

Mary shelley's novel frankenstein: the nature versus nurture debate

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



Nature versus Nurture

The argument between nature versus nurture can be redefined as the debate between an individual's genes in contrast to the environment in which they are raised and how this affects one's personality and actions. Many may choose a specific side to the debate but it is in fact both nature and nurture working together to shape an individual's personality. For example, one can look at the trait of intelligence. A child with superior intellectual genes who has been neglected will most likely be unable to reach full intellectual potential. This proves that although nature may have provided the tools for success, improper nurturing led to a lack of intelligence or intellectual development. One can also look at a child who was not given superior intellectual genes but was well nurtured and provided tools for success. This child may reach a higher intellectual level due to the environment in which they were raised, providing evidence to support that although nature may have lacked in abilities the proper nurturing could lead to intellectual success.

Frankenstein is a great novel for exploring the debate of nature versus nurture. In the first four chapters, Victor comes off as a bright and positive individual. The following quotes provide examples of nurtured behavior;

“ No human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself. My parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence. We felt that they were not the tyrants to rule our lot according to their caprice, but the agents and creators of all the many delights which we enjoyed. When

I mingled with other families, I distinctly discerned how peculiarly fortunate my lot was, and gratitude assisted the development of filial love.” [1]

This quotation provides an example of where Victor recognizes that he was more fortunate than others. He feels appreciative of the wealth and fortune that he was granted in comparison of other families. Victor describes his parents as nurturing and kind, providing evidence that proper nurturing can affect an individual's childhood and their outlook on many things. However, at the end of chapter two Victor comes to a grande realization about himself,

“ It was a strong effort of the spirit of good; but it was ineffectual. Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction.” [1]

One can look at the spirit of good as “ nurture” and destiny as “ nature” in the nature versus nurture debate. Victor ultimately feels that it is in his nature to be self destructive. Despite the good influences in his life, destiny is too strong and overpowers those influences. He claims that the spirit of good (like his parents) does not matter. They are ineffectual because destiny cannot be changed.

“ Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract: I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness. And Clerval—could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval?—yet he might not have been so perfectly

humane, so thoughtful in his generosity—so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit, had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of beneficence, and made the doing good the end and aim of his soaring ambition.”

Here the narrator speaks of Elizabeth, a character in the story who is very close with the narrator on a personal level. Elizabeth’s nature and harsh upbringing shaped her personally and she is bestowing her “ knowledge” upon the other characters and showing them other emotions.