

摘要

《弗兰肯斯坦：现代的普罗米修斯》是英国作家玛丽·雪莱的著名小说。主人公维克多·弗兰肯斯坦用科学创造出怪物，但由于丑陋而抛弃怪物，怪物被社会孤立，最终走向毁灭。小说自匿名出版后吸引了许多评论家的眼球。本文从道德心理学角度，应用科尔伯格道德发展六阶段理论分析小说中怪物的心理变化和道德发展。道德心理学是一门新兴的交叉学科，挖掘《弗兰肯斯坦》其中的道德心理一方面有助于理解复杂的道德发展，推动学科进步。另一方面，小说中社会偏见、情感控制对道德发展的有着深远的影响，在当今社会也有启示作用。

关键词：《弗兰肯斯坦》，道德心理，科尔伯格

Abstract

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus is a novel written by English author Mary Shelley about Victor Frankenstein, who created a grotesque creature but was horrified and struggled with the destruction till his death. Critics continues to be attracted since its anonymous publication in the nineteenth century. The article analyzes the moral psychology based on the theory of Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development to better perceive the monster's psychological changes and moral development. As a tentative probe into the burgeoning interdisciplinary research, on the one hand, it may resonates with today's moral development issues on social bias and personal emotions. On the other hand, it can improve the understanding of moral psychology.

Keywords: *Frankenstein*, moral psychology, Kohlberg

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance

Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus, created by Mary Shelley in 1818, is considered as the first true science fiction novel. Since the early publication, it has raised the awareness of many critics for its profound meanings. However, there are very few reviews on *Frankenstein* from the perspective of moral psychology. But in fact, the novel contains such features as described by the definition of the field. For instance, the moral development. Therefore, based on the theory of moral development, one of the distinguished theories from the perspective, this article explains the moral psychology in the novel to better understand the characters' morality and mentality. Through the analysis, it sheds light on the social bias concerning moral psychology with resonance of the contemporary age. As a result, Shelley's *Frankenstein* and her insight into moral psychology may contribute to the development of today's society.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This article consists of four chapters. Chapter One gives an concise overview of the article about the background and significance of the research and the structure of the thesis. Chapter Two is about the literature review. It talks about current research status in the field of moral psychology and the others, and introduces the theory used during the analysis coming next. Based on the theory defined in the previous chapter, Chapter Three analyzes the moral psychology in *Frankenstein*. In the beginning, it briefly introduces the life of the author of the novel, Mary Shelley. Then, with a generalized outline of the story, it focuses on the Creature's psychological changes and moral development and draws a conclusion of the analysis in the summary section at the end of the chapter. The last chapter, namely Chapter Four, displays the new findings of the research as well as the limitations and the suggestions for later studies.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies of *Frankenstein*

2.1.1 Moral Psychology Perspective

Researches on *Frankenstein* from the perspective of moral psychology are not very common, most of which focus on psychological analysis and moral values based on the theories such as moral behavior, moral emotion, moral judgment, moral reasoning and moral responsibility.

One of the recent studies is *Happiness and the Good Life* (Martin, 2012). This book explores the moral psychology surrounding the Happiness Principle: happiness promotes virtue; unhappiness produces vice. In the chapter twelve of his book, *Felicity in Frankenstein*, Martin reached a conclusion that the two protagonists do share but actually abuse the principle, or the hypothesis, by linking the discussion to the work of positive psychologists. Beginning with the analysis of the text, he explained the moral responsibility for wrongdoing and finally disclosed the fact consistent to Mary Shelley's insights that virtue has its own claim independently of our happiness.

Although reviews are relatively rare from this perspective, some critics related to moral psychology when the topic comes to morality and psychology. From the moral perspective, Gong Wen (2007) traced the author's ethical thoughts and claimed that the pursuit of happiness is one of the ways to realize moral ideal. From the psychological perspective, Wang Qiuyuan (2012) analyzed moral behavior based on the psychological theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and argued that the monster wreaked vengeance on the society due to his lack of love and belonging.

