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Soames's new conception of propositions

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Abstract   In this paper, I argue that, when it comes to explaining what can be described as "representational" properties of propositions, Soames's new conception of propositions—on which the proposition that Seattle is sunny is the act of predicating the property *being sunny* of Seattle and to entertain that proposition is to perform that act—does not have an advantage over traditional ones.

> *"[T]he search for explanation is all we have."*
> Soames (*2015: 210*)

1 Introduction

In *Rethinking Language, Mind, and Meaning*, Soames (2015: 14, 64) proposes "a new conception of propositions."[1] This new conception is the "core" of his project.[2] Replacing traditional conceptions with this new one is the "most foundational" of the changes that he proposes; it is, he says, "our most urgent task, and the one on which I will concentrate most."[3]

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[1] For previous versions of this new conception of propositions, see Soames (2010a, b, 2012, 2013, 2014a, b). For a similar view, see Hanks (2007, 2011, 2013a, b, 2015).

[2] Soames (2015: 208).

[3] Soames (2015: 8, 9).

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Let's fix some terminology at the outset. Soames (2015: 16–18, 215–216) distinguishes two senses of 'represent': a "primary sense" that is said to apply to agents and a "secondary, derivative sense" that is said to apply to acts, including propositions (as we'll see, on his view propositions *are* acts). Let's call the kind of thing that agents do when 'represent' in Soames's primary sense is said to apply to them *representation$_1$*; and let's call the kind of thing that propositions and (other) acts do when 'represent' in Soames's secondary sense is said to apply to them *representation$_2$*. On this way of approaching things, the properties *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* and *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny* are distinct. The former is a property of agents rather than acts; the latter is a property of acts rather than agents. Soames (2015: 17) describes the two properties as "related" (rather than, say, identical).[4]

In replacing traditional conceptions of propositions with his new one, Soames has an explanatory goal: namely, to explain what he calls "the intentionality of propositions."[5] On Soames's view, the intentionality of propositions has to do with their representational$_2$ and truth-conditional properties.[6] For example, on his view, the proposition that Seattle is sunny—call it 'SHINE'—represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny (and hence has the representational$_2$ property *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny*); and it is such that, necessarily, it is true if and only if Seattle is sunny (and hence has the truth-conditional property *being such that, necessarily, it is true if and only if Seattle is sunny*). Since it will be helpful to talk about facts as well as properties, let's say that the fact that SHINE represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny is a *representational$_2$ fact* about SHINE; and let's say that the fact that, necessarily, SHINE is true if and only if Seattle is sunny is a *truth-conditional fact* about SHINE.

Soames uses representational$_2$ facts about propositions to explain truth-conditional facts about them. For example, he says, "The truth conditions of a proposition are derived from a statement of what it represents [i.e. represents$_2$]."[7] In particular, on his view it is because SHINE represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny (and doesn't represent$_2$ anything else) that, necessarily, it is true if and only if Seattle is sunny. So, on his view, explaining the intentionality of propositions comes down to explaining representational$_2$ facts about them.

Soames's goal is explicitly explanatory. For example, in listing the "metaphysical and epistemic virtues" of his new conception of propositions, he begins with "its resolution of the problem of the unity of the proposition, construed as that of explaining how propositions can be representational [i.e. representational$_2$] and hence bearers of truth and falsity."[8] According to traditional conceptions, "the

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[4] Some think that propositions don't "represent" (as they might put it) or that, although agents represent$_1$ things as being as a being certain way, propositions don't themselves represent$_2$ anything. See Speaks (2014a, b). See also Caplan et al. (2013: 585 n. 2). I ignore this view in the text.

[5] Soames (2015: 14, 15, 16, 19). This explanatory goal is shared by Hanks (see the works cited in note 1) and King (1995, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2014a, b).

[6] See, Soames (2015: 16).

[7] Soames (2015: 21). See also, for example, Soames (2015: 215–216) and the text quoted at note 8 below in the text.

[8] Soames (2015: 65).

intentionality of propositions is treated as conceptually and explanatorily prior to that of agents who bear attitudes to them."[9] Soames (2015: 15) describes this order of explanation as the "most fundamental defect" of traditional conceptions. To avoid this defect, he says, "we must reverse" the "explanatory priorities" of traditional conceptions: that is, "we must explain the intentionality of propositions in terms of the conceptually prior ability of agents to represent [i.e. represent$_1$] the world."[10]

In this paper, I argue that, when it comes to explaining representational$_2$ facts about propositions, Soames's new conception of propositions does not have an advantage over traditional ones. In Sect. 2, I present a view, about the explanation of representational$_2$ facts about propositions, that Soames might endorse. In Sect. 3, I raise a question for that view. In Sect. 4, I discuss some responses to that question.

