

Friendship in Frankenstein: An Aristotelian-Thomistic Analysis

True friendship, as defined by both Aristotle and Aquinas, calls for not only a whole person development, but also a whole community development. Whole person development refers to the development of individual abilities and attributes that increase virtue or character (goodness), while whole community development refers to the development of environmental and social attributes of community that make room for and inspire the development of the whole person. Within the story of Frankenstein, each of the main characters, Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Monster, as well as the lesser characters of Henry Clerval, Alphonse Frankenstein, and Elizabeth Lavenza, highlights aspects of friendship within the larger pursuit of personal goals. The character's personal goals influence and are influenced by their friendships within the story. My primary claim in this essay is to explicate each character's significant friendships within the context of true friendship, and show how, as each character pursued a single value, such as intellect, love, revenge, and the like, their development as whole persons (and by extension, their contribution to and development of their communities) was greatly hindered.

Introduction

The story of Frankenstein is a multilayered tale encompassing multiple themes and ideas. Commentary on the story has stressed many of these themes, including: race relations, education, scientific and medical progress, gender roles and relations, psychological and psychiatric understanding of personality development, attachment, and mental illness. Each of these themes can be said to

emphasize specific aspects of whole person and/or whole community development. For example, on the theme of racial discourse, Anne Mellor discusses the descriptive characteristics of the Monster as being obviously Asiatic, non-Caucasian giant, at once implying the early 19th Century fears of the Orient and the implications of association with the nations of the East, whether political, religious, artistic, commercial, etc., might have upon the Europeans (2). Allan Lloyd Smith goes even further, stating, “Shelley chose not to give her scientist the arguably more straightforward route of reanimation of a dead human body: her choice of an assemblage of various human and animal parts introduces the issues attached to cross-racial and even cross-species reproduction and thus engages with the anthropological and biological discourses” of the time (211).

Overlapping with the commentary on race is the commentary on medical and social responsibility to those considered in need of guidance (Marcus 199). Such a paternalistic position changes the protector as much as it changes the protected: Frankenstein comes to share “the monstrosity of the creature’s condition- his solitude, his singularity, his being utterly outcast, his exile from human and communal forms of life” (199). Marcus goes on to say, “Irresponsible medicine is a mythological playing-out of the fantasy of technological omnipotence, is medicine without the awareness of the Other as a coequal self-consciousness” (199). Questions of difference, such as what they are and how we engage each other because of and despite these differences, are as much a part of our understanding of progress, technology, medicine, and politics, as they are part of our worldview.

Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality enter the general discussion, not only in relation to the Romantic/Gothic novel, but also concerning the role they play in our understanding of progress, technology, medicine, and politics. Vanessa Dickerson makes the argument that women within Shelley’s novel are little more than ghosts: “narcissistic males like Walton and Victor tend to be scientists, the doers, the literalizers who dominate the story, the selfless, ethereal and unscientific women in the novel are practically transparent if not invisible” (79-80). They are props in the homoeroticism of the male characters (Dickerson 80; Daffron 417).

Concerning male-male relationships, intimacy, and sexuality, Shelley advances a sensitive, though subsumed, understanding of masculinity (Daffron 417). The intensity of Victor's and Henry's relationship, a true friendship as discussed below, is overshadowed by Victor's insipient homophobia. Victor responds voyeuristically to his monstrous creation, built from the parts of men

whose features he found beautiful, relating the Monster's coming to life in what amounts to a physical description of orgasm, "it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs" (Shelley 22). Victor is horrified by this attraction to the Monster, spending the night dreaming of Elizabeth, his boyhood love. Embracing and kissing her in his dream, Victor witnesses the woman he loved innocently transformed into the corpse of his mother, while the Monster lived and breathed in the next room (23). Victor spends much of the novel evading the line between the sanctioned male friendships of his age and desiring intimacy with another male figure (Daffron 424), represented in the continual tension, feverish hallucinations, and saboteur behaviors toward himself and the Monster.

