

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CREATING LIFE:
AN INVESTIGATION OF *FRANKENSTEIN* AND *FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S*

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We are human after all.

– Daft Punk, 2005

For centuries the human race has passed down stories about the privilege of human consciousness. Tales of creation and resurrection remind audiences around the world that they are recipients of the great gift of life and that all humans have a responsibility to cherish and value their existence. However there is a dark side that sits in contrast to these uplifting tales. Humans have often asked themselves if they are capable of creating life on their own, resulting in many grisly tales such as Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and the recently successful video game *Five Nights at Freddy's*. These tales of horrific experiments gone wrong demonstrate that humans are incapable of creating anything greater than or equal to their own selves, and any living thing created solely with human hands is doomed to be a monster.

In January of 2014, a struggling video game programmer started a fundraising campaign for his next independent game. In the following weeks, he succeeded in raising exactly zero dollars towards the cause. However, he persistently continued to work towards his vision and created the game on his own time, releasing it six months later on August 18, 2014. The game was an overnight sensation as an increasing numbers of players around the world frightened themselves, resulting in the game acquiring bestseller status, widespread attention, and a loyal fan following. The man behind the game was Scott Cawthon and the game was *Five Nights at Freddy's*, a fantastically creepy game about pizzeria animatronics that come to life.

The game was hailed as a fresh, exciting, and unique entry in the video game horror genre, not only for the fact that it was created using an older software engine but also for the fact that gamers were scared by something so simple. *Five Nights at Freddy's* does not feature much blood, gore or violence. The controls are easy to learn, and the player can jump right into the action without learning about a dramatic backstory. The reason why the game is successful is not just because it is different but also because it hits upon a fear ingrained in every human

being: a fear of the monster. Obviously *Five Nights at Freddy's* is not the first work of fiction to pull from this world of subconscious paranoia. Many films and novels use monsters as a means to frighten the audience or to drive the story forwards, but quite often authors use these inhuman abominations to reveal deeper truths about the state of man.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is about the disordering of the natural world as Dr. Frankenstein attempts to create a living human being from the spare parts of corpses. In his mind, he imagines building a strong, loyal and obedient creature, yet once he brings it to life he finds that his creation is utterly horrifying. "I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form? ...Now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart." (Shelley) All in all, the resulting monster is not as much human as it is a frightening animal that bears some resemblance to the human shape. For the rest of the novel, the demented being haunts its creator and terrorizes the rest of the continent.

Why is mankind in fiction not able to create beings equal to itself or greater than itself without producing some sort of catastrophic result? The answer as to why men do not possess God's level of creative talent and inspiration is rather simple. In the sciences there has been a search for what is known as the perpetual motion machine, or a machine that moves continuously without any input or external energy source. However, such a machine is impossible in the real world because the existence of friction implies that energy will always be lost or transferred over a period of time, meaning that it is impossible for any machine to retain one hundred percent of its original energy no matter how well its gears are oiled or how smoothly its wheels turn. Thus,

a machine cannot create anything more than that which is put into it, nor can it maintain or completely replicate the power put into it. There is always a decrease from the input to the output. In the same way as machines, human beings are unable to create something greater than or equal to their own selves. This law applies to any being or machine; it cannot create something greater than itself or even replicate itself simply because it does not possess the insight to fully comprehend, analyze, or understand its own self. As much as humans dream of creating a fully sentient artificial intelligence or a supercomputer that can perform every human task, machines are capable only of doing what their creators program them to do, meaning that mankind must first fully understand itself before it can ever hope to replicate itself. Although the human race has come close to understanding the basic function of the majority of the physical body, the human mind still remains an enigma and the human soul eludes scientific understanding. Thus since humans cannot ever fully understand their own selves, they will never be able to replicate themselves. Thankfully, biological reproduction is not a method for mankind to scientifically control its own creation. If it were, every child would end up similar to Frankenstein's monster: a crude imitation of human life.

It is beyond the grasp of a human being to create anything equal to or greater than itself. Thus begins the paradox of Frankenstein: what if humans could reach beyond their abilities and inspire the dead to come to life? The book is a cautionary tale, similar to the story in which mankind attempted to reach the heavens with the tower of Babel or the myth of Icarus flying too close to the sun. Literature has taken on the role of outlining the limits of human nature so that readers do not have to learn the hard way. However, where does fiction end and fact begin? Is it possible to recreate life?

