

From Frankenstein to Brave New World: The Crisis of Ethics in Scientific Advancement in English Literature

Sanjay Madhukar Karanjkar

M.A. Eng. [SET]Arts & Commerce College Yeola Tal- Yeola, Dist- Nasik

Email- sanjay007mk@gmail.com

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M.A. Eng. [SET]Arts & Commerce
College Yeola Tal- Yeola, Dist- Nasik
Email- sanjay007mk@gmail.com

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Address for correspondence:

Anand Arvind Kamble
(M. A. B.Ed. Sanjay Madhukar Karanjkar
M.A. Eng. [SET]Arts & Commerce
College Yeola Tal- Yeola, Dist- Nasik
Email- sanjay007mk@gmail.com

Abstract

Science has contributed a lot in the progress of human beings in various aspects but has also raised very serious ethical concerns. These concerns are in many times reflected in English literature. The paper examines the way science and ethics are manifested in Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and Brave New World by Aldous Huxley. The dangers of scientific development are both novels depict, only the time they are written was in different periods of time, when the development of science lacked moral responsibility. Shelley dwells on the behaviour of a single scientist, whereas Huxley has given out an entire society dominated by science. The paper asserts that the two authors caution people against forgetting the human values in the name of progress.

Keywords: Science and Ethics, Human Values, Responsibility, Frankenstein, Brave New World

Introduction

Science is vital to the life of human beings. It makes life comfortable, healthy and educated. Meanwhile, it brings about the question of right and wrong. When the power of science increases more rapidly than the moral knowledge, things start to emerge. These issues are not technical but are also profoundly human. Such changes have always been met with English literature. Authors make use of imagination to indicate what can occur in case science is misused.

Through literature, the reader is tempted to consider the responsibility, morality and future of the human society. Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and Brave New World by Aldous Huxley are two relevant works that refer to these problems. The novels were set over a century apart; nevertheless, they address the same fears. The two authors demonstrate how science when unchecked by ethics can be detrimental to the human race rather than useful.

Ethical Dilemma in Frankenstein.

Frankenstein is a science fiction story. It is predominantly a responsibility tale. Victor Frankenstein is admired to establish life and be a great scientist. His aspiration is a measure of the scientific discovery that was so alive around his era. Victor, however, fails with morality. Since he makes the creature, he leaves it. He is not even speculative regarding its feelings or its future. It is this act that transforms into the actual cause of tragedy in the novel. The monster is discriminated against by his creator and the society. However, the animal, though regarded as a monster, expresses great feelings. He desires affection and wisdom. Victor on the contrary shirks his responsibilities. This contrast demonstrates the message of Shelley quite clearly; intelligence was not worth a lot without compassion.

Frankenstein is still relevant even today. Such experimental domains as artificial intelligence and genetic experiments in the modern sciences pose the same ethical concerns. Shelley takes the readers to remember that scientific success should be accompanied by the sense of morality.

Science and Control in Brave New World.

Aldous Huxley in Brave New World provides a futuristic society that is completely governed by science. In this case, science is not exploited by a single individual as it happens with Frankenstein. The government controls it. Individuals are created in the laboratories and socialized to perceive their roles. Such emotions like love, pain, and deep thinking are not encouraged. Happiness is induced artificially using drugs and conditioning. The society has been presented as sitting well, but it is not free. Individuals do not make ethical decisions. All the decisions regarding them are made. Huxley demonstrates that comfort without freedom is not the actual happiness. John the Savage is a symbol of pure human values. He is a believer in pain, decision, and feeling. The fact that he is not able to survive in the World State demonstrates the way in which science has killed the real humanity. The fact that he is killed is a powerful outcry against a life of lack of moral choice.

Comparison of the Two Novels

Even though both Frankenstein and Brave New World are about the misuse of science, they elaborate on it in different manner. In Frankenstein, it is the threat of individual egoism. The personal ambition of Victor to greatness welcomes the destruction. On the contrary, in Brave New World the threat is in the social and political format and science is used as the means of people control.

The two authors present various anxieties. Mary Shelley is scared of reckless creators whereas Aldous Huxley is scared of mighty systems and institutions. Nevertheless, both authors share one opinion that science which lacks ethics will result in the destruction of human values and humankind itself. This is the main point that is addressed in the research paper. Other contemporary issues that have apparently been anticipated by these novels include cloning, surveillance and privacy loss. Their warnings are also equally relevant and thought-provoking in the modern world, as it is evident after reading these two novels.

Significance of Literature in Ethical thought.

Literature makes the readers see the human aspect of science. Scientific reports are result oriented whereas literature is consequence oriented. It demonstrates the reactions, feelings, and suffering of people. With the help of stories, readers create empathy. They know how Frankenstein experiences the pain of his creature, and how little there is to live in the World State. This is a feeling that is gained and is useful in moral thinking.

Thus, literature has a significant role in leading the society. It does not forget to remind us that science must be of service to humanity and not substitute it.

Conclusion

Both, Mary Shelley and Aldous Huxley give solid warnings regarding science advancement. Frankenstein demonstrates the harmfulness of the irresponsibility of individuals, whereas Brave New World demonstrates the harmfulness of complete domination of science. The two novels allude to moral values as necessary in science. In the absence of ethics, humanity can be ruined in progress. These messages are more topical than ever in the modern era of fast technological development. Science ought to make human life better but should not in any way lose human responsibility.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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