According to Daffron, Shelley's presentations of gender inequality and homophobia are part of a larger critique of misogyny. The Monster asks for a female like himself, "with whom [he] can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for [his] being" (Shelley 70). Victor consents to the Monster's request, but only after repeated threats to the lives of Victor's friends and family, and with the promise that the Monster and his companion will remain far from civilization (72). Despite the verbal contract, Victor and the Monster remain at odds, and eventually Victor destroys the female companion he was nearly close to finishing (82). The destruction of the companion leads to the Monster fulfilling his threat of killing Elizabeth (97). The use of women as objects, between Victor and the Monster, even between the narrator and the reader in the person of Margaret Saville to whom Walton relates the tale, in Shelley's restrained critique of the destabilizing force Victorian-era relational paradigms, ultimately perpetuates "a claustrophobic, homophobic space of only men" (Daffron 426).

The way society turns to other-ing, be it by race, gender, social class, societal role, impacts relationships. However, a review of the literature, a brief sampling of which was discussed above, seems to lack a foundational, metaphysical appeal to a metatheoretical approach that would tie all these insights together. There is such a theory, longstanding in its tradition, that does provide such a connection: the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of human flourishing as represented through their explication of friendship.

On Friendship

While predating modern, psychological, anthropological, and sociological understandings of human interaction, there is an ancient philosophical theory, updated in the Middle Ages, that provides a metaphysical foundation for human interaction as a kind of flourishing between individuals, what is commonly called friendship. This theory begins with Aristotle and continues through the work of

Thomas Aquinas. In reference to Frankenstein in particular, this theory of friendship sheds light on the relationships of the major characters, the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment (especially the notion of progress), and enables us to form a deeper understanding. The purpose of this paper is to bring forth this theory of friendship in relation to the major characters of the novel, illustrating where they have embodied or failed to embody the aspects of human flourishing that comprise friendship. In so doing, I hope to provide an Aristotelian-Thomistic critique of the Enlightenment that is in line with Shelley's Romantic critique, as represented by the sorrow, disconnection, and despair each of the characters exhibits. Even the lesser characters, such as Henry Clerval, Alphonse Frankenstein, and Elizabeth Lavenza, exhibit this critique of modernity. I will first outline the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of friendship, limiting the analysis to the Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle and the Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas. Then, I will discuss the three major figures- Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Monster- as well as the minor figures with whom they interact- Henry Clerval, Alphonse Frankenstein, and Elizabeth Lavenza- as each of them relates to the main aspects of friendship and its importance to human flourishing.

Aristotle

Aristotle, as expounded in Nicomachean Ethics, presents a theory of human flourishing that has multiple components. Human flourishing, or as it is commonly translated "excellence," has two aspects, one that refers to what is innate within us (virtue) and one that refers to what we learn from interaction with our fellow creatures (skill) (1103^a). Neither the one nor the other is able to develop the individual completely, but rather they work in tandem, showing an astute understanding of the interpersonal factors that contribute to human flourishing. In fact, neither virtue nor skill can develop without being exercised, skill requiring education and tutelage, virtue requiring situations in which the character trait can be exercised. Aristotle goes on to outline his theory of human flourishing over the course of several lectures, and in Book VIII ties this theory to the interpersonal relationships associated with friendship. He builds his understanding of friendship on the same predicates as that of his theory of human flourishing, pointing toward the holistic and integrated understanding of interpersonal interactions and their necessity to human flourishing, "without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods" (VIII.1). Friendship, according to Aristotle, holds groups together, allows individuals to not only seek after justice, but to exercise the virtues completely (VIII.1).

There are three kinds or levels of friendship, each corresponding to a different level of human flourishing: utility, pleasure (hedonia), and virtue (eudaimonia). Each level of friendship corresponds to how we love (VIII.3). Friendship of utility corresponds to utilitarian love: we form the friendship based on what each of the individuals in the friendship gain from the relationship (VIII.3). Friendship of pleasure (hedonic friendship) corresponds to hedonic love: we form the friendship based on emotion, feelings of pleasure, and the arousal of “other hopes of something good to come” (VIII.3). Friendship of virtue (perfect or true friendship, eudaimonic friendship) corresponds to perfect love: we form friendships based on the development of virtue, the choosing of the good for the other because it is the good for the other and no other reason (VIII.3). Eudaimonic friendship, because it is based on virtue, also contains within it friendship of utility and hedonia, just as perfect love contains within it utilitarian love and hedonic love (VIII.3).