2.1.2 Other Perspectives

The contemporary myth, *Frankenstein*, has invited a wide range of interpretations from other perspectives since its publication. In the field of technology and ecology, many critics approached the novel as a cautionary tale of science. Isaacs (1986) pointed out the common elements between the myth and the historical development of the atomic bomb, from which he derived the "Frankenstein scenario" to better assess how scientific research in recombinant DNA fitted in such model at that time. Xu Pengyun (2010) put ecocriticism and ethics together. In the article, he inspected the profound thoughts that humans should respect life as well as live

harmoniously with nature.

While the popular view is about the consequent upon scientific experimentation (Davies, 2004), the story provides for its readers far from this. People also read from the perspective of romanticism, ethics, psychoanalytics and narrative. Recently, they tend to interpret it from the perspective of feminism. Feng Li (2012) emphasized the status of the female characters to reveal their potential power behind the plot.

As more and more thoughts from different perspectives emerge, people start to combine multiple perspectives, or the interdisciplinary perspective, to see whether there exists new findings. These combination usually include Gothic with feminism, feminism with ecology and ecology with ethics.

2.2 Theory of Moral Psychology

2.2.1 Introduction of Moral Psychology

Moral psychology is a field of study in both philosophy and psychology. Some tend to use the term “moral psychology” relatively narrowly to refer to the study of moral development (Lapsley, 1996). However, others use the term more broadly to include any topics at the intersection of ethics, psychology, and philosophy of mind (Doris and Stich, 2008). The field mainly covers topics like moral behavior, moral emotion, moral development, altruism and psychological egoism.

Historically, moral psychology began with early philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato and Socrates. They believed that “to know the good is to do the good”. In their empirical and conceptual researches, they analyzed how people make decisions about issues with regards to moral identity. As the field of psychology separated away from philosophy, the discipline gradually became a formal branch of both fields, expanding to include the role of emotions. Meanwhile, philosophers and psychologists extended the previous empirical measures in researches. Today, structured interviews and surveys such as the Moral Judgment Test (MJT) have been created to study the subject and its development.

Nowadays, it is not a surprise that the study is simultaneously carried forward by philosophers and psychologists. For example, the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt proposed the “Happiness Hypothesis”, where he expressed opinions on how the contemporary psychology cast light on the moral ideas of the past (Wikipedia, 2015). For another example, the experimental philosopher Joshua Knobe completed an empirical study recently. The result showed how the way of an ethical problem is phrased dramatically affects an individual’s intuitions about the proper moral response to the problem (Wikipedia, 2015).

2.2.2 Definition of Moral Psychology

Moral psychology is a novel branch within the field of philosophy and psychology. It investigates people's understanding of morality regarding to their emotions, attitudes and behaviors. One of the well-developed and most important aspects of the field is moral development (Liu Yajuan and Wu Rongxian, 2007). It focuses on individual's construction of morality from a psychological perspective. Furthermore, most researchers currently learn about moral psychology by studying Lawrence Kohlberg who was an American psychologist best known for his theory of moral development.

The moral development theory, or Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, holds that morality develops through constructive stages (Kohlberg, 1958). Generally, these stages are grouped into three levels of two respectively: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. The pre-conventional level, especially common in children, judges the morality by its direct consequences as described by Stage 1 and Stage 2. People in the former stage are obedience and punishment driven, while those in the latter self-interest driven. However, the conventional level is typical of adolescents and adults. Their senses of morality at Stage 3 are determined by the social consensus or "golden rule"; Stage 4 the social order or law. Finally, the post-conventional level is marked by one's own principles. Individuals in Stage 5 mutually respect different opinions, rights and values but in Stage 6, they may take precedent over society's views because it is right, rather than for their interests or against the penalty. Following the six stages of morality, progressions and regressions happen as a result of psychological changes.

Practically, the theory is often applied in an empirical way to resolve moral dilemmas. Nevertheless, according to the book, *The Black Guide to Aesthetics*, written by Kivy (2009), "fictions, as well, can be especially useful as sources of insight concerning moral psychology." He didn't dig into the text but explicitly pointed out its value reading from the perspective of moral psychology.

2.3 Summary

Clearly, over the last two centuries, the story of Frankenstein and his creation has been appealing to many new audiences with distinct perceptions. They usually read from the perspective of science, ethics, ecology and psychology. Recently, besides the feminist perspective, interdisciplinary perspective also prevails.