The gospel of John, taken by many Christians to be a historical and non-fictional account of the life and times of Jesus, focus on incidents in which the forces of life are manipulated and the laws of nature are broken. Chapter 11 describes an incident in which Jesus raises Lazarus, a man from Bethany, from the dead. "...[Jesus] cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out'. The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' " (John 11:43-45) It is a vivid and somewhat frightening image as Jesus' miracle blurs the border between life and death. Although it seems for a moment that it is possible after all for a human being to have control over the laws of nature and the intricate rules of existence, it is important to remember that several chapters later in the same book, Jesus himself was resurrected from the grave after three days of being dead. Jesus, as is widely believed by Christians, was God incarnate in a human body. He was fully human and yet fully God. This implies that in order to have any influence beyond the grasp of normal human power, a person is required to be more than human. The conclusion is that a normal human being is not able to perform larger tasks, such as spiritual endeavors, that lie outside of his or her reach. Thus the creation and/or recreation of life is outside the parameters of a human's abilities.

To put it all into perspective, the book of Genesis shows the role God gives to humans. The book tells of a spiritual being, simply referred to as "God", crafting mankind from the dust of the ground. "...The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." (Genesis) This passage is about the original creation of life, something that humans wonder if they can ever replicate. Continuing the story, mankind, as it is written, was created not only as another animal. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over

the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” (Genesis) In this passage it is clear that man is meant to rule over the rest of God’s earthly creations. However, it does not say anywhere that mankind is meant to inherit or imitate God’s ability to create living organisms. Mankind is placed above the earthly creation but still placed below God. Although man is meant to be creative and to function as a master over part of God’s creation, mankind is still meant to be under service or in obedience to God’s commands.

Frankenstein exhibits a deliberate overstepping of the boundaries inherent in God’s creation of mankind. Since Dr. Frankenstein is merely human and not a divine being, his creation is doomed to be less than human and thus results in a terrifying monster. The monster is not divinely inspired and is only the result of clumsy human hands. Dr. Frankenstein is motivated by the achievements of scientists before him and the words of his professor but as a result he pushes his own academic experiments too far. “ ‘[The philosophers] penetrate into the recesses of nature, and show how she works in her hiding places.’ ...More, far more will I achieve: treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.” (Shelley) Dr. Frankenstein deliberately attempts to play God, resulting in a disaster. It is not wrong that he is attempting to discover new principles. It is wrong that he steps over into the domain of spirituality and believes that he can personally control the forces of life.

The conclusion that mankind should not create life on its own leads to an interesting implication. In the same way that mankind should not create life with its own power, it could be said that mankind should not live life on its own power. The monster in *Frankenstein* may

actually serve as an example a life created solely with human power. Mary Shelley scares the reader into realizing that a life devoid of God's power is twisted, demented, and deeply rooted in despair. Since Dr. Frankenstein's monster was created with human hands, readers are warned that if they take it upon themselves to live as their own creation, they will ultimately fail and fall into depravity.

Saint Augustine talks about the need for divinity in his book *City of God*. In Book Twelve he argues that good angels are happier than fallen angels simply because they still rely on God. "The only good that can make a rational or intellectual being happy is God. The being that can be happy cannot draw happiness from himself, since he was created out of nothing, but from him by whom he was created. For the attainment of this good makes such a being happy, just as the loss of it makes him unhappy." (Augustine) The only way for created beings to obtain happiness is through their creator. In the same way that a fallen angel removes itself from God, a human being who turns away from God will become unhappy, and any being that is deprived of happiness will become miserable.

The monsters in *Five Nights at Freddy's* exemplify the empty result of human hands in the same way that Frankenstein's monster reminds readers of the futility of living without a creator. The game presents an interesting twist on the classic cliché of grand human experiments gone wrong. Four robot animatronics populate the pizzeria's main stage and are designed to entertain guests during meals and birthday parties. However, the game places the player in the role of a night guard, where it is discovered through the security camera monitor that the robots are not entirely still at night and in fact are rather determined to roam towards the player's office. The game is thrilling in its simplicity and suspense as the player struggles to block the robots out of the main office for one night at a time.

Five Nights at Freddy's has a unique ability to frighten people before they have even played the game. A reviewer online described his personal experience with the game, somewhat in jest but also consistent with the views expressed by others: "Launches game. Looks at Freddy from the start menu. Quits and uninstalls." (Cawthon) All in all, there is something deeply unsettling about the game's animatronic characters that taps into the fears presented in *Frankenstein* except in a more visceral way than literature is capable of. Three key components of the characters are frightening. First of all, the robots are meant to represent different animals but are eerily humanoid in the way that they are designed. Secondly, the animatronics move freely at their own will, which suggests that the animal mascots do not stick to their given programming but have independent thoughts. The final tipping point for many fearful players is that the robots are not only sentient and mobile but they are hunting specifically for you. The point is that these monster figures are undeniably meant to represent humans, although they display humanity in its lowest form. The animatronic monsters are without God, without happiness, and practically without life, although their physical motion might suggest otherwise. They are alive and yet so very close to dead, not unlike Frankenstein's monster.

