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Victor Frankenstein’s Responsibility and Modern Scientific Accountability

A central theme throughout Frankenstein is that the creation of life carries a profound realm of possibilities. Although, this comes with a variety of ethical and moral concerns. The events following Victor’s creation and subsequent abandonment prompt a discussion on the accountability of modern scientists, as well as the unintended consequences of their innovations. This is currently a widespread theme with the growing popularization of AI and Deep learning principles that seek to imitate or mimic human behaviors. Things like Natural Language Processors have allowed GPT to grow closer to mimicking the speech patterns of humans. Innovations like this raise similar ethical considerations to those posed in Frankenstein.

Victor felt horror in bringing the creature to life, he was appalled at his creation and subsequently abandoned it. “I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inert mass” (Shelley, 1818). Moreover, Victor’s immediate regret of his actions is what prompted his abandonment of the creature. As the creature was left alone, it experienced rejection and isolation. Saying things like, “I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me” (Shelley 1818). The creature is left to navigate the world alone and the creature's misery leads to aggression. Victor’s immediate horror and regret after bringing his creation to life demonstrate the consequences of irresponsible innovation, a theme that resonates strongly with modern scientific endeavors. His abandonment of the creature parallels current concerns in the development of technologies like artificial intelligence, where creators may not fully anticipate or take responsibility for the ethical implications of their work. The creature’s feelings of isolation and rejection serve as a poignant metaphor for the unintended consequences of technological advancements that, while innovative, may result in unforeseen societal harm when not properly guided.

The rapid advancements in genetic engineering, including gene editing technologies like CRISPR, introduce significant ethical dilemmas. The ability to alter genetic material raises questions about long-term consequences and potential risks to human health and biodiversity. As one study highlights, “The potential for unforeseen effects from gene editing highlights the need for stringent ethical guidelines” (Smith, 2021). Without careful oversight, these technologies could lead to outcomes that echo the neglect Victor displayed toward his creation. Similarly, the responsibilities of AI developers are paramount, especially concerning the potential harm their innovations can cause. Instances of AI systems leading to discrimination or unintended bias underscore the importance of ethical oversight in this rapidly evolving field. As noted, “AI technologies can perpetuate bias and lead to unintended consequences, necessitating responsible development practices” (Johnson, 2022). Just as Victor failed to consider the implications of his creation, modern scientists and developers must grapple with the ethical ramifications of their work.

Drawing parallels between Victor’s abandonment and modern scientific oversight reveals a critical lesson: neglecting ethical implications can lead to catastrophic outcomes. The disregard for ethical considerations in scientific innovation, as highlighted in recent analyses, “can have far-reaching consequences” (Williams, 2023). Victor’s tale serves as a cautionary reminder that the act of creation is not merely an achievement of science but a profound moral responsibility.To address these concerns, there is a pressing need for ethical frameworks that guide scientists in their pursuits. Just as Victor’s neglect contributed to the tragic outcomes of his story, contemporary scientists risk similar pitfalls without established guidelines. Expert opinions suggest that “Scientists must prioritize ethical implications alongside technological progress” (Williams, 2023). Such frameworks could provide crucial oversight and prevent negligence in scientific advancements, ensuring that innovations do not come at the cost of societal well-being.

A central theme throughout *Frankenstein* is the idea that the creation of life carries profound possibilities. However, with these possibilities come a host of ethical and moral concerns. The events following Victor’s creation and subsequent abandonment of the creature prompt a discussion on the accountability of modern scientists and the unintended consequences of their innovations. This theme is especially relevant today with the rapid development of technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning, which seek to mimic or imitate human behaviors. As advancements in AI continue, such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) models that allow systems like GPT to simulate human speech, we face similar ethical concerns to those raised in *Frankenstein*. Just as Victor failed to foresee the consequences of bringing his creation to life, modern scientists and developers must consider the potential societal impacts of their innovations.

