Comments on Mark Kalderon's "The Open Question Argument, Frege's Puzzle, and

Leibniz's Law"

A standard strategy for defending a claim of non-identity is one which invokes

Leibniz's Law.

(1) Fa
(2) ~Fb
(3) $(\forall x)(\forall y)(x=y \supset (\forall P)(Px \supset Py))$
(4) $a=b \supset (Fa \supset Fb)$
(5) $a \neq b$

In Kalderon's view, this basic strategy underlies both Moore's Open Question Argument

(OQA) as well as (a variant formulation of) Frege's puzzle (FP). In the former case, the

argument runs from the fact that some natural property—call it "F-ness"—has, but

goodness lacks, the (2nd order) property of its being an open question whether everything

that instantiates it is good to the conclusion that goodness and F-ness are distinct. And in

the latter case, the argument runs from the fact that that Hesperus has, but Phosphorus

lacks, the property of being believed by the ancient astronomers to be visible in the

evening sky to the conclusion that Hesperus and Phosphorus are distinct.

Kalderon argues that both the OQA and FP fail because in neither case is there

good reason to believe that both (1) and (2) are true. The reason we are tempted to

believe that they are true is because we mistake de dicto claims for de re claims. In order

for FP to go through, the truth of the following de re claims needs to be established:

FP1) Hesperus was believed by the ancient astronomers to be visible in the
evening sky.
FP2) Phosphorus was not believed by the ancient astronomers to be visible in the
evening sky.

But what we have grounds to believe are the corresponding de dicto claims:

> FP1') The ancient astronomers believed that Hesperus is visible in the evening sky.
> FP2') The ancient astronomers did not believe that Phosphorus is visible in the evening sky.

Similarly, in order for the OQA to go through, the truth of the following de re claims needs to be established:

> OQA1) F-ness is such that it is an open question whether everything that instantiates it is good
>
> OQA2) Goodness is not such that it is an open question whether everything that instantiates it is good.

But again, all we have good grounds to believe are the corresponding de dicto claims:

> OQA1') It is an open question whether everything that instantiates F-ness is good
>
> OQA2') It is not an open question whether everything that instantiates goodness is good.

Now as far as it goes, Kalderon's argument is right-headed, but it needs to go a lot further. In particular, he needs to establish that the truth of the de re claims at issue does not simply follow from the truth of the corresponding de dicto claims. He does present the following argument against (OQA1):

> "…the is no reason to believe the de re premise without antecedently believing that F-ness is distinct from goodness. After all, if you believe of F-ness that it is goodness, then it will not be an open question of F-ness whether everything that instantiates it is good. So, if one is initially agnostic about the conclusion of OQA…one should be agnostic about F-ness being such that it is an open question of whether everything that instantiates it is good." (p. 11)

And he presents a distinct argument against (FP2):

> "…it is overwhelmingly plausible that [(FP2)] is false. When the ancient astronomers looked into the night sky and saw Venus, they believed of it that it is

visible in the evening. But this is precisely what the corresponding de re claim denies." (p. 12)

The trouble with this pair of arguments is that they do not reflect a consistent account of the conditions under which de re claims can be derived from de dicto claims. Moreover, the argument against (FP2) is at risk of begging the question against FP.

Consider, first, the argument against (OQA1). The argument presupposes that (OQA2) can be inferred from (OQA2'), a *negative* de dicto claim, but that (OQA1) cannot be inferred from (OQA1'), a *positive* de dicto claim. And the move from (OQA2) to (OQA1) is resisted by denying our dialectical entitlement to the conclusion of the argument: the non-identity of F-ness and goodness.[1] Consider, second, the argument against (FP2). This argument presupposes that from (FP1'), a *positive* de dicto claim, (FP1) can be inferred, but that (FP2) cannot be inferred from (FP2'), a negative de dicto claim. And the inference from (FP1) to (FP2) is blocked by the derivation of the negation of (FP2) from (FP1) together with the identity of Hesperus and Phosphorus. Now, as should be obvious, this latter move assumes the falsity of the conclusion of FP; but insofar as the cogency of FP is what is at issue, agnosticism as to its conclusion is the proper attitude.[2] But the real problem is that we lack a general analysis of de dicto and de re claims which yields an account of conditions under the latter claims can be inferred from the former. And, as a result, we lack any genuine assurance that appeal to the de re/de dicto distinction will undermine either FP or OQA.