2 The grounding view

Let's start with a pair of facts: the first is a representational$_2$ fact about a proposition; the second is a representational$_1$ fact about agents.

| (Fact about a Proposition) | SHINE represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny. |
| (Fact about Agents) | Agents who entertain SHINE are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny.[11] |

Soames's goal is to explain (Fact about a Proposition). One strategy is to use (Fact about Agents). This strategy is thus to use a representational$_1$ fact about agents to explain a representational$_2$ fact about propositions. It is a specific instance of the general strategy that Soames (2015: 16) proposes, which is to "explain the intentionality" of propositions by "deriving it from the intentionality of agents."

If the specific strategy works, then there is an explanatory connection of some kind between (Fact about Agents) and (Fact about a Proposition). On one view, the explanatory connection between (Fact about Agents) and (Fact about a Proposition) takes a particular form: namely, (Fact about Agents) *grounds* (Fact about a Proposition), where grounding is a robust metaphysical relation.[12] Let's call this

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[9] Soames (2015: 15).

[10] Soames (2015: 14).

[11] There is a sense in which (Fact about Agents) is also about SHINE, which is a proposition. Please ignore that. In the text, I assume that (Fact about Agents) obtains. I think that, on Soames's (2015: 16, 18) view, it does. Perhaps it is a modal fact: namely, the fact that, necessarily, for any agent S, if S entertains SHINE, then S represents$_1$ Seattle as being sunny. Or perhaps it is a model-theoretic fact of some kind. See Soames (2015: 4).

   Also, note that, in some cases, displayed expressions name facts; whereas, in other cases, they name sentence schemas or propositions. I hope that it will be clear from context (or from clues in their names) what displayed expressions name in each case.

[12] Some remarks about grounding are in order. First, in taking grounding to be an explanatory relation, I am following Fine (2001: 15–16, 20, 2012). An alternative is that grounding, while itself not explanatory, nonetheless backs explanations. See Schaffer (2016).

view about the explanatory connection between (Fact about Agents) and (Fact about a Proposition) *the grounding view*.

One might put the grounding view by saying that (Fact about a Proposition) obtains *because* (Fact about Agents) does or that (Fact about a Proposition) obtains *in virtue of* (Fact about Agents). Soames (2015: 16) might have something like the grounding view in mind when he asks for an entity can play the role of a proposition (presumably by having representational$_2$ properties) "by virtue of the fact that for an agent" to entertain it "guarantees that the agent represents [i.e. represents$_1$] things as being a certain way."[13]

If the grounding view is true, then the following fact obtains.

> (Fact about Grounding)   The fact that agents who entertain SHINE are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny **grounds** the fact that SHINE represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny.[14]

We can get clearer on what (Fact about Grounding) is by getting clearer on what (Fact about Agents) and (Fact about a Proposition) are.

On Soames's view, propositions are cognitive acts. For example, he says, "Propositions are repeatable, purely representational [i.e. representational$_2$], cognitive acts or operations the performance of which results in concrete cognitive events."[15] In particular, propositions are acts of predication. For example, SHINE is the act of predicating the property *being sunny* of Seattle.[16] So (Fact about a Proposition) is identical to the following fact.

> (Fact about a Proposition)   The act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny.

(I have replaced 'SHINE' with 'the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle').

Footnote 12 continued

Second, in taking grounding to be a relation between facts, I am following Rosen (2010: 114–115). But there are other ways of doing things. Perhaps grounding is a relation between objects more generally [see Schaffer (2009: 375–376)], or perhaps grounding is best expressed by a sentential operator [see Fine (2001: 16, 2012: 46–48)].

Third, in keeping with Fine (2012: 50), I am taking grounding to obtain only when the grounds are full (rather than merely partial. See also Fine (2001: 15).

Finally, I am assuming that there is distinctive metaphysical work for grounding to do. For a contrary view, see Wilson (2014). For replies to Wilson (2014), see Cameron (forthcoming), Schaffer (forthcoming). For a reply to Schaffer (forthcoming), see Wilson (forthcoming).

[13] Italics removed.

[14] I am using boldface for 'grounds' for ease of readability, to do something like indicating the main connective.

[15] Soames (2015: 16); italics removed.

[16] See Soames (2015: 214).

On Soames's ([2015](): 16) view, "to entertain a proposition is to perform it."[17] (On his view, propositions are acts, and acts can be performed, so propositions can be performed). So (Fact about Agents) is identical to the following fact.

> (Fact about Agents)   Agents who perform SHINE are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny.

(I have replaced 'entertain' with 'perform'). And recall that, on Soames's view, SHINE is the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle. So (Fact about Agents) is identical to the following fact.

> (Fact about Agents)   Agents who perform the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny.

(I have replaced 'SHINE' with 'the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle').

Given what (Fact about a Proposition) and (Fact about Agents) are, (Fact about Grounding) is identical to the following fact.

> (Fact about Grounding)   The fact that agents who perform the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny **grounds** the fact that the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny.

The grounding view, then, is the view that (Fact about Grounding) obtains.

It is possible that Soames does not endorse the grounding view. But it is helpful to have a specific proposal on the table. And I suspect that there are analogues of the question and responses I discuss in Sects. [3]() and [4]() for other views about the nature of the explanatory connection between (Fact about Agents) and (Fact about a Proposition).[18] In the rest of this paper, I tentatively assume that, if there are problems for the grounding view, then there are problems (perhaps analogous ones) for Soames's view.