Victor Frankenstein’s reaction to his creation is one of immediate horror and regret. As he reflects, “I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inert mass” (Shelley, 1818). The instant revulsion he feels upon seeing the creature is what prompts him to abandon it. Left to navigate the world alone, the creature experiences rejection and isolation, lamenting, “I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me” (Shelley, 1818). This isolation eventually leads to the creature’s aggression and violence. Victor’s abandonment of his creation serves as a warning about the consequences of irresponsible innovation, a theme that resonates strongly in modern scientific fields like AI. Today, creators of complex systems like AI sometimes fail to anticipate or take responsibility for the ethical implications of their work. The creature’s experience of rejection mirrors the unintended consequences of technological advancements that, while impressive, can cause unforeseen societal harm when not properly guided.

The discussion of unintended consequences is particularly relevant in fields like genetic engineering, where innovations like CRISPR have introduced unprecedented ethical dilemmas. The ability to edit genetic material opens the door to a range of possibilities, but it also raises questions about long-term consequences and risks to human health and biodiversity. As Smith (2021) notes, “The potential for unforeseen effects from gene editing highlights the need for stringent ethical guidelines.” Without careful oversight, technologies like CRISPR could result in outcomes that echo Victor Frankenstein’s neglect of his creation. Just as Victor did not fully comprehend the scope of his actions, modern scientists must grapple with the profound responsibility that comes with manipulating the fundamental building blocks of life.

AI development poses its own set of ethical challenges. In recent years, AI systems have shown the potential to reinforce biases or perpetuate harmful outcomes, often due to the data they are trained on or the way they are programmed. Johnson (2022) discusses how “AI technologies can perpetuate bias and lead to unintended consequences, necessitating responsible development practices.” In much the same way that Victor Frankenstein failed to account for the creature’s potential suffering, developers of AI systems must acknowledge and address the ethical implications of their creations. If left unchecked, AI could lead to widespread societal disruptions, including job displacement, privacy violations, and exacerbated inequalities.These outcomes reflect a broader concern about innovation that prioritizes technological advancement over ethical considerations.

Victor Frankenstein’s story can be seen as a cautionary tale for the scientific community today. His neglect of the ethical dimensions of his work ultimately leads to disaster, both for himself and for those around him. Modern scientific pursuits, whether in genetic engineering, AI development, or other fields, must be guided by strong ethical frameworks to prevent similar outcomes. As Williams (2023) argues, “Scientists must prioritize ethical implications alongside technological progress.” This approach ensures that innovation is not solely driven by the desire to push boundaries but also by a commitment to societal well-being and moral responsibility. Without these safeguards, the risks of harm increase exponentially, as technologies with far-reaching consequences are introduced without adequate foresight or control.

Additionally, scientific accountability today demands a level of transparency and responsibility that Victor Frankenstein lacked. The ethical missteps in *Frankenstein* highlight the dangers of isolating scientific endeavors from broader societal impacts. Franklin (2019) discusses how “The moral obligations of scientists extend beyond their laboratories; they must also consider how their work will affect the world at large.” The creation of life, or any significant scientific breakthrough, is not simply a technical achievement—it carries moral weight. For Victor, his failure to engage with the consequences of his actions led to the tragic downfall of both himself and his creation. For modern scientists, the lesson is clear: the act of creation must be accompanied by reflection on its broader impacts.

In the context of AI, this reflection includes considering how new systems will interact with existing social structures. Carter (2021) emphasizes the importance of “addressing the societal and ethical implications of AI development.” AI’s integration into society raises questions about autonomy, privacy, and the potential for machine-driven decision-making to displace human judgment. Like Victor’s creature, AI systems can take on a life of their own, developing in ways that their creators may not have anticipated. Ensuring that these systems are ethically designed and properly managed is crucial to avoiding unintended harms.

In conclusion, Victor Frankenstein’s failure to take responsibility for his creation serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of accountability in modern science. His actions highlight the ethical dilemmas that accompany innovation and the potential consequences of neglecting them. As we continue to advance in fields like genetic engineering and AI, it is crucial that we learn from Victor’s mistakes. Scientific progress must be tempered with ethical considerations to prevent harm and ensure that the benefits of innovation are distributed equitably. By fostering a culture of responsibility, modern scientists can avoid the pitfalls that plagued Victor Frankenstein, ensuring that their work contributes to the betterment of society rather than its detriment.

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