Each level of friendship builds on the other, resulting in true friendship only when all three levels are present. Friendship of utility, which seeks relationship with others for the good the individual receives from it, is deficient for human flourishing because it does not provide the individual with a way to develop skill, virtue, feel pleasure- only to satisfy need. Hedonic friendship builds on the notion of utility, and adds the emotions, feelings of pleasure, that arise from the satisfaction of need and from the joy we get from the other. However, hedonic friendship is also deficient, as hedonic friendship does not require the individuals involved to develop character traits that create excellence, nor does it foster the good for the other in the relationship. Eudaimonic friendship is perfect friendship, because not only does it contain the aspects of utilitarian and hedonic friendships (it satisfies needs and has emotional involvement), but also encourages the development of skill and virtue, and seeks the good of the other for the sake of the other. Moreover, true friendship is built on love: “for love may be felt just as much towards lifeless things, but mutual love involves choice and choice springs from a state of character; and men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of a state of character. And in loving a friend men love what is good for themselves; for the good man in becoming a friend becomes a good to his friend. Each, then, both loves what is good for himself, and makes an equal return in goodwill and in pleasantness; for friendship is said to be equality, and both of these are found most in the friendship of the good.” (VIII, 5).

True friendship, then, according to Aristotle, does several things to increase human flourishing. For the individual, utility, hedonia, and eudaimonia

intermingled for the development of virtue, the creation of excellence of character that is shown through skill and habit, as well as need satisfaction and pleasure feeling. In true or perfect friendship, utility, hedonia, and eudaimonia find their outlet in human connection. This is an important component in Aristotle's theory. No one individual is isolated or disconnected from the society in which he or she lives. As a result, for an individual to truly achieve excellence of character that is the hallmark of eudaimonia, the individual must establish friendships that reflect and foster the excellence of character after which he or she is striving.

He also addresses the kinds of relationships that mirror these levels of friendship, showing how each can also have the character of true friendship, despite inequalities that may be inherent in the power structure of the relationship. For example, individuals of "sour and elderly people" can engage in friendship when they find individuals of similar temperament or can "bear goodwill to each other" (VIII.6). This type of friendship falls either into the utility level or the hedonia level, depending on the motivation for the friendship. However, such individuals are not excluded from perfect friendship, it is only more difficult for them to achieve it. For individuals who have authority over others, they often chose individuals for friendships that help them achieve some characteristic important to their station (VIII.6). This pertains to familial relationships, such as that of father and son, as well as political relationships, such as that of ruler and ruled. These relationships typify friendships that mirror all three types of friendships, but due to their nature are unlikely to produce perfect friendship. This does not mean that it is impossible, however, but that the nature of the relationship changes when perfect friendship is achieved between these individuals. As Aristotle puts it, "It is by their likeness to the friendship of virtue that they seem to be friendships (for one of them involves pleasure and the other utility, and these characteristics belong to the friendship of virtue as well); while it is because the friendship of virtue is proof against slander and permanent, while these quickly change (besides differing from the former in many other respects), that they appear not to be friendships; i.e. it is because of their unlikeness to the friendship of virtue" (VIII.6).

Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas builds on Aristotle's basic outline of friendship in the *Summa Theologica*, stating "Friendship cannot exist except towards rational creatures, who are capable of returning love, and communicating one with another in the various works of life, and who may fare well or ill, according to the changes of fortune and happiness; even as to them is benevolence properly

speaking exercised” (I.20.2.r3). Friendship, then, requires recognition of the other as being capable of returning the same choice, the choice for the good of the other. In Aquinas’s concept of rational creatures, he is drawing on the metaphysical precepts of Christianity. Rational creatures in this view can include humans, angels, and any creature to whom God has granted reason. While the specifics of his hierarchical understanding of creation is beyond the scope of this paper, the requirement of rationality places a proviso upon friendship that is implied by Aristotle: we cannot have friendship with creatures that do not have reason. Communication between the individuals engaged in the friendship is also a necessary component, again implied by Aristotle and made explicit here. In order to foster the good of the other, communication is the method in which we make this known.