3 The pattern question

According to the grounding view, there is a sense in which *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* behaves like certain properties rather than others. The question I want to ask is "why?" We can make this question a little more precise.

First, we need a way of talking about a relation between properties of agents and properties of acts. Let's say that a property like *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny* is the *act-correlate* of a property like *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny*.

Second, we need a way of talking about propositions about a certain kind of connection between properties of agents and properties of acts. Consider the following sentence schema.

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[17] Italics removed.

[18] For some analogous questions, see some of the works cited in note 24.

(Schema) For any act A, if agents who perform A are guaranteed to ___ (and if it is possible to perform A), then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to ___ **grounds** the fact that A ... .

Let's say that the *signal proposition* for a property of agents is the proposition expressed by an instance of (Schema) in which the '___' blanks are filled with a predicate that picks out that property and the '...' blank is filled with a predicate that picks out its act-correlate (and appropriate grammatical adjustments are made).

For example, the following proposition is the signal proposition for the property *being insulting$_1$*.[19]

(Insult) For any act A, if agents who perform A are guaranteed to be insulting$_1$ (and if it is possible to perform A), then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to be insulting$_1$ **grounds** the fact that A is insulting$_2$.

And the following proposition is the signal proposition for the property *being an agent$_1$*.

(Agent) For any act A, if agents who perform A are guaranteed to be agents$_1$ (and if it is possible to perform A), then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to be agents$_1$ **grounds** the fact that A is an agent$_2$.

(Let's ignore for now the question of which signal propositions are true).

Third, we need a way of talking about the properties of agents that we're interested in. Let's say that the *target properties* are properties like *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* and other representational$_1$ properties whose act-correlates are constituents of representational$_2$ facts about propositions that Soames proposes to explain.

Fourth, putting the target properties aside for a moment, we need a way of dividing up the remaining properties of agents. Let's say that a property of agents is *extensible* if and only if (*i*) it is not among the target properties and (*ii*) the signal proposition for that property is *true*. And let's say that a property of agents is *inextensible* if and only if (*i*) it is not among the target properties and (*ii*) the signal proposition for that property is *false*.

For example, *being insulting$_1$* is extensible, because it's not among the target properties and (Insult) is true. By contrast, *being an agent$_1$* is inextensible, because it's not among the target properties and (Agent) is false: it is possible to perform the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle, and agents who perform that act are guaranteed to be agents$_1$, but it is not the case that fact grounds the fact that the act itself is an agent$_2$, for the act itself is *not* an agent$_2$.

Extensible properties include *being insulting$_1$, being intelligent$_1$, being stupid$_1$*, and *being thoughtful$_1$*. Soames asserts something like (Insult) when he says, "an act is insulting [i.e. insulting$_2$] when for one to perform it is for one to insult [i.e.

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[19] I use a subscripted '1' to indicate that the accompanying expression picks out a property of agents and a subscripted '2' to indicate that the accompanying expression picks out a property of acts.

insult₁] someone."[20] Similarly, speaking of the properties *being intelligent₂*, *being stupid₂*, and *being thoughtful₂*, he says, "For an act to be one of these *is* for it to be one the performance of which marks an agent as behaving intelligently, stupidly, or thoughtfully—which is how those who are intelligent, stupid, or thoughtful [i.e. intelligent₁, stupid₁, or thoughtful₁] often act."[21]

Inextensible properties include *being an agent₁*, *not being a proposition₁*, *occupying an agent-sized region of space₁*, *kissing Bill₁*, and *performing the act of predicating being sunny of Seattle₁*. On Soames's view, the last of these is identical to (or at least necessarily coextensive with) the property *entertaining SHINE₁*.[22]

Fifth, we need a way of talking about which properties of agents behave like which other properties of agents. Let's say that some properties of agents *pattern with* some other properties of agents if and only if the signal propositions for all of those properties have the same truth-value. For example, the target properties pattern with the extensible properties if and only if the signal propositions for those properties are all true, and the target properties pattern with the inextensible properties if and only if the signal propositions for those properties are all false.

On the grounding view, the explanation of (Fact about a Proposition) is (Fact about Grounding). And, if (Fact about Grounding) obtains, then *representing₁ Seattle as being sunny* patterns with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones; and likewise for the other target properties. That is, if (Fact about Grounding) obtains, then the following proposition is true.

(Seattle) For any act *A*, if agents who perform *A* are guaranteed to represent₁ Seattle as being sunny (and if it is possible to perform *A*), then the fact that agents who perform *A* are guaranteed to represent₁ Seattle as being sunny **grounds** the fact that *A* represents₂ Seattle as being sunny.

