

# ARTICLES

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## Mental Properties and Levels of Properties<sup>\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

John Heil, independently and with David Robb, has recently proposed a non-traditional conception of properties. This ontology of properties does not allow any higher or lower level or order of being among the properties. Heil and Robb have claimed that their ontology of properties can solve most of the problems in philosophy of mind, because most of these problems are based on a faulty conception of the mental property. They also claim that from their ontology as a consequence it follows that the mental properties are physical properties and we need not introduce the mental property as a distinct property.

This paper argues that their arguments and ontological precepts may show that it is possible to do without a view of mental properties as a higher level property, but thereby they do not also show that it is possible to do without the mental property as a distinct property. It also argues that introduction of distinct property layers need not be the only option available for an anti-reductionist interested in doing metaphysics of mental properties. An anti-reductionist may defend the irreducibility claim of the mental as a distinct property without endorsing the ontology of properties that Heil and Robb find so objectionable. So, the rejection of a layered conception of properties in general need not imply rejection of the claim of the mental as a distinct property.

John Heil, individually<sup>1</sup> and also with David Robb<sup>2</sup>, has recently proposed a somewhat non-traditional ontology of properties which allows for no lev-

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els, higher or lower, of being in reality. Through a critique of what they claim is a more commonly held theory of properties, Heil and Robb have tried to raise questions about the tenability of the metaphysical presuppositions underlying the notion of the mental properties in current theories in philosophy of mind. Their criticisms, if valid, imply that many controversies in philosophy of mind are founded on a misconception about the mental properties and prevalent theories about the mental properties, such as property dualism, are not ontologically correct.

This article is an attempt of an assessment of the claims of this ontology vis-à-vis the mental properties. I argue that their arguments for ontological eradication of the mental property as a higher level property does not entail the ontological abolition of the mental as a distinct property. To think that it does is to conflate between what forms the core in the conceptualization of the mental property in the anti-reductionist theories such as property dualism and what could be deployed by some defenders as an explanatory framework around that core. I contend that the arguments of Heil and Robb are directed towards the latter, and do not touch the former. I end the article with some suggestions about how a theory of the mental can sustain its anti-reductionist character without subscribing to the ontology that Heil and Robb have found objectionable.

### *Section 1. Property Dualism as an example of anti-reductionism*

It is true that contemporary philosophy of mind is replete with talks about the mental properties. For example, for property dualism<sup>3</sup>, which has come to be accepted as a major choice as an anti-reductionist metaphysical alternatives, this notion is pivotal. Property dualism, as a position, claims that

<sup>1</sup> Heil, John. *From an ontological point of view*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). Henceforth in this article referred to as Heil 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Heil, John, and David Robb. "Mental Properties". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 40 No.3 (2003): 175-196. Henceforth in this article referred to as Heil and Robb 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes a cluster of theories are considered under the heading 'Property Dualism'. This is how Paul M Churchland, for instance, approaches the topic of property dualism (see Churchland, 1993, p.10). On the assumption that the diversity in this cluster comes from further additions of details resulting in different versions within the position, in this article I have taken a singular approach. I have referred to property dualism as a certain kind of metaphysical position which allows differences within the position.

though there is no separate substance as the mental substance, there are two basic kinds of properties in the world, the physical (e.g. *having a mass*) and the mental (e.g. *being a belief*, or *being a desire*). In other words, it is held that the objects in the world are fundamentally physical by nature, but under suitable conditions they can have (at most) two different kinds of properties, the physical and the mental. Both kinds of properties are considered to be real and are held as *being not reducible* to each other in the sense of being *different* from each other in some putative sense.

This class distinction between two kinds of properties, which is often labeled as type-dualism in recent literature, is also present in Cartesian substance dualism. In that scheme, however, the type dualism carves reality up into two neat halves. Two entirely different sets or *kinds* of properties or features are supposed to characterize the two different substances, affirming and explaining the essential difference that is supposed to exist between the two kinds of substance. Each exclusive set of properties requires a completely different kind of substance for instantiation.