Friendship unites friend to friend in love, stemming from the desire for good that is appropriate to the nature of the individual who loves (I.60.3). Utility and pleasure are aspects of friendship, but do not comprise the whole or fullness of the love and good which are at the core of true friendship (I-II.4.7). This is a direct mirror of Aristotle’s levels of friendships. Utility and pleasure are part of the fullness of friendship; they are present in true friendship because true friendship satisfies the wholeness of human flourishing. Where they exist without seeking the good for the other, they are merely functions of parts of ourselves, for Aquinas, like Aristotle, considers human creatures as comprising higher and lower aspects: utility and pleasure satisfy the lower parts, but not the fullness of the rational creature.

Progress toward beatitude or happiness, while not attainable in this life according to Aquinas, is begun in the friendships that we establish with each other; friends enable us to further develop virtues that are necessary for such happiness (I-II.5.5). Moreover, friendships of utility or pleasure only hinder the flourishing of true friendship. “When friendship is based on usefulness or pleasure, a man does indeed wish his friend some good: and in this respect the character of friendship is preserved. But since he refers this good further to his own pleasure or use, the result is that friendship of the useful or pleasant, in so far as it is connected with love of concupiscence, loses the character to true friendship” (I-II.26.4.r3). In other words, every relationship is a kind of friendship, but there is a hierarchy to the relationships in regards to individual and group character development (or growth of virtue).

The reasons that utility and pleasure are incomplete is that they are selfish. They reflect the pursuit of the good back onto the pursuer and not the good for the sake of the other in the relationship: “Friendship based on convenience or

pleasure is friendship inasmuch as we want our friend's good; but because this is subordinated to our own profit or pleasure such friendship is subordinated to love of desire and falls short of true friendship" (Aquinas 205). This is an important explication of Aristotle's theory. By categorizing friendships of utility and pleasure as selfish when they exist on their own shows, from the point of view of perfect friendship, where they lack in the development of virtue and goodness, where they lack love. True human flourishing is not a quality that exists in an individual rational creature, but rather through the interaction and interconnection of rational creatures. True friendship, then, also requires this interaction and interconnection, as friendship is one of the processes through which human flourishing occurs.

Analysis of the Novel

Within the story of *Frankenstein*, we are constantly reminded of the need for friends, the desire for the kind of interaction and connection that comes through the seeking of human flourishing. The three main characters- Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Monster- each express desire for this kind of relationship, but each fails in different ways. The interactions with the minor characters- Alphonse Frankenstein, Henry Clerval, and Elizabeth Lavenza- also highlight where each of the characters is deficient in their pursuit of true friendship, why each of them winds up frustrated and alone: Walton returning to the bosom of his family, Frankenstein dead, and the Monster into the arctic. The way in which the story is told, as well as the progression of the events within the layered narrative, provide the critique of the Enlightenment that is at the core of Shelley's Romanticism. The Aristotelian-Thomistic analysis of friendship provided above is in line with the Romantic critique, and in many ways, provides a foundation for the more modern analysis.

Robert Walton

Robert Walton, as the narrator and one of the three main characters of the novel, is the first to broach the desire for friendship that is at the heart of human flourishing. In the opening letters to his sister, Walton writes, "I desire the company of a man who could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine.... I bitterly feel the want of a friend" (Shelley 4). At first, the desire for friendship that he puts forth is that of hedonic friendship. Sympathy is an emotional response to seeing in another a state or event with which we personally identify. However, Walton goes onto expound his desire further, stating that the friend he desires would be "gentle yet courageous, possessed of cultivated as well

as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans” (4). Such a friend would help Walton to be a better person, develop patience, and ground him in the realities of the moment, “who would have sense enough not to despise [him] as a romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavor to regulate [his] mind” (4). One can extrapolate from these statements that Walton is desirous of more than mere hedonic friendship. The phrasing of this desire is self-reflective, hinting at true friendship but without the other-reflective qualities that would mark his desire as one for true friendship. As the story progresses, the reader is granted insight into Walton’s retelling of both Victor Frankenstein’s and the Monster’s desires. The reader is shown Walton’s deepened understanding of the role of friendship, as he develops sympathy for the other, and reorders his life goals in such a way as to return to his family and begin a different kind of life. He recognizes the horror his sister must have felt reading his narrative (155). When discussing the final moments he has with Frankenstein, he states, “My thoughts, and every feeling of my soul, have been drunk up by the interest of my guest, which this tale, and his own elevated and gentle manners, have created. I wish to soothe him” (156). He goes as far as to try to help Frankenstein desire to live, “Behold, on these desert seas I have found such a one; but, I fear, I have gained him only to know his value, and lose him. I would reconcile him to life, but he repulses the idea” (157). These sentiments show Walton’s deep desire for true friendship, and the understanding that he has been operating on the hedonic level the whole time. He sought a friend as a way for him to feel pleasure in others, and came to realize, over the course of Frankenstein’s tale, that he also wanted to show the same considerations for the other; his self-reflective desire for companionship changed to other-reflective.

