
Victor Frankenstein's Selfishness As The Reason For His Downfall

In literature, the protagonist commonly possesses a negative trait that ultimately becomes their biggest flaw. Of these many possible flaws, selfishness can potentially be the worst of them. Selfishness can be defined as lacking consideration for others and being concerned with only one's self. In Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, Frankenstein, it is conveyed through the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, that the continual rationalization of one's selfish actions will ultimately lead to downfall. Victor Frankenstein's selfishness can be seen early in the novel when he explains his childhood. He claims he was the "innocent and helpless creature bestowed on his parents by heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery". This ideology of Victor's shows that he is both selfish and a hypocrite. Not many people express themselves as a creature bestowed upon heaven; of those who do think of themselves that way are selfish narcissists. This comment also shines light on the irony of what happens later in the story. When Victor talks about his childhood, he suggests that parents play a big role in how their kids turn out. However, when it was his turn to partake in this role after he created the monster, he cowardly and selfishly pushed the responsibility away.

Frankenstein's selfishness can also be seen through his first desire for creating the monster. Although it may seem that Frankenstein's motivation for creating the monster is his desire for scientific advancement for his society, his true motives come out when he says, "A new species would bless me as its creator and source...and would owe its being to me". Victor's main motive is not for the greater good of society, but for him to be god-like and usurp power only belonging to god; praise is what Victor was aiming for, not for society to benefit from scientific advancement. It is also selfish and negligent in itself to assume the role of god without considering the consequences. Due to his creation, Victor's own family lost their lives and suffered hardship. Here Victor's selfishness is exemplified, inevitably in complete contrast to the rule he now wished he had abided by in his past. Victor was then cut off from all his loving relationships, and began his journey towards re-integration into the idyllic society he once held a position in.

In the process of creating this monster, he also isolates himself in his craft. Shortly after his mother dies, Victor decides to leave for school instead of staying with his family to support them in their time of need. During this time at school, he rarely talked to his family but instead focused on creating the monster. His tragic flaw can be seen through his failure to take responsibility for his actions. Once he created the monster, he did nothing for him but abandon him. Without a name, identity, or ability of communicating, the monster was a result of a selfish and

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irresponsible parent. When Victor finished creating the monster, “the beauty of his dream had vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled his heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being he had created, he rushed out of the room”. Victor rejects his creation due to his own distaste of his creation, selfishly forcing a life of rejection upon the life of another. The reason for the monster’s rejection was a superficial one too.

While Victor was reflecting upon his residence in Ingolstadt, his selfishness was identified in retrospect, cynical toward his own ignorance. Victor stated, “I... thought that my father would be unjust... ascribing my neglect to my family to... faultiness on my part, but I am convinced that he was justified. A human being in perfection ought to always preserve a calm and peaceful mind and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. (Shelley 33-34) Upon venting to Walton, Victor reveals how he completely prioritized himself in his hunt for knowledge. Because he has no excuse, the tragic elements of this mistake are simultaneously revealed, how isolating himself influenced his actions towards selfish goals.

Victor’s first attempt at seeking consolation results in unjust decisions, evident in his progress away from society. Victor says “I longed to console and sympathize... but I could hardly sustain the multitude of feelings that crowded into my mind... Night also closed around, and when I could hardly see the dark mountains ... The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil ... Storm increased every minute and this noble war in the sky elevated my spirits... I perceived in the gloom a figure whose ... gigantic stature ... instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy demon to whom I had given life”. At this time, Victor began his pursuit for his monster. Throughout this scene, pathetic fallacy further comments on Victor’s negative perspective upon approach of his confrontation. Because he is isolated in the stormy mountains, Victor’s first reaction to his creation is cynical, shallow, and ultimately unjust. This proves that his neglect for his relationships to society corrupt his mindset and goal to console with the monster.

Victor then begins to justify his own selfish reasons, proving his digression from the path towards the ultimate morality he wishes to achieve. He states, “I must perform my engagement and let the monster depart with his mate before I allow myself to enjoy the delight if a union from which I expected peace... I was aware also that I should often lose all self-command, all capacity of hiding the harrowing sensations that would possess me during the progress of my unearthly occupation. I must absent myself from all I loved while thus employed”. Throughout these chapters, Frankenstein is convinced to help the monster by creating a companion for him, yet fails to act immediately upon his pseudo-realization for the monster’s and society’s needs. It is here that Frankenstein expects peace from his fulfilling some less important selfish foals such as his marriage before risking his family and society’s security from an angry monster. Ultimately, one of the last of Victor’s attempts to solve his problem leads to further digression from the greater good for society, and in turn, leaving isolation to outline the selfishness in his

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decision. Frankenstein's way of thinking and his actions because of it lead to his tragic downfall.

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