However, moral psychology, as a burgeoning interdisciplinary subject, is not so frequently discussed in *Frankenstein* as others. Moral psychology studies both morality and mentality. One of the well-known theory is Kohlberg's six stages of moral development which explains

the formation of morality by introducing three moral levels: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional level. Its examples often can be found in real tests concerned about balance of moral dilemmas. However, the fiction, in fact, also provide useful sources for its development. Thus viewing from perspective of moral psychology is meaningful.

Chapter Three Analysis of *Frankenstein*

3.1 A Brief Introduction to *Frankenstein*

3.1.1 The Author

Mary Shelley (1797–1851), best known for her horror novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, was an English novelist in the nineteenth century. Her husband was the romantic poet and philosopher Percy Bysshe Shelley; her father, the political philosopher William Godwin; and her mother, the philosopher and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. Born in such a family, she received an unusual and advanced education under the large influence of her parent's thoughts, which encourages her political radical and contributes to her literary output later on.

Mary Shelley led a rough life. Her mother died when she was only eleven days old. In 1814, Mary began a romantic relationship with the married Percy Shelley. In spite of the family's objection to their affair, the pair ran away together and got married after the suicide of Percy Shelley's first wife. Nevertheless, before the birth of her only surviving child, she had lost three of her children prematurely. Her husband also drowned when sailing during a storm accidentally. In her last decade, she was dogged by illness, probably caused by the brain tumor that was to kill her at the age of 53 (Wikipedia, 2015).

In her whole life, besides the famous *Frankenstein*, other works include the historical novels *Valperga* and *Perkin Warbeck*, the apocalyptic novel *The Last Man*, and her final two novels, *Lodore* and *Falkner*. However, she wrote not only novels but also short stories, dramas, essays, biography and travel books. These works are less known but studied by interested scholars.

3.1.2 The Work

The story of *Frankenstein* happened in the eighteenth century that Victor Frankenstein, who created a grotesque creature but was horrified and struggled with the destruction till his death. It is written in the form of a frame story (Wikipedia, 2015). Mainly, there are three narrators in the frames: Captain Robert Walton, Scientist Victor Frankenstein and the Creature.

The novel starts with Captain Walton's introductory frame composed of four letters to his sister about the ambitious expedition to the Arctic, during which he encountered the fainted scientist, looked after him and put down his words as content of the log book.

In the following frames, Frankenstein told the life so far, beginning from his childhood. He was crazy for the origin of life. After pursuit of the elixir formula for many years, he finally reanimated the Creature. But to his disappointment, the appearance was so hideous that he irresponsibly fled away. The Creature had to hide in a low hovel where those who would attack him with stones couldn't see his ugliness. Saddened by rejection, he still believed in love and humanity and tried to make friends with the local villagers by gathering food for them secretly. At first it works. However, when the Creature eventually presented himself in front of his "friends", all efforts turned out to be nothing but grief. Hopeless and desperate, he sought revenge on his creator and asked for a female spouse to dwell in the wild away from the habitation of man permanently. Frankenstein agreed reluctantly. While working on the female one, he worried about the premonitions of disaster that their breeding of a race might plague mankind and thus destroyed the work. Wrongly deceived by the promise, the Creature provoked his enemy to chase him up to the North Pole. Frankenstein went after decisively. But he was too weak to resist the coldness and was rescued by Captain Walton.

In closing, Frankenstein died and the Creature appeared. The novel ends with his confession that he would embrace death too, as living remorsefully in a world of unfairness is a torture. In the last two letters, recording what the monster said, Captain Walton resolved to return to his sister.

Interestingly narrated from the first-person perspective and switching among narrators, the book allows its readers to overview characters' point of views, particularly their thoughts and feelings. In the following analysis, it begins from chapter eleven (Shelley, 2013), targeting on the Creature's narrative.

3.2 Moral Psychology in *Frankenstein*

3.2.1 Psychological Changes

Frankenstein and his creature had the narrative voice in the novel by telling the story of their own history. Articulate as they were, compared to the Creature, the moral psychology of Frankenstein is less depicted since his narration is inclined to spotlight his misfortune and warning of the pursuit of wisdom. In contrast, the Creature revealed his entire psychological changes throughout life, which to some extent even aroused his creator's sense of responsibility.