The type-dualism supported by property dualism is definitely different from this. The type distinction between its two kinds of properties is not a consequence of a corresponding difference at the substance level. Moreover, property dualism allows that two different kinds of properties can be instantiated or co-instantiated in the same physical entity. As for example, a human being can have the physical property of *is 55 Kg (in weight)*, and the mental property of *is a belief that Santa Claus is real*. In fact, the challenge for property dualism is to show how well its ontology can accommodate unexceptionally physical objects with a dualistic division among the properties which characterize these objects. Its critics believe that this uncomfortable metaphysical situation either makes the mental causally impotent towards behavior and leads to epiphenomenalism, or results in causal overdetermination and go against the principle of metaphysical economy. Others<sup>4</sup> do not think so.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Jackson, Frank. “Epiphenomenal qualia”. *Philosophical Quarterly* 32, No.127 (1982): 127-136; Mills, Eugene. “Interaction and overdetermination”, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 33 (1996): 105-15.

Though it is easy to confuse it with predicate dualism, property dualism is not just another name for predicate dualism. While predicate dualism remains satisfied with the claim that the physical and the mental are merely *two different ways of characterizing* the essentially same physical thing, property dualism goes one step further to claim that the two *different types of properties* are the two types of characteristics that the objects really have. Its claims uses the following metaphysical assumption as the backdrop:

*1. Properties, as characteristics of objects, exist*

Different versions of property dualism<sup>5</sup> have emerged which employ different kinds of arguments in support of their thesis. But on the whole, a property dualist seems to favor a certain degree of realism, as is compatible with the different accounts of properties that envisage them as ‘something that is really out there’ and not merely existing as predicates.

**Irreducibility claim:** However, the most distinctively different claim of property dualism as an anti-reductionist theory is that *mental properties exist*. If in the context of dualistic division, the property of *being non-physical* may be taken as coextensive of the property of *being mental*, then we can formulate this important claim of a property dualist as follows:

2. There exists at least one property  $x$  such that  $x$  is not a physical property.  $[(\Box x) (\sim Px)$ , where the universe of discourse is of properties, and  $Px$  stands for  $x$  is physical]

Alternatively, if it is not acceptable to take the property of *being mental* as coextensive to the property of *being non-physical*, the claim may be stated as:

2'. There exists at least one property  $x$  such that  $x$  is a mental property.  $[(\exists x) (Mx)$ , where the universe of discourse is of properties, and  $Mx$  stands for  $x$  is mental ]

I shall refer to this claim as the *irreducibility claim*. 2 or 2' is an unequivocal assertion of the existence of the mental as a property distinct from the

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Churchland, Paul, M. *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993 5<sup>th</sup> Printing), 10-13.

physical property. Unless this claim is held, as I see it, property dualism cannot be distinguished very well from its physicalistic or reductionist counterparts in philosophy of mind. For, as mentioned earlier, property dualism accepts that at the substance level everything is fundamentally physical. Churchland<sup>6</sup> asserts that this important claim identifies the position as dualist. I take the *irreducibility claim* as a core commitment to anti-physicalism or anti-reductionism. It, for example, will form the core of a bare minimum version of property dualism. Heil and Robb suggest that their ontology makes this irreducibility claim entirely redundant. I disagree.

**Higher and lower levels of properties claim:** Discussions in contemporary philosophy of mind often contain a reference to *levels* or *layers of properties*. This does not mean merely that the level of properties is different from the level of the things which they characterize. Different levels are said to exist among the properties. Microphysical properties, neurobiological events and properties in the brain etc. are often supposed to be *lower level* properties. The mental properties and complex physical properties, on the other hand, are unexceptionally said to be *higher level*<sup>7</sup> properties.