Soames (2015: 18) asserts something like a generalization of (Seattle) when, speaking of propositions, he says that "the sense in which they represent [i.e. represent₂] things is simply that performing them guarantees that agents represent [i.e. represent₁] those things."[23]

We can now be a little bit more precise about the sense in which, according to the grounding view, *representing₁ Seattle as being sunny* behaves like certain properties rather than others: according to the grounding view, *representing₁ Seattle as being sunny* and the other target properties pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones. But why? That is, why do *representing₁ Seattle as being sunny* and the other target properties pattern with the extensible properties

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[20] Soames (2015: 17).

[21] Soames (2015: 17); italics in original. Soames does not use 'because' or 'in virtue of' here, but perhaps he is asserting claims about *what it is* for an act to be insulting₂, intelligent₂, stupid₂, or thoughtful₂; perhaps such claims are claims about reduction; and perhaps claims about reduction entail claims about grounding. See Rosen (2010: 122–126). On reduction and grounding, see also Fine (2001: 4) n. 2. But cf. Fine (2001: 26, 27 n. 38). For further discussion, see Sect. 4.4.

[22] Several of these examples come from (or are modeled on examples that come from) Caplan et al. (2013: 582), King (2013: 91, 2014b: 136–137), Speaks (2014a: 165).

[23] Italics removed.

rather than with the inextensible ones?[24] Let's call this question *the pattern question*. In the next section, I consider several responses to the pattern question.

4 Some responses

4.1 General laws

One response to the pattern question is to appeal to a general law. The idea behind this response is that, as Rosen (2010: 132) puts it, "Particular grounding facts must always be subsumable under general laws."[25] Perhaps the explanation of why *representing*$_1$ *Seattle as being sunny* and the other target properties pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones—that is, the answer to the pattern question—is, roughly, that this pattern follows from a general law. Let's call this response to the pattern question *the general law response*.

Here, a *general law* is a true generalization that is not ad hoc. Let's say that a generalization *covers* a property just in case that generalization (perhaps together with a proposition about which properties are act-correlates of which) entails the signal proposition for that property. For example, the following proposition is a generalization that covers *representing*$_1$ *Seattle as being sunny*, since (Seattle) is an instance of it.

(Weak)   For any act A, any object o, and any property F, if agents who perform A are guaranteed to represent$_1$ o as having F (and if it is possible to perform A), then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to represent$_1$ o as having F **grounds** the fact that A represents$_2$ o as having F.

And the following proposition is a generalization that covers *being insulting*$_1$, since (Insult) follows from it and the proposition that *being insulting*$_2$ is the act-correlate of *being insulting*$_1$.

(Strong)   For any act A and any properties F_1 and F_2, if (*i*) agents who perform A are guaranteed to have F_1, (*ii*) F_2 is the act-correlate of F_1, and (*iii*) it is possible to perform A, then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to have F_1 **grounds** the fact that A has F_2.

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[24] Caplan et al. (2013: 578–581, 582–585) raise analogous questions for earlier versions of Soames's view, found in Soames (2010b, 2014a, b). King (2013: 91, 2014b: 136–137) raises analogous questions for earlier versions of Soames's view, found in Soames (2010b, 2014a). Speaks (2014a: 165) raises an analogous question for an earlier version of Soames's view, found in Soames (2014a).

[25] For similar views, see Audi (2012b: 697–698), Fine (2001: 22, 2012: 75), Dasgupta (2014b: 569–571, 574), Wilsch (2016). How best to capture this idea is a further matter. Some don't explicitly propose principles (Dasgupta, Wilsch). Others explicitly propose principles that don't entail that the target properties and the extensible ones are covered by the same general law (Rosen, Audi, Fine). And some explicitly propose principles that are vulnerable to a counterexample from Litland (2015) (Rosen, Audi). But Litland assures me that his example is not a counterexample to Fine's principle. In any case, it is the idea that matters for our purposes. For further discussion of Rosen (2010) and Fine (2012), see Sect. 4.4. Thanks to Jon Litland here.

The general law response to the pattern question, then, is that there is a general law that covers the target properties and the extensible properties but not the inextensible ones.

But the general law response is not promising. For it is hard to come up with a true generalization that isn't ad hoc and that covers both the target properties and the extensible properties without also covering the inextensible ones. For example, (Weak) might not be ad hoc, it covers at least some of the target properties, and it doesn't cover the inextensible properties, but it's *too* weak, since it doesn't cover the extensible properties (e.g. *being insulting*$_1$) either.[26] And (Strong) isn't ad hoc, it covers the target properties, and it covers the extensible properties, but it's *too* strong, since it covers the inextensible properties (e.g. *being an agent*$_1$), too.[27]

4.2 Quietism

I don't think that Soames's response to the pattern question is the general law response.[28] He is aware that generalizations like (Strong) are false. We can think of there being a "smooth transition" between agents having extensible properties (e.g. *being insulting*$_1$) and the acts that they perform having the act-correlates of those properties (e.g. *being insulting*$_2$). By contrast, no such transition occurs when agents have inextensible properties like *being an agent*$_1$. If (Strong) were true, then there would be a smooth transition for extensible and inextensible properties alike; but there isn't. Speaking of the transition in the case of extensible properties, Soames (2015: 17–18) says, "The point is not that this kind of smooth transition between properties of agents and related properties of acts *always* occurs; it most certainly

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[26] Speaks (2014a: 165) suggests that generalizations like (Weak) are ad hoc. In any case, (Weak) doesn't cover all of the target properties, and it might even be too strong. Agents who perform the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle while hopping on one foot are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny; but one might think that, on Soames's view, the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle while hopping on one foot is not a proposition and does not have representational$_2$ properties. In that case, contrary to (Weak), the fact that agents who perform the act are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny would not ground the fact that the act itself represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny. The example is based on examples from Speaks (2014a: 165). See also Caplan et al. (2013: 583–584).