---

[1] It is worth noting that even if we were entitled to the conclusion of OQA, this would not suffice for the truth of (OQA1). It would simply give grounds to refrain from believing its negation. One wonders what would suffice for the truth of (OQA1), on Kalderon's view, if not some inference from (OQA1').
[2] Note also that one can give the same argument for (FP2) that Kalderon gave for (FP1): when the ancient astronomers looked into the *morning* sky and saw Venus, they did not believe of it that it is visible in the evening.

But a Fregean analysis will serve just this purpose. Let 'm(p)' denote the mode of presentation associated with expression p, and 'xMPy' abbreviate 'x is a mode of presentation of y'. Consider, first, FP. We can analyze the de dicto claims (FP1') and (FP2') as,

F-FP1') Bel (AA, <m('Hesperus'), m('is visible in the evening sky')>)

F-FP2') ~Bel (AA, <m('Phosphorus'), m('is visible in the evening sky')>).

And we can analyze the de re claims as,

F-FP1) $\exists$m($_m$MP$_{Hesperus}$ & Bel (AA, <m, m('is visible in the evening sky')>))

F-FP2) ~$\exists$m($_m$MP$_{Phosphorus}$ & Bel (AA, <m, m('is visible in the evening sky')>)).

What is important to note is that, on this analysis, whereas (F-FP1) follows (more or less trivially) from (F-FP1'), (F-FP2) does not follow from (F-FP2'). All that follows is,

F-FP2*) $\exists$m($_m$MP$_{Phosphorus}$ & ~Bel (AA, <m, m('is visible in the evening sky')>)),

in which the tilde has narrow, rather than wide scope.[3] As should be obvious, this Fregean analysis of de re and de dicto belief claims undermines FP.

A similar analysis undermines OQA. We can (loosely) analyze the de dicto claims (OQA1') and (OQA2') as,

F- OQA1') OQ<m($\forall$), m('F-ness'), m('goodness')>

F- OQA2') ~OQ<m($\forall$), m('goodness'), m('goodness')>

where '$\forall$' denotes a second order relation that is satisfied by a pair of properties just in case everything that instantiates the first property also instantiates the second. And the de dicto claims (OQA1) and (OQA2) can be analyzed as,

F- OQA1) $\exists$m($_m$MP$_{F-ness}$ & OQ<m($\forall$), m, m('goodness')>)

---

[3] This suggests that Kalderon is wrong to suggest that the Fregean would deny FP1 while assenting to FP2 (p. 6).

F- OQA2) $\sim\exists m(_mMP_{goodness}$ & OQ<m($\forall$), m, m('goodness')>).

As before, whereas (F-OQA1) follows from (F-OQA1') on this analysis, (F-OQA2) does not follow from (F-OQA2'). All that follows is,

F- OQA2*) $\exists m(_mMP_{goodness}$ & $\sim$OQ<m($\forall$), m, m('goodness')>).

And the truth of (F-OQA1) and (F-OQA2*) does not suffice for the non-identity of F-ness and goodness.

To sum up: I do agree that invoking the de re/ de dicto distinction is the right strategy for undermining OQA and FP. But I think in lieu of an analysis of de re and de dicto claims the strategy is not adequately implemented. I do not insist upon a Fregean analysis, although I think it is plausible one. Any analysis which blocks at least one of the inferences from the de dicto claim to the corresponding de re claim will be satisfactory. But the mere invocation of the de re/de dicto distinction alone will not.

Peter Alward
Department of Philosophy
University of Lethbridge
4401 University Dr.
Lethbridge, AB T1K 3M4
peter.alward@uleth.ca