After this change, he realizes his own deficiencies of virtue, even as he realizes his growth in eudaimonia, “The brave fellows, whom I have persuaded to be my companions, look towards me for aid; but I have none to bestow. There is something terribly appalling in our situation, yet my courage and hopes do not desert me. Yet it is terrible to reflect that the lives of all these men are endangered through me. If we are lost, my mad schemes are the cause” (158). Such a recognition of his responsibility toward the lives of those under his command, which shows the type of friendship that mirrors true friendship, in the form of one having authority over others. And yet he is clear, his hope and courage are with him. Hope and courage are virtues, the balance between extremes of human characteristics on which excellence is habituated (Aristotle II.7). So, Walton’s relationship with Frankenstein, while beginning as hedonic friendship, changes

over the course of the narrative, taking on the characteristics of true friendship, as evidenced by his attention to the needs of his crew.

Understandably, Walton's full story is not revealed, but only so much as to frame Frankenstein's narrative. The bookends of Walton's letters to his sister provide the reader with the setting and context in which Frankenstein relates his own scientific pursuits, interpersonal relationships, and mysterious creation of the Monster, as well as the Monster's tale, retold through Frankenstein's narrative. In those few missives, the major points of Frankenstein's narrative are foreshadowed: the desire for scientific knowledge and renown, the pursuit and development of single attributes and abilities in lieu of the whole person, and the resulting poor interpersonal relationships that arise when one becomes single-minded. Even the desolate reaches of the North where the boat becomes lodged in ice shows the single-mindedness of the main characters- the downfall of their journey, and why they have failed to find the friendships they all seek (Shelley 7, 8). Moreover, the desolation of the North, and the abandonment of Walton's initial plans for great scientific discovery in favor of returning to his family also foreshadows the Monster's ultimate despair, a result of the choices and interactions with others that prohibited from achieving the kinds of friendship he desired.

Walton describes Frankenstein in the following way: "I have found a man who, before his spirit had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as the brother of my heart" (11). When Frankenstein recovers his strength, and can engage in conversation with Walton, he furthers the development of the search for friendship, both in his relationship with Walton and in the narrative he relates, a large portion of it dealing with his relationships with Elizabeth and with Clerval. Before he begins the story of the Monster's creation, he establishes what behaviors toward the other are appropriate or, more accurately, inappropriate, behaviors that instantiate and grow the concomitant virtues which form true friendship. To Walton, Frankenstein says, "You seek for knowledge and wisdom as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been" (13). This statement to Walton is the intentional or attitudinal disposition necessary for the foundation of friendship, desiring the cultivation of virtue in the other and the avoidance of disaster or ill-fortune. This disposition is not the only aspect necessary for true friendship, and Frankenstein's narrative shows what more is necessary through what his relationships lack.

Victor Frankenstein

Frankenstein's relationships with Henry Clerval, his father Alphonse, Elizabeth Lavenza and the Monster, continue the exposition of friendship within the novel, as well as show how the advancement of any one aspect of human culture, without all the other aspects, can impact the development of true friendship. Henry Clerval is "boy of singular talent and fancy," who enjoyed risk-taking, was chivalrous, with a keen imagination (19). He was kind and tender, which enhanced his adventuresome spirit (20). All of these traits attracted Frankenstein, drawing him to Clerval as a companion and confidant. Yet, as he became more and more involved in his work, Frankenstein stopped fostering the relationship between him and Clerval. The memories of their companionship and balance took on a quality that resembles friendship of utility.

While Frankenstein continued to delve more and more into his pursuit to create life, he ignored the development of his other virtues, becoming withdrawn and obsessive (32-34). In his own words, "a human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility" (34); Frankenstein lost this balance when he ignored the mutuality that Clerval's friendship helped to foster within him. It was the restoration of Clerval to Frankenstein (despite the creation of the Monster and the tremendous mental disturbance that obsession caused), that calmed his spirit and brought him back to his senses (37). Frankenstein was able to feel joy and cast aside his sorrows and misfortunes only when his friendship with Clerval was intact (37).