On Soames's (2015: 70–71) view, the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle while hopping on one foot is not a proposition, because it is not a *purely* representational$_2$ act. But, by itself, that doesn't prevent the act from having representational$_2$ properties.

One might restrict the generalization to acts that are *purely* representational (or perhaps to acts that are, in some suitable sense, "minimal"). But that would increase the likelihood that the resulting generalization is ad hoc. An alternative response, due to Hanks (2013b: 570–571, 2015: 78–79), would be to allow that the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle while hopping on one foot is a proposition and has representational$_2$ properties. See Caplan et al. (2013: 579–580). I ignore these complications in the text.

[27] Alternatively, perhaps there is a patchwork of general laws such that, for every target property or extensible property, there is some general law that covers it (and for no inextensible property is there a general law that covers it). I don't explore this idea further in the text. But I wonder whether, as with responses that appeal to brute facts (see Sect. 4.3), responses that appeal to a patchwork of general laws could be coopted by someone who accepts a traditional conception of propositions. Thanks to Richard Samuels and Kelly Trogdon here.

[28] Hanks (2013b: 572–573 n. 12) explicitly rejects the general law response. On what his preferred response might be, see note 46.

doesn't."[29] But, he says, "it can and often does occur," and a target property like *representing₁ Seattle as being sunny* "is a case in point."[30]

Soames's remarks might suggest the following view: generalizations like (Strong) are false; the target properties pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones; and that's all there is to say about it. Let's call this view *Soamesian quietism*.[31] Soamesian quietism is a response to the pattern question. One way to respond to a question is to decline to answer it.[32]

The possibility of Soamesian quietism suggests that someone who accepts a traditional conception of propositions might accept the following view: SHINE represents₂ Seattle as being sunny; similarly for other propositions; and that's all there is to say about it. Let's call this view *traditional quietism*.

Soamesian quietism might, or might not, be more acceptable than traditional quietism.[33] But, even if Soamesian quietism is more acceptable than traditional quietism, Soamesian quietism might not be satisfying. At any rate, many have professed dissatisfaction. Speaking of another case in which patterns of facts about grounding are not explained, Dasgupta (2014b: 574) says, "This is unacceptable. There must be *some* explanation of the pattern."[34] In a case closer to hand, after distinguishing analogues of some extensible properties and analogues of some inextensible properties, King (2013: 91) says, "Soames needs to give us some reason for thinking" that the analogue of a target property patterns with the

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[29] Italics in original.

[30] Soames (2015: 18). Soames (2015: 18) might be proposing a general law like the following:

> (Moderate) For any act A and any properties F and F*, if (i) agents who perform A are guaranteed to have F, (ii) "the connection" between F and F* is "particularly tight," (iii) "there is reason to exploit" the connection between F and F*, and (iv) it is possible to perform A, then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to have F **grounds** the fact that A has F*.

But (Moderate) strikes me as implausible and ad hoc. On a related proposal, see Caplan et al. (2013: 583–585).

[31] Views in the vicinity of Soamesian quietism include the view that some facts about grounding are not *grounding-apt* (in something like the way in which definitions are not proof-apt) and the view that some facts about grounding are *zero-grounded* (in something like the way in which logical truths are derivable from the empty set of premises). For the former view, see Dasgupta (2014b: 575–580), and on the analogy with definitions, see Dasgupta (2014b: 577). For the latter view, see Litland (forthcoming), and on the analogy with propositions that are derivable from the empty set of premises, see Litland (forthcoming: Section 1).

On Dasgupta's (2014b: e.g. 580) view, some facts about grounding are ungrounded and hence brute, which suggests the view discussed below in Sect. 4.3. And Dasgupta (2014b: 565–571, 589–592) and Litland (forthcoming: Section 11) are both sympathetic to the sorts of essentialist claims discussed in Sect. 4.4.

[32] SOCRATES: Why does *representing₁ Seattle as being sunny* pattern with *being insulting₁* rather than with *being an agent₁*?

> SOAMESIAN QUIETIST: … (Shrugs).

[33] Peter Hanks suggested in conversation that representation₂ might be problematic in a way in which representation₁ is not, in which case remaining silent about how representational₁ properties pattern might be acceptable in a way in which remaining silent about what propositions represent₂ would not be.

