

# Frankenstein and percy shelleys moral science

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Frankenstein and Percy Shelley's Moral Science In his *A Defence of Poetry and other Essays*, Percy Shelley divided science, in the *Speculations on Morals*, into Metaphysics and Moral Science. While metaphysical science, according to Shelley, simply refers to "just classification" and labeling, moral science entails the harmonious arrangement of things that would result into the most happiness for humanity. In the subdivision 'Moral Science Consists in Considering the Difference, not the Resemblance, of Persons.' of the heading *Speculations on Morals*, Shelley expounds his concept of moral science by pointing out the fact that despite the deliberate uniformity of human actions for the purpose of attaining stability of human society, a closer scrutiny of them would reveal that every human act is different from others. The underpinning rationale for this difference is that every person is inherently unique and this uniqueness emanates from within and not from without and influences and colors his every act. A person's uniqueness alters the nature of an action that differentiates it from otherwise similar actions of others. Shelley's point is that moral science should focus on such differences rather than on their similarities.

Shelley's views are aptly illustrated by the characterization of the monster in the novel *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus*. Penned by no less than Percy Shelley's wife, Mary Shelley, Frankenstein's foray into the science of human creation resulted in a hideous and ugly creature feared by all. Despite its ugliness and its general reputation earning it the label 'monster,' the creature is revealed to be a sensitive, lonely and benevolent being capable of attachment and love even for its creator who has spent the rest of his life hunting it down to destroy it. When Frankenstein died towards the end of the novel exhausted and overpowered by the harsh climate of the

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North, the creature surprisingly deeply mourned his death and showed a side, during his conversation with Walton that is far-fetched from his appearance. The monster turns out to be more than human after all. This is in contrast to the character of Frankenstein, the monster's creator, who has wantonly discarded ethical considerations by going beyond the boundaries of science in creating the creature without any thought of kindness and sympathy for the life he created.

The monster's startling characteristics of kindness, sympathy, benevolence and capacity for deep affection despite its subhuman shape clearly illustrate Percy Shelley's views that goodness or evil emanates from within and not from without. Although external elements may influence and affect human actions, these actions are modified by the internal make-up of the person doing the act. Thus, labeling an act as simply good or bad is generalizing. The creature, for example, may have killed, wittingly or unwittingly, some of the people around Frankenstein, but these are not acts of evil per se. Some were not deliberate and most were done out of passion, utter loneliness and desperation of a misjudged being feared for its monster-like appearance and isolated from the rest of humanity. The fact that the creature looks like a monster, therefore, does not necessarily mean that it thinks or acts like a monster or the fact that Frankenstein is a brilliant and educated member of a civilized society necessarily follow that his actions are all civil and that of an educated man. His acts may have been more monstrous than that of the creature.

In conclusion, parallelisms may be found between Mary Shelley's 'monster' and Percy Shelley's moral science in that both reflect the notion that evil and good are not necessarily seen on the face of things, but must be discovered <https://assignbuster.com/frankenstein-and-percy-shelleys-moral-science/>

from the internal motives and intent of a person. Put another way, it is hardly wise to label an act as pure evil or good or adjudge them as such merely on the basis of what one sees externally. Evil and good emanates from within and these characteristics can only be detected by looking past the act and into the intent and motives of the individual actors.