In the very beginning of his life, the Creature was like any newborns except that he had a gigantic and maturely developed body, and more miserably, he was abandoned. As he recalled with considerable difficulty, "A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; ... I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and

could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.” (pp. 150–152). Thus the Creature had not yet internalized what is right or wrong and continued to immerse himself in a world without view of others until his initial contact with mankind. He first entered a small hut. he was surprised by the shriek, but was more enchanted by the shelter and its food (pp. 156–157). According to Kohlberg, it is blind egocentric with the pre-conventional level. On the one hand, the Creature fell into the Stage 1 since he was punishment driven. After his behavior resulted in bruise by attack of stones, he regretted that “after my late dearly bought experience, I dared not enter it.” (p. 157). On the other hand, the Creature avoided punishment by stealing for his own need of consumption (p. 166), which expresses the “what’s in it for me” position in Stage 2.

However, the Creature’s view of person concerning intentions was developed when he was watching the De Laceys, a human neighbors, whose gentle manners different from what he had known before struck him chiefly (p. 163). Therefore, as he discerned how his theft inflicted sufferings on the cottagers, he stopped the practice and apologized to himself with “I abstained and satisfied myself with berries, nuts and roots,” (p. 166). The feeling of sorry did not come from punishment. Instead it was because such kind of action didn’t live up to the society’s, or the De Laceys’ expectations. Hence, the Creature spontaneously stepped across the boarder of the conventional level, specifically Stage 3, with a social relationship perspective as he was longed to join the family. Still, he was afraid of his monstrous face would scare them (p. 165), which again identifies his moral reasoning at this level.

Hitherto, the Creature almost reached the conventional level, characterized by an acceptance of society’s view of right and wrong based on the theory. As for Stage 4, where morality is still predominantly dictated by an outside force, he intended to maintain a functioning society with human by learning its system. However it became ambiguous for his remaining at the fourth stage because at the same time, he had faith in the elimination of the prejudice (p. 172). Although the belief might be regarded as self-interest to approach the family, he also expressed sympathy to those living in similar conditions and deprecated the vices of mankind. (pp. 179–180, pp. 195–197). Accordingly, it could be said that he was virtually near the post-conventional level, but sadly he wasn’t. Actually, he was far from the top level, or Stage 5, because of the murder of Frankenstein’s family, which reflected that his concerns for others was not based on loyalty or intrinsic respect, but rather a “You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.” mentality, just as what he reasoned with his creator: “Shall I respect man when he contemns me? ... I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear,” (p. 221).

But at the end of the story, the Creature cried with sadness that “still I desired love and

fellowship, and I was still spumed. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from the door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the savior of his child?" (p. 344). He obviously realized his immorality, admitting the crime of killing Frankenstein's family and friends. Additionally, he accused those "virtuous and immaculate beings" of injustice satirically and still shunned from moral responsibility by blaming it mainly for his self-absorbed psychology, albeit with regrets, as he tried to argue that "A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse. Think you that the groans of Clerval were music to my ears?" (p. 341).

To conclude, the Creature was created in a state of *tabula rasa* where he had no idea about good and evil. As a clean slate, he learned the hard way to join the society, which was changing him from egoism to altruism, from no view of person to a social perspective. Therefore, there is no denying that the Creature was advancing in his moral development stages. But he was capricious; he accepted the stereotype of the society, but attempted to strive for respects; he committed the murder of the Frankensteins but condemned himself with compunctions. As a result of balancing his emotions, he failed to progress and ultimately regressed.

3.2.2 Moral Development

Although it is extremely rare to regress in the six stages of moral development, in Kohlberg's empirical studies of individuals throughout their life, he observed that some had apparently undergone moral stage regression. But this could be resolved either by allowing for moral regression or by extending the theory. Kohlberg chose the latter, postulating the existence of sub-stages in which the emerging stage has not yet been fully integrated into the personality (Kohlberg, 1976). For this reason, in the case of *Frankenstein*, the Creature can be typically noted as Stage 2½, or Stage 2+, a transition from the pre-conventional level to the conventional level, or Stage 2 to Stage 3 that shares characteristics in both.

