

Two Adverbs Fit All? On the Polyfunctionality of *wārlīh(h)o* and *giwisso* in Old High German

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This presentation investigates the Old High German expressions *wārlīh(h)o* (> Mod. German *wahrlich* ‘truly, really, indeed’) and *giwisso* (> Mod. German *gewiss* ‘certainly’), focusing on their functions and syntax in the earliest attestations of German. Previous studies (Axel 2007; Ferraresi 2011) mention these elements only in passing, treating them as epistemic adverbs with a (discourse) connective use within the broader discussion of V3 word orders in Old High German. While their modern counterparts mainly express epistemic modality, their Old High German usage displays a broader range of functions. In particular, in Old High German translations from Latin, both items frequently render (discourse) connectives such as *autem* (‘but, however’; also used as a transition marker), *ergo* (‘thus, therefore’), *enim* (‘truly, indeed’; ‘for, because’, indicating cause or explanation), and many others. In these contexts, they appear to function not primarily as epistemic markers, but rather as discourse-structuring elements and truth intensifiers. At first sight, *wārlīh(h)o* and *giwisso* seem thus to operate as ‘one-size-fits-all’ adverbs, which raises the question of whether their wide range of uses reflects purely translational practices rather than genuine polyfunctionality (cf. Behaghel 1934). However, evidence from other texts shows that besides these connective and intensifying uses, *wārlīh(h)o* is also attested as a manner adverb, while *giwisso* occurs both as a manner adverb and as an epistemic sentence adverb. Drawing on corpus data, this presentation explores the functional spectrum of *wārlīh(h)o* and *giwisso* in Old High German, arguing in favour of a genuinely polyfunctional usage, and outlines their syntactic distribution, including their occurrence as intervening elements between a fronted XP and the finite verb in V3 configurations.

References

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