When the Monster murdered Clerval, Frankenstein turned his attentions to the pursuit of the Monster, subsuming all relationships under his need for revenge. Frankenstein acknowledges that Clerval is a victim of his (Frankenstein's) own pursuit of science, stating "that Clerval, my friend and dearest companion, had fallen victim to me and the Monster of my creation" (135). Frankenstein's pursuit of revenge of the Monster clouded his responsibilities to himself and to the development of his science- if he had been cultivating true friendship with Clerval, that friendship would have been a check on his obsessions, as he would have been more able to cultivate temperance and the other virtues that go along with the pursuit of the good, of which true friendship is a part.

Frankenstein's relationship with Elizabeth is a bit more complicated, highlighting friendships that not only involve the three levels of friendship, but also the different types or capacities of friendship, such as between siblings and lovers. Frankenstein describes his relationship with Elizabeth in the following way: "Elizabeth Lavenza became the inmate of my parents' house- my more than sister- the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures"

(17). He “looked upon Elizabeth as mine- mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own. We called each other familiarly by the name of cousin. No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me- my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only” (18). His description of his relationship with Elizabeth shows that his understanding of friendship is varied and encompasses all three levels of friendship to different degrees. First, it is marked by friendship of utility, as he considers Elizabeth, to some extent, to be his possession, something that satisfies a need for him. Second, it is marked by hedonic friendship, as Frankenstein gains pleasure from their relationship. Third, by stating that Elizabeth was his “to protect, love, and cherish,” Frankenstein shows that there are also elements of true friendship in his relationship with her. Love and protection, and to a certain extent cherishment, are elements that involve the good of the other, for the good of the other.

On Elizabeth’s part, the reader gains little about her perception of the relationship. I think this is for two reasons. First, the reader only learns about Elizabeth’s disposition through Frankenstein’s narrative, and that limits access to her thoughts and disposition. However, there are two letters from Elizabeth to Frankenstein that give some insight into her disposition toward him. In the first letter, Elizabeth writes to Victor as he is recovering from the shock of having created the Monster. She expresses worry for his condition: “You are forbidden to write- to hold a pen; yet one word from you, dear Victor, is necessary to calm our apprehensions” (40). She has hope for his welfare, saying “I eagerly hope that you will confirm this intelligence soon in your own handwriting” (40). She relates to him the happenings of their family, giving Victor information regarding his siblings, father, and household servants; she even indulges to relate some of the gossip of Geneva. These sorts of communiques show that she includes him in her daily interactions with others, despite his distance and lack of reciprocal communication with her. She notes, “I have written myself into better spirits, dear cousin; by my anxiety returns upon me as I conclude. Write, dearest Victor- one line- one word will be a blessing to us” (42). So, there are elements of hedonic friendship here; in writing to Victor, she is giving herself pleasure, pulling herself out of the worry she feels. Moreover, an element of utilitarian friendship remains, as she has the need for her anxiety to be lessened, and asks Victor to satisfy that need for her. This does not exclude the elements of true friendship that are also present- she is genuinely concerned for Victor’s well-being for his own sake. In the second letter, Elizabeth relates the heartache she has felt for Victor over the course of his trial, and the desire she has for his well-being, “My poor cousin, how

much you must have suffered! ... This winter has been passed most miserably, tortured as I have been by anxious suspense; yet I hope to see peace in your countenance, and find that your heart is not totally void of comfort and tranquility” (137-8). This shows the depths of true friendship, acknowledgement of Victor’s suffering and a desire that he find peace. Further, she highlights aspects of the multiple kinds of friendships they share- that of childhood playmates, siblings, lovers, potential spouses- all of which are intertwined between the levels of friendship they share.