Schaffer<sup>8</sup>, for instance, cites a “standard” view of properties which he attributes to Newton to start with and also to contemporary philosophers such as Putnam, Kim, and Fodor<sup>9</sup>. On this view, the properties and the associated sciences are seen as arranged in layers and each higher layer is supposed to supervene on the lower layer. Schaffer describes it as follows:

It is now standard to think of nature as *layered* on which the natural properties are ordered into supervenience families: mental properties, which then

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Chalmers, David. *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996.); Kim, J. *Supervenience and the Mind: Selected Philosophical essays*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Schaffer, Jonathan. "Two conceptions of sparse properties", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004): 92-102.

<sup>9</sup> Fodor, J. "Special sciences and the disunity of science as a working hypothesis", *Synthese*, 28 ((1974):, 77-115.

supervene upon chemical properties, atomic properties, particle properties, quark properties, and perhaps more below. The levels of nature are reflected in the hierarchy of science: psychology, which is above biology, which is then above chemistry, atomic physics, particle physics, quark physics, and perhaps more below<sup>10</sup>.

Heil and Robb interpret those, who place the considerations about the mental property within a theory of higher and lower levels, to assume the following:

- 3. Higher level properties exist and the mental property is one of them.

They cite<sup>11</sup> Putnam and Fodor are to subscribe the view that the same creature can have both the *higher* level property pain and some lower level physical property as the realizer.

In their ontology, Heil and Robb are particularly critical of this layered view of properties, which they claim assume levels of reality. They maintain that it is a fiction created out of false metaphysical expectations.

How does their criticism pertain to the discussion of the mental property in anti-reductionist theories? Heil and Robb appear to think that their ontological criticisms affect it negatively. They suggest that their arguments against the layered view of properties and in favor of a no-layer ontology also show that there is no need to accept the mental as a distinct property. I disagree. In Section 3 of this paper, I argue that their ontological precepts may show that it is possible to do without a view of mental properties as a higher level property, but thereby they do not also show that it is possible to do without the mental property as a distinct property. Moreover, in Section 4, I try to show that 3 need not be the only option available for an anti-reductionist interested in the metaphysics of mental properties. So, rejection of 3 in general need not imply rejection of 2 or 2'. But first, in Section 2, I present a brief summary of the ontology proposed by Heil (2003) and Heil and Robb (2003).

## *2. An Alternative Conception of Property*

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<sup>10</sup>Schaffer, Jonathan, 2004, 92.

<sup>11</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 179.

Heil and Robb (2003) maintain that an ontology of a hierarchically arranged levels of being among the properties owes its existence to some profound misconceptions about the nature of a property. Heil (2003) considers it also at the root of many contemporary philosophical conundrums. As he puts it,

In leaving behind levels, we leave myriad philosophical puzzles. These, if I am right, are puzzles of our own making<sup>12</sup>.

In particular, they claim that abandonment of the notion of hierarchical layers of properties will resolve some of the most vexing controversies in philosophy of mind. According to them, while espousing doctrines about the mental property, recent philosophers of mind should have settled, in particular, their ontology of properties first<sup>13</sup> and then they would have avoided many of the difficulties.

There are well-known “difficult disputes”<sup>14</sup> in metaphysics about how properties are to be conceived. In each of these disputes, Heil and Robb take what they call a non-traditional position. They reject three following widely held doctrines about properties:

- A. *Predicates are related to properties by correspondence*
- B. *Properties are universals*
- C. *Properties are either categorical or dispositional but not both*

In their ontology, properties and predicates are different. Properties are viewed as *the ways a particular object is*. Predicates help to express properties, however, in this ontology in order to be meaningful, every distinct predicate does not have to have a corresponding property that it uniquely designates or names. A predicate may apply to an object, not by virtue of the unique property that it names, but by virtue of some property. It may apply by virtue of salient similarities or resemblances, exact or ranging between *more to less*<sup>15</sup> among certain objects. They say that they also pre-

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<sup>12</sup> Heil (2003), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 190.

<sup>14</sup> Armstrong, D.M. *Truth and Truthmakers*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 43.