Progress through Kohlberg's stages happens as a result of the individual's increasing competence, both psychologically and in balancing conflicting social-value claims, such as fundamental rights, patriotism, respect for human dignity, rationality, sacrifice, individuality, equality, democracy and many others that guide our behavior. Starting from Stage 2, the Creature was getting a social perspective. When he found conflicts not resolved between the social values of reciprocity and the prejudice, he returned to raging envy and vengeance. Thus the social bias has influence upon moral development, especially of those who are similarly at his stage. This is because since even a single stage cannot be skipped (Wikipedia, 2015), they will probably either progress to Stage 3 or be stuck in Stage 2½. However, the Creature's morality is

more primarily affected by internal emotions rather than rejections outwards. As the ending of the story has shown, “then impotent envy and bitter indignation filled me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance. ... but I was the slave, not the master, of an impulse, which I detested, yet could not disobey. ... Evil thenceforth became my good. Urged thus far, I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen. The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion.” (p. 341–342). And this is why the Creature chose his own sacrifice over the destruction of the world because, to him, it is not the society but himself that is more to blame from the perspective of moral psychology.

Mary Shelley’s novel gives rise to the issue of social bias concerning the topics of moral psychology. While social bias has its impacts on moral development, the self-control of feelings seems to be a dominant factor on the rise and falls of one’s sound reasoning. Also Shelley mentioned in the Creature’s words that “The pleasant sunshine, and the pure air of day, restored me to some degree of tranquility; I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. ... I ought to have familiarized the old De Lacey to me, and by degrees to ...” (p. 209). So, in fact, the Creature once had chance in retrieving the errors afterwards. By calming down, he could still properly reason at his moral development level in accordance with the stage, which demonstrates that the serene mind does help one’s reasoning against conflicts or dilemmas, and thus increasing opportunities of advancement in moral development.

3.3 Summary

Frankenstein is a horror fiction, written by English novelist Mary Shelley. By telling a story about Victor Frankenstein and his creature, Shelley vividly showed her understanding of social bias concerning moral psychology, which can be best traced by looking at the Creature’s psychological changes and moral development.

Based on the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development, the analysis points out the Creature’s changes in psychology between the stages, or levels, of moral development. At the early stage, the Creature cared for nothing but himself. But as he progressed through the pre-conventional level, he was confused by social bias and his own principle and eventually regressed. But what is the cause behind his decline in moral development? On the one side, stages cannot be skipped. So he had no way up to higher stages above. On the other side, social bias may claim its contribution partly. However, after the analysis of the Creature’s psychology, it is found that the Creature’s inclination in giving negative emotions into his reasoning led to his moral failure.

Chapter Four Conclusion

4.1 New Findings

The article explores *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* from a perspective of moral psychology. According to the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, the Creature is identified to be stopped at Stage 2½ among all six stages, a level between the pre-conventional and the conventional. Furthermore, after the analysis of his psychological changes and moral development, it is found that such situation is mostly due to his indulgence in vengeance rather than the society.

Throughout *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, she draws attention to the issue of social bias from the perspective of moral psychology. In our present society, there are still prejudices coming in many forms, including appearance, figure, gender, race, age, ethnicity and many features either universally or locally. Of course, more or less, such tacit conventions do undermine our views of the world and moral development, and thus some will challenge but others may obey. Whatever the result is, it is paramount to be emotionally self-controlled in peace. Since it takes time to shape the prejudice as well as to resolve, there is little use in losing control of emotions, which tends to be a species of revenge. Instead, through a tranquil reasoning mind, the rational will construct the world while the emotional assist it, consequently benefiting a society with better moral development.

4.2 Limitations and Suggestions

In this article, primarily focusing on the Creature's moral psychology, the analysis gives a conclusion on the issue of social bias. However, the issue actually involves two parts: those who are prejudiced and those who prejudices. The former, best represented by the Creature in the novel, has been elaborated in details in Chapter Three, while the latter hasn't. Actually, there are a group of characters in the story belongs to the latter. Although, their bias are scattered segments in Shelley's writing, further dig into these characters moral psychology will probably provide a more fruitful result.

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