

## IS THE ARGUMENT THAT UNIVERSALLY PREFERRED BEHAVIOUR IS MORALLY USEFUL CORRECT?

Stefan Molyneux has attempted to ground good behaviour without using God or religion to do it. He calls it universally preferred behaviour. "These preferences, furthermore, have to do with morality, behavior that can be forcibly imposed on people. 'Those preferences which can be considered binding upon others can be termed 'universal preferences' or 'moral rules'".

Universally preferred behaviour is based on and inclusive of,

The scientific method

Logic

Empiricism

Debating

Language

Ethics

What if God commands such a morality? Then it changes to universally preferred behaviour as defined by God. But God would be surplus and bringing him in shows that you merely want to use him as a prop for you think the ethic cannot hold its own.

Molyneux uses test cases. He says that we should have beliefs that help get the right answer to dealing with things such as rape and murder and theft. He says that his principle of universally preferred behavior does that. If it does, then even if it is problematic in many ways it could still be better than Christianity or anything else we have got. It is a problem how religions and politicians preach about treating people with dignity but ignore the main test cases. The patriarchal misogyny of the Church means that the endless abuse of women in society is not costing it any sleep.

But how does he turn the right treatment say of a rape victim into a moral obligation? He answers that if rape is morally good then not raping must be a moral evil. He says it makes no sense to say that a man who rapes and one who does not are both morally good or moral at the one time. What does he mean? As he says universally as in universally preferable behaviour is the criteria to see if somebody is moral, he ends up with,

Rape is only morally wrong if all people do it all the time. Occasionally is fine especially when the rapist won't get caught

And worse. Hypothetically, if rapists could live in a world more like that, they should.

Such a teaching means your heart is not closed to rape and that ultimately makes you part of the problem of rapists even if you never attack anyone.

Molyneux is aware of how theft is a contradiction for it is asserting that you have the right to own like everybody else and then going against that. Rape is theft of the body of another sexually. But if the exercise is that logical what do we need Molyneux's UPB for?

Molyneux writes,

1. Truth is universally preferable to falsehood. i.e. it is not a subjective opinion, but arguments which conform to reason and evidence.
2. It is universally preferable for my arguments to be rational, and not irrational.
3. It is universally preferable for me not to contradict myself.
4. In the realm of rational argument, success is universally preferable to failure, and success and failure are not subjective outcomes.

That is a good answer.

To do no harm and to do some good are two separate issues and ideals. To do no harm matters more than doing some good because if harm does not matter then doing good cannot. The sheer logic of this shows that morality is indeed rational even if we are not sure how. Sometimes something is hard to put down as sensible until you see what conclusions you get. You

may not understand how the maths worked out but the end result shows you have got it right.

You could say that is all we need to say about the validity of the universally preferred behaviour way of thinking.

The universal preferred behaviour may be about ethics but only partly. Ethics is a subset of it. For that reason Molyneux cannot treat biological laws as the same as moral laws or as showing us anything about what a moral law should be like. Yet he thinks he can, "It is impossible that anyone can logically argue against universally preferable behavior, since if he is alive to argue, he must have followed universally preferable behaviors such as breathing, eating and drinking." The reason biological laws tell us nothing is that unlike ethics they are involuntary and nothing has set them up. Ethics involves personal agency. Drinking something is a choice but the effects of it are not.

Molyneux interestingly says that we own our bodies and our selves. Thus we own the effects of what we do no matter what we do. We own what we make or create or produce. If you create a murder you own the murder. If you create a sculpture you own it.

The universally preferred behaviour argument could be one of those things which has some kind of force even if you don't know exactly how. It is much better than believers trying to ground morality in God for they as good as say their stance eludes proof but there is something persuasive about it.