[34] Italics in original.

analogues of the extensible properties. "But," King (2013: 91) says, "no reason has been given." Similarly, after discussing analogues of some inextensible properties, Speaks (2014a: 165) asks, "why should we think, as Soames encourages us to," that the analogue of a target property patterns with the analogues of the extensible properties? Speaks (2014a: 165) says, "As it stands, this is less an objection to the theory than a question to which the theory ultimately owes an answer which, at present, I don't think it provides."[35] He concludes that, because of this, the theory in question is "not as obviously explanatory as one might have thought."[36]

4.3 Brute facts

In response to the pattern question, a Soamesian quietist says nothing. But there is something in the spirit of Soamesian quietism that a Soamesian could say: namely, something about a brute fact (that is, a fact that obtains but not in virtue of any other fact). Perhaps it's a brute fact, about *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny*, that it patterns with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones; and perhaps there are infinitely many other brute facts, one for each of the other target properties, to the effect that it patterns with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones, too. Or perhaps there is a single brute fact, about the target properties collectively, to the effect that they pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones.[37] On this view, either (Fact about Grounding) is ungrounded or it obtains in virtue of a collective fact, about all the target properties, that is ungrounded. Let's call this view *the Soamesian brute fact view*. The Soamesian brute fact view is a response to the pattern question. One response to a request to explain a pattern is to say that it is a brute fact that it obtains (or that it obtains given a collection of brute facts).[38]

If the Soamesian brute fact view is acceptable, that suggests that someone who accepts a traditional conception of propositions might accept a view that appeals to one or more brute facts. Perhaps it's a brute fact, about SHINE, that it represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny; and perhaps there are infinitely many other brute facts, one about each proposition, to the effect that it represents$_2$ what it does. Or perhaps there

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[35] Speaks is speaking of an earlier version of Soames's view, in Soames (2014a), but his remarks apply equally well to the current version of Soames's view.

[36] Speaks (2014a: 165). Caplan et al. (2013: 585) make similar remarks.

[37] See Caplan et al. (2013: 584–585). There are further options. Perhaps there is a single brute fact, about the target properties and the extensible properties collectively, to the effect that they pattern alike. Perhaps there is a single, conjunctive brute fact, with a conjunct for each target property. Or perhaps there is a single, conjunctive brute fact, with different conjuncts for each target property and each extensible property.

On Dasgupta's (2014b) view, facts about grounding are ungrounded (for more on Dasgupta's view, see note 31).

[38] SOCRATES: Why does *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* pattern with *being insulting$_1$* rather than with *being an agent$_1$*?

SOMEONE WHO ACCEPTS THE SOAMESIAN BRUTE FACT VIEW: It's brute.

is a single brute fact, about all the propositions collectively, to the effect that they represent₂ what they do.[39] Let's call this view *the traditional brute fact view*. The traditional brute fact view is, I think, Merricks's (2015) view. For example, he says, "my account implies that there is no explanation of how propositions essentially represent things as being a certain way."[40] That is, on his view, "each proposition *primitively* essentially represents things as being a certain way."[41]

The traditional brute fact view might posit infinitely many brute facts, one about each proposition; or it might posit a single brute fact, about a plurality of propositions. The Soamesian brute fact view might posit infinitely many brute facts, one about each target property; or it might posit a single brute fact, about a plurality of properties. When it comes to explaining representational₂ facts about propositions, the Soamesian brute fact view does not seem to have an advantage over the traditional brute fact view.[42]

4.4 Essences

Another response to the pattern question is to appeal to essences. The idea behind this response is, as Fine (2012: 74, 78 n. 26) puts it, that some facts about grounding "flow from the nature" (or essence) of some entities or that it "lies in the nature" (or essence) of some entities that certain facts about grounding obtain.[43] For example, certain facts about grounding might flow from the essence of properties that are constituents of the facts that are being grounded.[44]

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[39] Alternatively, perhaps there is a single, conjunctive brute fact, with a conjunct for each proposition.

[40] Merricks (2015: 195). On what Merricks might mean by 'essentially' here, see note 51.

[41] Merricks (2015: 195); italics in original. McGlone (2012) might endorse a similar view. But there are two caveats. First, McGlone's (2012: 215–220) view is explicitly about truth-conditional properties; it might, or might not, apply to representational₂ properties [on the one hand, see McGlone (2012: 214–215, 218, 219, 223); on the other hand, see McGlone (2012: 224)]. Second, McGlone (2012: 223 n. 14) is officially neutral between a view that appeals to brute facts and a view that appeals to essences. On essences, see Sect. 4.4. See also note 51.

[42] Hanks (2013b: 573 n. 12) suggests a "comparison" between the traditional brute fact view and his response to an analogue of the pattern question (but I think Hanks's response might not appeal to brute facts; see note 46). I think that the comparison between the traditional brute fact view and other responses to the pattern question suggests that these other responses don't have an explanatory advantage over the brute fact view.

[43] Cf. Fine (2012: 74–80). For similar views, see Rosen (2010: 130–132), Audi (2012a: 108–110), Trogdon (2013: 473–477), Dasgupta (2014b: 565–571, 589–592), Litland (forthcoming: Section 11). On essence, see also Fine (1994, 1995).