<sup>15</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 183.

fer a “sparse”<sup>16</sup> and *in re* notion of properties, favoring only those properties which are determined to exist “by our best scientific effort”<sup>17</sup>. As a result, they reject the notion of properties as universals. Properties exist in their ontology only as particular property-instances<sup>18</sup>, which in the literature are known as *tropes* but Heil prefers to call them *modes*<sup>19</sup>. Each object can have indefinitely many modes, but each mode uniquely characterizes the particular object which has the mode. In their ontology a property is only supposed to characterize, and the unifying role, which is usually understood as the job of a universal (they cite Kim<sup>20</sup> as an example of a view like this), is supposed to be performed by what they call the *types*, which are not properties but are *resemblance classes*. If two objects are of the *same type*, then they both are supposed to have properties belonging to the same *resemblance class*. Similarly, the more traditional way is to view a property as either categorical or dispositional. In fact, some philosophers<sup>21</sup> have envisaged the categorical properties as the lower level properties by virtue of which the dispositional properties as higher level properties can manifest themselves. Following C.B. Martin, however, Heil and Robb consider each property as *both* categorical and dispositional, just regarded from a different aspect<sup>22</sup>. When we put all of these above claims together, they claim that the result is a *no-layers*, lean ontology.

In their view, the layered view of properties stems from a confusion between properties and predicates. They claim that treating predicates as the same or similar to properties exhibits a misplaced faith in the relation predicates (language) have to properties (reality). They claim that under the influence of this wrong notion philosophers such as Block, Fodor and Putnam have allowed their arguments in philosophy of mind to shift from a claim about higher-level predicates to a claim about higher-level properties<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> See for a discussion on “sparse” or minimal notion of property: Swoyer, Chris. “Theories of Properties: From plenitude to paucity.” *Philosophical Perspectives*, 10, Metaphysics. Ed. James E Tomberlin. (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996). 243-44.

<sup>17</sup> Heil and Robb, 186.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Heil (2003), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 178.

<sup>21</sup> Prior, E.W, Pargetter, R, and Jackson, F. “Three theses about dispositions”. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 19 (1982.): 251-257.

<sup>22</sup> Heil and Robb (2003).

<sup>23</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 177, 181.

Also, in their opinion the layered view of properties is at the root of a broad range of currently contested philosophical problems. For example, according to them, if one accepts that there are properties existing in their respective higher and lower levels, then the question rises how and whether the levels are connected causally. They see the controversy with *qualia* also as a problem of levels: it is either seen as a categorical property from one level, or as dispositional property from another level, thus its explanation is never wholly satisfactory to all sides. The solution is, they argue, to discard the multilevel ontology along with its metaphysical assumptions.

### *3. What does it all mean for the mental properties?*

What does this mean for the mental properties? Does this new ‘sparse’, no-layer ontology have no room for the mental properties? Heil and Robb (2003) claim that it does. They say the mental properties are accepted in their ontology as “perfectly real”<sup>24</sup> complex properties, but not as “ontological additions”. Complex properties are supposed to be just elemental properties standing in a certain relation to each other. The creation of a statue, to use Heil’s example<sup>25</sup>, may require a certain complex arrangement of basic particles. From this, it *need not follow* that the universe contains statues *in addition* to the basic particles of physics, because, Heil contends, the *truth-maker* is the same. Every seemingly true statement that is affirmed about the statue, Heil claims, will have some complex arrangement of the basic particles as its *truth-maker*. Yet, he declines to be an eliminativist who claim that there are no statues. For, he argues that a statement such as ‘there are statues’ will be true because its truth-maker will be there<sup>26</sup>.

In other words, in this ontology a mental property is not an “ontological addition”. It is just a complex arrangement of basic physical properties. So, it does not exist “over and above” the physical properties at a higher and irreducible level. At the same time, predicates such as ‘is a belief’ will be meaningful without naming a corresponding property, and statements such as ‘there are beliefs’ or ‘there are desires’ will be true because the *same* truth-makers which would make statements such as ‘there are brain states....’ true will be there.

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<sup>24</sup> Heil (2003), 143.

<sup>25</sup> Heil (2003), 53

<sup>26</sup> Heil, (2003), 189.