According to the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory presented here, the relationship between Victor and Elizabeth is a complicated one. It has the layers of friendship due to the different layers of relationship they have with one another, as siblings and lovers. It has the levels of friendship- utility, hedonism, and eudaimonia- that mark true friendship, but each of these levels is salient at different times and for different reasons. Given the presentation of the novel itself, this changing saliency presents a new facet of the critique that Shelley makes, which can be inferred from the Aristotelian-Thomistic model. Specifically, friendship, in all its forms, changes over time and according to the needs of the individuals involved in the particular relationship. This causes varied levels of friendship to become more salient than other levels of the friendship at various times. This does not necessarily mean that the individuals engaged in a true friendship do not maintain the true friendship over time, but rather that the development of the individuals involved requires diverse needs, skills, and virtues to be satisfied and/or flourish in order to ensure the overall development of the individuals. Although the novel does not address this directly, it is a clear critique made given the constantly changing interpersonal relationships, as represented in the brief outline of Victor and Elizabeth’s relationship.

Victor’s relationship with his father, Alphonse, also highlights the varying degrees of friendship, although more subtly than his relationship with Clerval and Elizabeth. We know most about Victor’s father from the indulgence and sternness with which he was treated during his studies, from a letter received by Victor from Alphonse after Victor’s recovery from the creation of the Monster, and his presence alongside Victor during and after his trial for Clerval’s murder. “My parents,” Victor tells us, “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” (19). Alphonse embodies, to an extent, the friendship of parent and child, as Aristotle remarks:

Each party, then, neither gets the same from the other, nor ought to seek it; but when children render to parents what they ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to their children, the friendship of such persons will be abiding and excellent. In all friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e. the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should the more useful, and similarly in each of the other cases; for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is certainly held to be characteristic of friendship. (VIII.7)

However, there is an incident which Victor relates that caused Victor some amount of heartache, namely, when Victor begins to study Cornelius Agrippa, and his father ridicules him. Victor feels this failure of kindness and intellectual rigor on the part of his father very deeply, and it impacts their relationship for many years. He hypothesizes, “If, instead of this remark, my father had taken pains to explain to me that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that a modern system of science had been introduced, which possessed much greater powers than the ancient...” (Shelley 20-1). In other words, his father was more concerned with his own sense of pleasure or need (it is Alphonse’s knowledge that Alphonse wishes to exemplify or merely to satisfy his own disgust with his son’s choice of study), rather than with the development of his son’s intellect. In this way, Alphonse failed in his fatherly duties, as well as in the cultivation of the friendship he has with his son.

When Victor was in Ingolstadt, recovering from his terror of having created the Monster, with Clerval by his side, he receives from Clerval a letter from Alphonse. This letter contains several bits of information, some which highlights the friendship of father and son which Aristotle mentions. Alphonse looks to commiserate with his son, “You have probably waited impatiently for a letter...” (46). However, the letter is to relate what has happened to Victor’s younger brother- he was killed by the Monster (47). While the nature of the letter is one of tragedy, even if the tragedy is caused by Victor’s Monster, there are certain points which mark this as one exemplifying Aristotle’s theory, as well as showing where Alphonse’s fatherly friendship is also deficient. For example, he has no desire to “inflict pain on [his] long-absent son” but also needs to make him aware of the tragedy that has befallen the family, namely the murder of William, Victor’s little brother (46). Conversely, Alphonse is unable to console Elizabeth, and asks Victor to come and take care of her, “you alone can console Elizabeth,” as well as the whole family, “return and be our comforter,” a sentiment that pulls at Victor’s emotionality, and in some ways, is founded more in utility and hedonism than in

true friendship (47). However, Alphonse addresses his son as “friend,” and entreats him to be with them through their mourning.

Further in Frankenstein’s narrative, Victor relates that his father joined him during the murder trial, making an appearance at Victor’s jail cell under the appellation of “friend” (132). During the exchange between Victor and Alphonse that follows, however, their relationship is primarily rooted in the father and son dichotomy, and they try to fulfill the duties and obligations as the circumstance requires. Victor relates, “My father calmed me with reassurances of their welfare, and endeavored, by dwelling on these subjects so interesting to my heart, to raise my desponding spirits” (133). Alphonse validates Victor’s reasons for travelling, acknowledging the heartache his son must be feeling at the murder of his friend, and is for Victor “like that of my good angel” (133). These are the marks of friendship that are proportional and appropriate for a father to a son, even seeking to ensure his son’s future happiness in marriage to Elizabeth (Aristotle VIII.7; Shelley 140). Victor was suicidal during this time, wrapped in the depression and grief of the murder of Clerval, and in this sense, fails to return the proportional and appropriate behaviors of a son to a father (Shelley 134).