[44] Although the views cited in note 43 agree that one can appeal to the essence of an entity to explain a fact about grounding, they disagree about what kind of entity that can be and what fact that entity can be a constituent of. But they all agree that the entity can be a property and that it can be a constituent of the fact that is being grounded, which is the possibility that I consider in the text.

There are views on which, when fact A grounds fact B, it is A itself that grounds the fact that A grounds B. See Bennett (2011), deRosset (2013). These views might or might not allow appeal to essence. Bennett (2011: e.g. 32) talks about "the intrinsic nature" of A, but perhaps she means to refer to A's intrinsic properties rather than to A's essence in Fine's sense. deRosset does not talk about essence or nature. But these views would not provide a satisfactory response to the pattern question, since they do

To see how this might work, let's consider an example.[45] Suppose that Nancy is an equilateral rectangle. And suppose that the following fact obtains.

(Grounding Nancy)   The fact that Nancy is an equilateral rectangle **grounds** the fact that Nancy is a square.

(Grounding Nancy) is a particular grounding fact. Perhaps it is grounded in the following general grounding fact together with the particular fact that Nancy is an equilateral rectangle.

(Grounding Square)   For any object x, if x is an equilateral rectangle, then the fact that x is an equilateral rectangle **grounds** the fact that x is a square.

Perhaps there is a reductive analysis of the property *being square*: perhaps *being square* reduces to, or can be analyzed as, the property *being an equilateral rectangle*. The fact that *being square* reduces to, or can be analyzed as, *being an equilateral rectangle* is a fact about the essence of *being square*. And this fact about the essence of *being square* grounds (Grounding Square).

On Rosen's (2010: 122–126) view, when one property reduces to, or can be analyzed as, another, those properties are numerically distinct, even if we can say that one property "just is" the other or that what it is for something to have one property "just is" for it to have the other. Given this way of speaking, perhaps *being square* "just is" *being an equilateral rectangle*, and perhaps what it is for something to be square "just is" for it to be an equilateral rectangle.

Putting it all together, the fact that Nancy is an equilateral rectangle grounds the fact that Nancy is a square. So a particular grounding fact, (Grounding Nancy), obtains. (Grounding Nancy) is grounded in the particular fact that Nancy is an equilateral rectangle together with a general grounding fact, (Grounding Square). And (Grounding Square) is grounded in a fact about the essence of *being square*: namely, the fact that for something to be square "just is" for it to be an equilateral rectangle.

Similarly, perhaps the explanation of why *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* and the other target properties pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones—that is, the answer to the pattern question—is, roughly, that this pattern follows from the essences of the act-correlates of those properties. Recall that, on the grounding view, the following fact obtains.

(Grounding Shine)   The fact that agents who entertain Shine are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny **grounds** the fact that Shine represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny.

(I have renamed '(Fact about Grounding)'). Perhaps (Grounding Shine) is grounded in the following, more general fact together with the fact that agents who perform

the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny and the fact that it is possible to perform that act.

> (Grounding Represent$_2$)   For any act A, if agents who perform A are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny (and it is possible to perform A), then the fact that agents who perform A are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny **grounds** the fact that A represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny.

Perhaps there is a reductive analysis of *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny*: perhaps that property reduces to, or can be analyzed as, the property *being an act such that agents who perform it are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny*. The fact that *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny* reduces to, or can be analyzed as, *being an act such that agents who perform it are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* is a fact about the essence of *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny*. And this fact about the essence of that property grounds (Grounding Represent$_2$).

   If *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny* reduces to, or can be analyzed as, *being an act such that agents who perform it are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny*, then, in Rosen's idiom, for something to have the first property "just is" for it to have the second property. Soames sometimes speaks in something like this way. For example, speaking of a proposition that represents$_2$ an object o as being red, he says, "For it to represent o in this sense [i.e. represent$_2$ o as being red] is simply for any arbitrary agent who entertains it to represent o as being red in the primary sense [i.e. represent$_1$ o as being red]."[46] More generally, he says that "for an act to have a certain property is for an agent who performs it to have a related property."[47]

   Putting it all together, (Fact about Agents) grounds (Fact about a Proposition). So (Grounding S<small>HINE</small>) obtains. (Grounding S<small>HINE</small>) is grounded in the fact that agents who perform the act of predicating *being sunny* of Seattle are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny, the fact that it is possible to perform that act, and a more general grounding fact, (Grounding Represent$_2$). And (Grounding Represent$_2$) is grounded in a fact about the essence of *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny*: namely, that for an act to have that property "just is" for it to be an act such that agents who perform it are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny.

   We could tell a similar story about the other target properties and the extensible properties. The explanation of why the target properties pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones—that is, the answer to the pattern question—might appeal to a plurality of facts about the individual essences of

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[46] Soames (2015: 16). Hanks (2013b: 572–573 n. 12) has a similar sort of view in mind when he says, speaking of his view, "The inheritance model is meant to answer the question about how propositions have truth-conditions, where this is understood as a metaphysical or constitutive question. The question is: what is it for a proposition to have truth-conditions? The answer given by the inheritance model is that a proposition is a type of act of predication, and the possession of truth-conditions by this type is constituted by the possession of truth-conditions by its actual and possible tokens."