Heil and Robb (2003) also mention that their view on the mental properties is compatible to the type-dualist views<sup>27</sup> and that the ‘mental types’,

...are not ontological additions to our world, they are simply more *abstract ways of characterizing physical properties*<sup>28</sup>. (italics mine)

As far as I understand, *ways of characterizations*, as mentioned the quotation cited immediately above, are predicates or descriptions; they do not carve up the reality. They belong to language, exhibiting our linguistic choice for this kind or that kind of expressions. If so, then the type-dualism that Heil and Robb want to endorse regarding the mental cannot be anything more than predicate dualism. In their ontology, then the mental ‘property’ is not really a property, as it is not considered really as “the way an object is”. Instead, it is admitted as one of the ways in which we may choose to describe bits of reality.

Finally, Heil and Robb claim that we may specify a situation in different ways as *Gus is in pain* (expression involving ‘mental’ term) or as *Gus is in brain state B* (expression involving only physical terms), but their truth-maker will be the same; namely, “Gus’s possession of one and the same property”<sup>29</sup>. This shows, they contend, that for the type of expressions containing the mental (a) we do not need to introduce any separate property layers, and (b) we also do not need to introduce separate or distinct property. In their own words:

...these various modes of specification *do not require, for their deployment, in re property layers*. ...such descriptions, while they classify the property differently, *do not introduce distinct properties*.<sup>30</sup> (italics mine)

#### 4. Not a distinct property or not a higher level property?

Is the claim:

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<sup>27</sup> Op.cit, 188.

<sup>28</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 188.

<sup>29</sup> ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 188-189.

(a) We do not need to introduce any separate property layers

equivalent to the claim:

(b) We do not need to introduce a separate or distinct property?

It does not seem so. (a) is an off-shoot from the general rejection of layered conception of properties. (b), on the other hand, is a far more stronger assertion. It is the negation of the irreducibility claim (2 or 2' of Section 1). Admission of (b) throws a serious challenge to all anti-reductionist positions. Moreover, one can agree to (a) without necessarily agreeing to (b). (a), if true, shows that the physical and the mental as properties do not need to be on two separate layers, lower and higher. But strictly speaking, that does not rule out the possibility of the mental being a distinct property at the same level. Elimination of layers in reality by itself does not establish that every property-instance, if it belongs to the same layer, must be the *same* or must be of the *same type*.

If they are not equivalent, then they should not be treated so. We need to evaluate separately which of (a) and (b) follows from what Heil and Robb (2003) state about the mental property. While doing so, we need also to remember what it is that we are evaluating. The question that we are concerned here is not the general question of whether it is possible to have an ontology without the mental as a property. That claim has been voiced by different groups of reductionists, physicalists, materialists, for years. Our task is to determine whether (b) *in this case* is supported by the arguments provided by Heil and Robb or not. Do their arguments show:

(a') the mental properties need not exist as higher level properties ?

Or, do they show that:

(b') the mental properties need not exist as distinct properties?

In order to close in on this, a good place to start is a direct quotation from them. Let me use a previously cited quotation from them again:

...these various modes of specification *do not require, for their deployment, in re property layers.* ...such descriptions, while they

classify the property differently, *do not introduce distinct properties.*<sup>31</sup> (italics mine)

Each of their arguments for the alleged misplaced faith in property-predicate correspondence, against universals, the supposedly indistinguishable nature of categorical and dispositional properties seem to lend support for the conclusion (a'): that an ontology can do without positing additional, hierarchical layers of being within reality. In their ontology, the connection between objects, as “property-bearers” or “propertied entities”, and properties is envisioned to be inseparable<sup>32</sup>, so this ontology does not allow different levels of being between objects and properties. They do not allow transcendental or immanent universals, hence for them there is no need for a higher ontological layer or plane to house the universals. They do not admit any level difference between categorical and dispositional properties either. Since there are no higher ontological levels, it follows that there are no higher-level properties also which “depend on, but are not reducible to, lower levels”<sup>33</sup>. If there are no higher level properties, clearly the mental property cannot be one of them. So, there is support in their arguments for the conclusion (a').