Victor’s failings in the many friendships he relates over the course of his narrative is due in large part to his single-mindedness, first in relation to his studies, then in his relation to the consequences of having created the Monster. This single-mindedness overwhelms his ability to form and carry out the types of relationships and levels of friendships that human flourishing requires. It is this single-mindedness that becomes his downfall, although he recognizes this as he is dying, exhorting Walton as only a true friend can, “Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed” (162). His last act is to be the true friend of Walton.

The Monster

The Monster’s narrative about friendship alternately embodies true friendship, friendship of utility and friendship of pleasure. The progression of his story is an analogue of the distinct kinds of friendship Aristotle and Aquinas outline. When he first awakes to his condition, before the notions of betterment or revenge (a kind of personal advantage notion of progress, if you will) consume him, he is filled with wonder and curiosity at his environment, and seeks the companionship of others to share this wonder and curiosity with (71-72). However, given his grotesqueness and overall lack of knowledge concerning

human interactions (no language, custom, or familial resemblance), he is quickly set upon by the humans he tries to interact with (74). Eventually, he comes into an interesting relationship with the blind farmer and his children, learns language and routine behaviors, comes to understand trade-offs and heartache, and is exposed to the intricate dynamics of human behavior (Chapter XII).

Something happens within the Monster's formation, however, that he no longer seeks connection with humans, but becomes obsessed with finding a companion of his own kind. I think the reason for this is two-fold. On the one hand, he is responding to what he is taught from the humans, that he is something to be feared due to his construction and general difference. On the other hand, he sees that he is different, and true friendship is built on connection and development with one who is substantially like oneself, sharing the same species as it were. The combination of experience and existence that overlap in his narrative seem to spur the Monster into a direction of personal progress over and above his development as a good person (whether he be human or not).

In order to create an environment in which he can seek true friendship, the Monster asks Frankenstein to build him a companion that is like him in every way, with the added benefit of potential romantic connection, as well: "You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of sympathies necessary for my being" (104). At first, the Monster is living in accord with virtue and goodness in his asking Frankenstein, but it quickly devolves to coercion and revenge. I think this is partly due to the two-fold influence on the Monster's development already discussed. However, I think it is due more to the fact that the Monster became obsessed with creating his own community, since he had been ostracized from humans. Creating one's own community is not a bad thing; in fact, it is necessary to flourishing to have a supportive community in which one is involved. It is when the establishment of such a community is the only focus where true friendship becomes perverted- there is no longer the dual focus on personal and group development, a prerequisite for the flourishing of goodness.

Conclusion

The relationship between Victor and the Monster is the antithesis of the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of friendship presented here. Victor fails in his creator/fatherly duties to the creature, running in fear from the grotesqueness of his creation, and then seeking to destroy his creation without recognition of the Monster's independence and individual moral standing. Conversely, the Monster goes through his own process, beginning from a place of virtue and eudaimonia and devolving into a murderous destroyer of others' happiness. As the Monster

himself states, “When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now, that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned to bitter and loathing despair” (164). His failure to flourish is due in part to the treatment he received from others, as well as from his own lack of self-development and focus on revenge against Victor: “For while I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were forever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was spurned” (165).

Single-mindedness and lack of whole person development remain throughout the novel the downfall of friendship in its full form for each of the major characters. As a critique of the Enlightenment, Frankenstein stands strong against the notion of any one form of progress, personal or group, in which all the virtues and needs of human flourishing are not also developed. The Aristotelian-Thomistic model of friendship helps to shed light on why notions of scientific and single-subject development is detrimental to human flourishing. As an aid to understanding the horror of the novel, what is truly the tragedy of the characters, true friendship as a mark of human flourishing is a key component. While there has been a great deal of research into the themes of the novel, friendship has been little researched. What I have presented here is a rudimentary look into this concept as it relates to the story and as a critique of modernity. Future work should involve a more in-depth analysis of the interpersonal relationships, and would benefit from a closer examination of the Romantic period, its correlation to pre-Enlightenment classical influences on understanding of interpersonal relationships, and a deconstruction of the layered telling of the novel.

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