibility to adopt such a meaning. The case of *von wegen* shows that this implies a long and complex way through the above-mentioned path “propositional/descriptive meaning > text-/discourse-structuring meaning > affect-/stance-related meaning”. A PP such as *zum Teufel* ‘to the devil’, in contrast, is less dependent on such a context-driven import of meaning, and its semantic and pragmatic path towards a use as an interjection can be assumed to be shorter and less complex.

Taken together, it is obviously the high complexity and context-dependency of changes that prevents a frequent development of new interjections from prepositional heads in German. Full PPs, in comparison, can be reanalyzed much more easily as interjections as they require fewer changes and fewer contexts giving rise to these changes. However, if both the linguistic system and the contextual circumstances of language use provide an opportunity, the path P<sup>0</sup> > INT<sup>0</sup> is possible and can yield interjections such as *von wegen* that are able to become a lasting part of the language.

## 5 Summary

The starting point of this paper was the observation that German deprepositional interjections usually arise from full PPs (PP > INT<sup>0</sup>) and not from prepositional

heads alone ( $P^0 > INT^0$ ), the present-day German interjection *von wegen* ‘my foot’ being an exception that traces back to the Early Modern High German prepositional head *von wegen*. In order to find out how an isolated prepositional head can be reanalyzed as an interjection, we took a look at the forms and functions of *von wegen* in present-day German spoken data in Section 2 and then reconstructed the diachronic steps of its development, beginning with the rise of the prepositional *von wegen* in Section 3. After that, we arrived at some observations and considerations on why a development along the path  $P^0 > INT^0$  is far less frequent in German in comparison to the alternative path  $PP > INT^0$  in Section 4: Even though each step of the diachronic emergence of *von wegen* for itself reflects common mechanisms and directions of semantic-pragmatic and structural change, the development as a whole was strikingly complex. Most of the reanalytic complexity has to do with the presence of a complement position and the absence of an affective and stance-related meaning that characterizes  $P^0$ : The removal of this position and the adoption of a new meaning required, so to say, hard reanalytic work in highly specific contexts. Full PPs, in contrast, can be reanalyzed as interjections much more easily as they are not inherently connected to fixed accompanying linguistic material that has to be removed and can come with complements from lexical domains that promote the use as an interjection (e.g., sacral and profane nouns).

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