But I do not see how the same arguments can also show that (b'): that the mental properties need not be properties distinct from the basic physical properties. Heil and Robb state that “the mental properties *are ...physical properties*”<sup>34</sup> follows as a consequence of their metaphysical position is. From which premises? As mentioned above, Heil and Robb try to answer this through an argument invoking parsimony: having the *same truth-makers*. In Heil (2003) Heil states it somewhat differently. He claims that if complex properties, even when they are “perfectly real”, are allowed to exist additionally as properties, then “sparseness evaporates”<sup>35</sup>. Let us look closely at both of these.

What exactly does having the *same truth-maker* show? A truth-maker is supposed to be a fact or a state of affair, or “some portion of reality”<sup>36</sup>, which makes a true statement about it true. Armstrong sees it as a cross-

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<sup>31</sup> ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Heil (2003), 172.

<sup>33</sup> Heil (2003), 7.

<sup>34</sup> Heil and Robb (2003), 188.

<sup>35</sup> Heil (2003), 143.

<sup>36</sup> Armstrong (2004), 5.

categorial relation, in which one of the relata is a truth or a proposition, and the other is some entity or item in the world<sup>37</sup>. There is no restriction on what a truth-maker has to be in order to make a true statement true: it can be whatever it takes to make the statement true.

Heil in his example of a statue combines with this truth-making a claim about metaphysical parsimony. Some dynamic arrangement of basic particles is supposed to be the *same truth-maker* for every possible true statement about the statue. This I understand as the claim that there will be a core set of properties which being basic will suffice as the common, shared truth-makers for *every* true statement about the statue. Similarly, we are supposed to assume that *every* true assertions or specifications about the mental will be made true by a common core set which will also act as *the same truth-makers* for the true statements about the physical.

But the mere fact that many true statements may share a group of properties as the *same truth-makers* does not by itself warrant the conclusion that other properties need not exist. For example, it is trivially true that every truth about this world has the world as the least common or the maximal truth-maker. From this, it does not follow that the existence of other properties as truth-makers is redundant. Even if we treat the claim of Heil and Robb of having the *same truth-makers* as having the same common *minimal truth-makers*<sup>38</sup>, even then the conclusion that they are after does not strictly follow. For, in a broad sense, some overlapping set of particles and their arrangement can certainly suffice as the same common minimal truth-makers for different truths. What makes it true that ‘My hair exists’ basically and minimally also makes ‘I as a human being exist’ true. From that fact, it does not follow that we need not introduce any distinct property which makes any of these distinct truths *individually* or *separately true*. Parsimony is not a blind metaphysical tool.

If we recall their discussion about the expressions ‘Gus is in pain’ and ‘Gus is in brain state B’, we shall find that Heil and Robb assume that both of these expressions can be made true by “one and the same property”. One

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> “If T is a minimal truthmaker for  $p$ , then you cannot subtract anything from T and the remainder will still be a truth-maker for  $p$ ”, Armstrong (2004), 19-20.

might say that their claim may be interpreted as, not about maximal or common minimal, but about unique minimal truth-makers: both expressions have some property as identical *unique minimal truth-maker*. For a true assertion, a *unique minimal truth-maker* is supposed to be *one and exactly one*. However, this line of reasoning seems doubtful to me. For, all we know, there exists some property  $p$  that makes ‘Gus is in brain state  $B$ ’ true, and there exists some property  $p'$  which makes ‘Gus is in pain’ true. What ensures that  $p$  and  $p'$  are “one and the same”, i.e., not two? For, the ontology of properties of Heil and Robb is an ontology of modes or tropes. And an ontology of modes (tropes) allows the possibility of two exactly similar, yet numerically distinct, particulars. In this respect, tropes or modes, as particular entities, are said to defy the principle of identity of indiscernibles<sup>39</sup>. For the sake of argument, let us suppose that the modes of Heil and Robb follow this notion of particularity: that they can be exactly similar qualitatively yet be numerically distinct. Given this, in their ontology there is no *non-circular way* to establish that  $p$  and  $p'$  will be “one and the same”. Unless we *presume* already that the mental properties need not be among the properties, the claim about the *same truth-makers* do not rule out the possibility that we may still need the mental as a distinct property.

