Multiple ways to be multiply valued

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This talk explores the syntax and morphology of multiple valuation through a comparison between successful cases of agreement with multiple targets on the one hand, and cases where multiple valuation appears to result in a morphological conflict on the other. I argue that these don't reflect language- or construction-particular variation in the details of morphological realization, but instead different configurations in which multiple valuation can occur.

Recent work in Minimalist syntax takes multiple valuation—where a single probe can receive different values for a single feature or feature type—to be a regular and non-exceptional output of Agree. While this accounts for a wide range of omnivorous and hierarchical patterns of agreement, however, it is potentially at odds with long-standing proposals that some structures are ungrammatical by virtue of a single element receiving multiple values for a single feature, when those features cannot be given a single morphological realization. Ungrammaticality due to conflicting valuation has often been diagnosed by the ability of syncretic realizations to "rescue" the otherwise-illicit structure, in languages including Hungarian (Szamosi 1976), Norwegian (Taraldsen 1981), German (Groos and van Riemsdijk 1981), French (Kayne 1975; Zaenen and Karttunen 1984), Finnish (Zaenen and Karttunen 1984), Russian (Asarina 2011), and Polish (Citko 2018).

The existence of resolution via syncretism raises a number of architectural questions for our theory of grammar, especially if we adopt an interpretive approach to morphology such as Distributed Morphology. For syncretism to ever resolve feature conflicts, structures with mismatching features on a single head must be syntactically licit—as they are indeed assumed to be in multiple-valuation approaches to agreement phenomena. After a brief review of the profile of resolution-via-syncretism across different languages, I explore its architectural consequences via a case study of Hungarian, a language with both apparent multiple agreement and resolution-via-syncretism within its system of finite verbal agreement. I argue on this basis for a representational difference between two ways of being multiply valued, sequential vs simultaneous, extending a proposal from Citko (2018) for valuation in multidominant structures.