It's in the words (I)

How you are owned

Perhaps I have not written enough about the obligation to take care of the children - within the family - being the most fundamental and source of all other obligations: the *mother* of all obligations - starting with the obligation towards the parents, which is just <u>a projection of it onto the child</u>. But it's all in the words anyway, and easily understood that way.

The word *mother* is one of those, of course, used by children to refer to certain primary female caregiver. You probably refer to your own mother this way most often. But what about her? Does she call you "child", "son" or "daughter", or does she use your name - a name *she* gave you?

'Honour thy parents' is a false commandment - as any commandment is false. It is the root of all trauma, and of any religious or statist ideology that ever was and ever will be. Alice Miller showed this well through writings based on her own experience. A good stab at the problem is to be found in the logical analysis made by Stefan Molyneux in <u>this book</u>. "Parents" ("father", "mother"...) are referred to as *concepts* by this commandment. If you honour a concept that a certain individual happens to fit by accident (you had no choice in being born to these particular people) then you are honouring an arbitrary individual and not a universal concept such as "parents".

The problem with this approach, though, is that concepts can be narrowed down to fit particular cases and still remain universal in nature. My phone is an iPhone, which is a concept that *universally* describes a set of all the phones in the world that fit certain characteristics. The concept "my phone" is an even narrower set of phones, consisting of one item that fits the characteristics of being mine. Similarly, "my parents" is a very valid universal concept, and this is how Stefan Molyneux's reasoning is flawed (for other instances of the same error with his understanding of concepts, see <u>this article</u>). Any proponent of 'honour thy parents' can argue this to show there is no conceptual inconsistency in it. If the proposition "I own my iPhone" is correct, then the proposition "honour your iPhone" makes perfect sense and is something I can do without risking being inconsistent - albeit a bit mad.

Stefan's reasoning is still a good one, because it shows how important it is to understand concepts, and because it is true that people do use the word "parents" as a universal concept that applies to everyone *and* as a local concept to refer to particular people, which is an inconsistency. **But to be correct one has to simply admit that no positive moral obligations can be drawn from reality.** If I can just say "honour your parents", then I can also just say "do not honour your parents" and be just as "right". If I can say "honour your iPhone" then I can also say "honour your Samsung Galaxy" and think I am pointing people in a rational direction...

But of course none of this is rational.

For concepts to be valid and rational they have to be drawn from reality, not imposed on

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reality. The concept "parents" comes from reality only inasmuch as you are the result of a certain sperm cell blending with a certain egg. In our evolutionary past women used to have intercourse with many males (as bonobos do) and it was difficult to tell whose the children were, so the concept "parents" would have been a difficult one then. It is also a difficult one now if you are a woman who likes to have sex with different men. And even if you are able to spot whose it is, why would you or he care? How to determine that one is morally "the one" for the child, and not somebody else whose sperm happened to win?

None of this is very rational when we are talking about morality - not biology.

"Honour thy parents" is a moral commandment. It only makes sense if we think of the concept "parents" as a moral one, which is the equivalent of attributing moral quality to any random biological thing.

Morality is, of course, about *behaviour*, not biological identity. That is what the commandment intends to modify and justify: behaviour. It is used to modify or affect the behaviour of the child, and justify the behaviour of the parents whatever it may be. I could hit and torture my child and appeal to this principle in order to be "justified" and forgiven, because I am "the father"... This being an invalid and whimsical proposition means it can only be violently imposed on reality. Families strive to stay together all in the light of this inconsistency and irrationality that lies at the core, in *the meaning of the words* they utter.

If I have to live by the principle "honour your iPhone", then I have to keep it regardless of how it performs. If it crashes and gets slow or unpredictable, it would be bad for me to get upset, or feel any sort of feelings that indicate I reject this phone and want to get away from it. If we have a "row" because things are not going well between us, it will always be resolved by some negotiation over how we are going to *continue* being together. This means that my possession of the iPhone is as if written in stone. I cannot ever relinquish my ownership of this phone; even if it "goes away" - because I put it in the recycle bin - I would feel very sad and always keep its precious little electronic self in my heart (!)

Does this make any sense really from the perspective of owning this iPhone? No. It makes sense from the perspective of the *iPhone owning me*.

Thus, what moral commandments do is establish people ownership. "Honour thy parents" is the equivalent of "you are the property of your parents".

Most of the time people refer to their parents as "mum" or "dad", this is what lives in the back of their minds, and deep within their hearts: that they are talking to people who are morally higher than themselves by some made-up decree; that they are talking to their owners.