[47] Soames (2015: 17).

act-correlates of the target properties and the extensible properties (the inextensible properties would lack act-correlates with the appropriate essences). Or perhaps the explanation would appeal to a single fact about the collective essence of a plurality that includes the act-correlates of the target properties and the extensible properties.[48] Let's call this view *Soamesian essentialism*.[49]

The possibility of Soamesian essentialism suggests that someone who accepts a traditional conception of propositions might accept a view that appeals to one or more essences. Perhaps it lies in the individual nature of SHINE that it represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny; and perhaps it lies in the individual nature of each proposition that it represents$_2$ what it does.[50] Or perhaps it lies in the collective nature of a plurality that includes all the propositions that propositions represent$_2$ what they do. Let's call this view *traditional essentialism*. According to traditional essentialism, it is not a brute fact that SHINE represents$_2$ what it does, although it might be a brute fact that SHINE has the essence that it does. Traditional essentialism is at least in the spirit of Merricks's (2015) view. For example, he says that the claim that propositions necessarily represent$_2$ things as being a certain way is part of his "account of the nature of propositions."[51]

Traditional essentialism might appeal to infinitely many individual essences, one for each proposition; or it might appeal to one collective essence, the essence of a

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[48] Rosen (2010: 131), Fine (2012: 74–76, 2015: 299), Trogdon (2013: 473, 475–476), and Litland (forthcoming: Section 11) allow for appeals to the essences of pluralities. Dasgupta (2014b) doesn't discuss essences of pluralities, but appealing to the essences of pluralities to explain facts about grounding would seem to fit well with his view of grounding, on which pluralities of facts ground pluralities of facts. See Dasgupta (2014a). On essences of pluralities, see Fine (1995: 54–55, 65–66). In the case at hand, it would lie in the collective nature of a plurality of properties that a plurality of facts about grounding obtains. As far as I know, Rosen, Fine, Trogdon, and Litland don't explicitly allow for this sort of appeal to the essence of a plurality, since they don't explicitly allow for it to lie in the nature of some entities that a plurality of facts obtains. But I see no reason why they couldn't allow for that. Alternatively, we could say that it lies in the collective nature of a plurality of properties that (Fact about Grounding) obtains, and likewise for other facts about grounding, but then the properties whose collective nature we are appealing to wouldn't all be constituents of (Fact about Grounding).

[49] SOCRATES: Why does *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* pattern with *being insulting$_1$* rather than with *being an agent$_1$*?

   SOAMESIAN ESSENTIALIST: Because it lies in the nature or essence of *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny*.
   SOCRATES: Why does *representing$_2$ Seattle as being sunny* have the essence it does?
   SOAMESIAN ESSENTIALIST: Maybe it's brute.

[50] Soames might say that it lies in the nature of SHINE that agents who perform it are guaranteed to predicate *being sunny* of Seattle; that it lies in the nature of predication (or perhaps of representation$_1$) that agents who predicate *being sunny* of Seattle represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny; and that it lies in the nature of representation$_2$ (or perhaps of representation$_1$) that, if agents who perform SHINE are guaranteed to represent$_1$ Seattle as being sunny, then SHINE represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny. But, even if so, it would still not lie in the nature of SHINE—or at least not in the *immediate* nature of SHINE—that it represents$_2$ Seattle as being sunny. On the distinction between mediate and immediate essence, see Fine (1995: 61–62). Thanks to Peter Hanks here.

[51] Merricks (2015: 191). Merricks (2015: 191) says, "each propositions essentially represents things as being a certain way." But by that, I take it, he means a claim about necessity rather than about essence. Traditional essentialism is suggested by Ostertag (2013: 519). For a similar view about truth-conditional properties, see McGlone (2010: 447–452). See also McGlone (2012: 223 n. 14).

plurality of propositions. Soamesian essentialism might appeal to infinitely many essences, one for each target property and extensible property; or it might appeal to one collective essence, the essence of a plurality of properties. When it comes to explaining representational$_2$ facts about propositions, Soamesian essentialism does not seem to have an advantage over traditional essentialism here.

According to the grounding view, representational$_1$ facts about agents ground representational$_2$ facts about propositions. This raises the pattern question: namely, why *representing$_1$ Seattle as being sunny* and the other target properties pattern with the extensible properties rather than with the inextensible ones. In this section, I canvassed four responses to the pattern question. The general law response is not promising, and in any case I don't think that it's Soames's response to the pattern question. Soamesian quietism might be disappointing. And the last two responses— the Soamesian brute fact view and Soamesian essentialism—don't seem to have advantages over their traditional counterparts when it comes to explaining representational$_2$ facts about propositions. I conclude that responding to the pattern question remains a problem for the grounding view. I suspect that it remains a problem for Soames's view, too.

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