Can the appeal to “sparse” conception of properties preferred by Heil and Robb be used as a handy criterion to eliminate the mental property as a distinct property? Not, according to some. Schaffer<sup>40</sup>, for example, has argued that a “sparse” conception of property does not and need not exclude the mental property as a distinct property. Rather, he maintains that a “sparse” conception can be revised and redefined to include all such properties which, even if they do not belong to the micro-level fundamental physics, need to be invoked for a *total* “scientific understanding” of the world. This, on his view, includes the properties of mind as ontologically at par with the properties of the molecules.

Moreover, sparseness cannot be the ultimate guiding metaphysical criterion for allowing entities in this ontology of modes. As Heil himself notes<sup>41</sup>, the number of modes or particular property-instances or ways that each object is, will always exceed the number of objects in this ontology.

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<sup>39</sup> Williams, D.C.“Universals and Existents”. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (1986): 3.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Schaffer (2004), Chalmers (1996).

<sup>41</sup> Heil (2003), 142.

This ontology admits unifying notions such as *types of modes* and some might argue that the typification of modes in this case may serve as a move to economize or to manage the plenitude of modes. However, we need to remind ourselves that in this ontology types do not occupy any ontological space. They merely help to classify the modes. Thus, bringing the modes or tropes under them does not really help to empty some ontological space. They merely classify the modes without helping to decrease the number of modes.

#### *4. What does it all mean for antireductionist positions?*

Heil, and Robb, have brought to our attention the need to do metaphysics before doing philosophy of mind or cognitive science. They have also indicated that upholding a certain conception of properties can help us to do without a *layered conception of mental properties* that may be prevalent in the literature. Does this show that doing metaphysics of properties can necessarily lead a philosopher of mind only to the kind of weak predicate dualism that Heil and Robb endorse? Does this show that property dualism or any other anti-reductionist theory, which considers the mental property as a property i.e. as an ontologically irreducible item, is necessarily false or is mistaken?

I do not think so. It is a mistake to assume that the irreducibility claim of the mental (2 or 2' of Section 1) is a *consequence* or a *conclusion* that can be arrived *only* on the back of a claim of the mental property being a higher level property (3 of Section 1). The *irreducibility claim* of the mental property need not be considered as inalienably tied up with, or ensuing as a conclusion only from, a layered view of properties. It is possible to separate the irreducibility claim both analytically and ontologically from a layered view of the properties. That is, within an anti-reductionist position it is possible to defend 2 (or 2'), i.e. mental properties exist, without necessarily subscribing to 3, i.e. higher levels of properties exist and mental property is one of them. Just because A and B, two properties, are not reducible to each other in some sense, does not mean strata of being must separate them, or that any one of them has to be *higher* or *lower* in the order of being than the other. One may try the theory of *higher* and *lower* levels as a way to defend the irreducibility of the mental, but it need not be the only way to do so. Also, in the preceding section, I have argued that the ontology of Heil and Robb may be successful to persuade us to give up a view

of the world as containing stacked up hierarchies of properties and objects, with levels of being, but it does not satisfactorily show that the mental property is not needed as a distinct property.

