Some problems with merge

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(1) In the merge/remerge theory merge can join two categories derived in two independent sub-derivations and (re)merge can take as one of its inputs a category merged earlier. If merge and move/remerge are the same operation, the existence of sideward movement (SM), which joins a category merged earlier with one derived in a different sub-derivation, appears to inevitably follow.

However given the possibility of SM, the extension condition does not entail the c-command property of movement/remerge and, I will argue, not only c-command but also island constraints on move are effectively voided.

In other words given SM, the core properties of move become difficult to attribute to remerge, let alone explain. There is no reason to adopt move/remerge in the grammar if its apparent properties are not its own, but are perhaps the properties of some other object, like e.g. interpretive 'chain' relations. Not ruling out sideward movement questions the status of movement as a syntactic operation.

(2). Stipulations that rule out (SM) can also be taken to at least implicitly question the thesis that move is remerge, and consequently also the status of move as a syntactic operation. I will instead suggest an understanding of the mechanics of merge that entails the impossibility of SM.

(3) Move obeys a more general c-command condition than the one the extension condition is capable of ensuring: move not only targets c-commanding positions, but also ignores non-c-commanding interveners. Move does not even “see” sideward. To account for this more inclusive property, I propose a more radical departure from standard merge. I assume that syntactic phases, linked only at the interfaces, are paths from the initial symbol to the terminal elements, and that the syntactic assembly operation is concatenate rather than merge. Among various advantages, the c-command requirement of reconcatenate (the correspondent of remerge in this approach), and the principled lack of (the equivalent of) SM and sideward intervention relations immediately follow.