Scott Cawthon, the game's creator, is in fact a Christian but in interviews he has denied any intentional religious meaning behind the game. "*Five Nights at Freddy's* is just a simple horror game, although I did try to keep it relatively clean with no blood or guts." (Morgan) The game appears to have been designed for sheer scare factor. Even though this may be the case, perhaps underneath it all is a warning message about the creation of life similar to that found in *Frankenstein*. As it turns out, the animatronics are glitchy not only because of defective programming but because of far more sinister events. Newspaper clippings hidden in the back of a room reveals that the restaurant has had a shady past: "Kids vanish at local pizzeria. Five

children now reported missing. Suspect convicted. The children themselves were never found and are presumed dead.” The story continues over several different nights as the clippings change. “Local pizzeria threatened with shutdown over sanitation... reports of foul odor coming from the much-loved animal mascots... parents reportedly noticed what appeared to be blood and mucus around the eyes and mouths of the mascots. One parent likened them to ‘reanimated carcasses’.” (What Happened to the Children?) Someone, either the criminal suspect or a company employee, hid the bodies of murdered children in the animatronic suits. The events in the restaurant cross over from the physical to the demonic as the player notices that the animatronics grow more aggressive, unusually fast, and impossibly glitchy as the game goes on. The spirits trapped within the animatronics are comparable to Saint Augustine’s fallen angels. Removed from God and their natural relationship to him, the trapped spirits act of their own will and power, forever doomed to a dismal existence. Perhaps the moral behind the game is similar to what Frankenstein’s monster teaches readers: any attempt to create life or to live on one’s own power will result in failure, frustration, and a frightening shadow of true human consciousness.

Psychologically speaking, a large part of the scariness in the monster in *Frankenstein* and the robots in *Five Nights at Freddy’s* comes from how closely they resemble humans. Both creations are considered prime examples of what scientist Masahiro Mori calls the “uncanny valley”, or the nervous reaction in an audience that is realized when they are presented with something closely resembling a human and yet clearly not being human. (Mori) Creations like these cause audiences to ask, “What if that was me?” while at the same time realizing that the monster or robot cannot be themselves, simply because the small differences are so vast. Frankenstein’s monster is ugly and large. Freddy Fazbear is mechanical and obtuse. Both figures hint at the presence of a human being but simultaneously reject any possibility of it

actually being human, simply because Frankenstein's monster is made up of dead flesh and Freddy Fazbear is made up of a metallic endoskeleton. Audiences realize these differences, consciously or unconsciously, and that is what makes both of these works scary yet intriguing. Upon examining something that is definitely not like themselves, viewers are forced to look closer at their own selves and decide what they are made of. Questions about physical composition arise, but soon the viewer realizes that physical composition isn't what sets them apart from a monster or a well-designed machine. Humans are made up of tissue and muscle just like the Frankenstein monster. Humans are built with bones and joints, not unlike an animatronic skeleton. There must be something more to being human than just physically being a body made up of parts.

The conclusion comes when a person realizes that his or her identity comes not from what they are physically composed of but from his or her actions. The reason why Freddy Fazbear and Frankenstein's monster are so scary is that they are devoid of the life that only God can give. As creations of human blunders, the monsters and machines believe that contact with their human creators must be the solution to their problems, but as a human being is limited and finite and incapable of understanding life, chances of resolution in any form are slim. They are doomed to give in to their lowest animalistic level and suffer for the rest of their days, simply because their creators did not know what power was in their hands. Once again, such robots and monsters are impossible to create, but the metaphor becomes all the more clear. In the same way that a tormented monster cannot find resolution by meeting with human beings, human beings cannot find happiness apart from their own creator. If humans ignore that there is a God who is the source of all happiness and life, then they are doomed to lives of revenge, hatred, pain and isolation. Living their own efforts, humans become more like animals, fulfilling only their most

basic pleasures and interacting with others on a purely selfish basis. A man or woman without God is a lifeless machine.

The reason why *Frankenstein* and *Five Nights at Freddy's* are so scary is that they remind audiences of the monstrous results of living independently from God. These works of fiction serve not only to frighten readers and gamers into obedience but also serve to point out the monstrous faults already present in human nature. The gap is wide between man and God if mankind attempts to live on its own power. If humans realize that happiness does not come from within themselves or from the lesser parts of creation but from their creator, then perhaps there is hope. Like Augustine's angels who can only find happiness when they follow God, audiences will have to make up their minds when reading about a walking corpse or freakish animatronics. It is up to them to choose to be a human or a monster.

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