Literature shows that the notion of irreducibility of the mental has received different treatment in the hands of different proponents. Where *p-types* represent the physical property group and the *m-types* represent the mental property group, given below are some of the different interpretations that the irreducibility claim of the mental property has received. These are not equivalent claims. If nothing else, they at least show that it is possible to conceptualize the irreducibility of the mental property in more than one way. Among these, only (g) explicitly appeals to different orders of reality:

- (a) *m-types* are not causally dependent on the *physical states* such as *brain states* or neurobiological states of the body<sup>42</sup>.
- (b) *m-types* can not ever be explained solely in terms of the concepts of the physical sciences<sup>43</sup>
- (c) *m-types* are not ontologically dependent on the *p-types*<sup>44</sup>
- (d) *m-types* are not logical consequences of the *p-types*<sup>45</sup>
- (e) *m-types* and *p-types* are not occupants of the identical functional role.
- (f) *m-types* are not just organizational features of physical matter<sup>46</sup>

To these, we can add also:

- (g) *m-types*, as a higher level property, cannot be given a complete and a satisfactory explanation in terms of the lower level physical properties.

In addition, there are other possibilities. Searle suggests a promising alternative. In Searle's metaphysics, the physical and the mental properties do not occupy two orders of being. For the sake of explanation, he allows consciousness to be understood as a high level system feature, but that does not mean it exists over and above the physical states and their properties. Yet, the mental is viewed to retain its distinction as an ontologically

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<sup>42</sup> Searle, John, R. "Why I am not a property dualist". *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 9, No.12 (2002): 57-64. This is how Searle 2002 interprets property dualism, but Searle does not consider himself a property dualist.

<sup>43</sup> Churchland 1993, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Kripke 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Chalmers, 1996

<sup>46</sup> Churchland, 1993, 12.

irreducible property from the unique way in which we experience it. In his own words:

But in the case of consciousness, causal reducibility does not lead to ontological reducibility. From the fact that consciousness is entirely accounted for causally by neuron firings, for example, it does not follow that consciousness is nothing but neuron firings. Why not? What is the difference between consciousness and other phenomena that undergo an ontological reduction on the basis of a causal reduction, phenomena such as colour and solidity? The difference is that consciousness has a first-person ontology; that is, it only exists as experienced by some human or animal, and therefore, it cannot be reduced to something that exists independently of experiences<sup>47</sup>.

Sure, an anti-reductionist has a responsibility to metaphysically ground her claim of irreducibility. But, she has many choices. She may opt for Searle's understanding of ontological irreducibility to construct the rest of the theory of a mental property. Or, she may take the irreducibility of the mental property as a primitive notion or a brute. That is, it can be taken as a notion that is not further analyzable in terms of any further characteristics of the mental or that of the physical. This alternative does not preclude further theorization, as Heil and Robb state, “every theory must take some notions as primitive”<sup>48</sup> and their theory takes the similarity among the properties as primitive. Rather, it becomes the bulwark from which then a property dualist can build the rest of the account. This premise of distinctness between the mental and the physical as a given in the theory may create a metaphysical distance between the two, but it does not need to involve two separate orders of being. But it certainly does not warrant envisioning them as two separate realms with no bridge in between. In any case, she does not have to embrace the layered ontology of properties that Heil and Robb find so unacceptable.

To conclude, rejection of a layered ontology does not show that the basic irreducibility claim of antireductionist theories such as property dualism must also be forsaken. This is why, contrary to what Heil and Robb claim, dismissal of higher and lower property layers does not effectively solve the “myriad philosophical puzzles” in philosophy of mind. They may wrongly suppose that all of them come from conceiving the mental property as a higher-level property, when actually many of the problems stem from a ba-

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<sup>47</sup> Searle, 2002, 60.

<sup>48</sup> Heil and Robb, 184.

sic claim of irreducibility of the mental. For example, they claim that the problem of *causal relevance* of the mental will go away, once we accept their zero-level metaphysics. Since in their ontology there will be no property layers, higher and lower, competing for causal relevance, so they argue that there will be no question about whether and how the mental can be causally relevant for behavior. But the problem of causal relevance poses a different question that starts from the irreducibility claim: How can the mental be causally relevant to our behavior in a causally closed universe, *given that the mental exists?* It is a problem *only if* one's metaphysics is anti-reductionist. The “solution” that Heil and Robb offer does not address the irreducibility claim that is built into the premise of the problem and merely dismisses the problem as a non-issue once the metaphysical levels are collapsed.