

Bartleby the scrivener

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Bartleby is employed in the narrative not merely or not really as a character but more of a representation or symbol. Bartleby's character can be compared with another character made by Melville, Moby Dick. The reason for such comparison and at some point similarities between them is that both characters are interpreted by the readers and some literary critics in many different ways. In effect, these characters cannot be construed in a single way.

In the story *Bartleby the Scrivener*, Melville discovers comparable philosophical concerns in a special sort of setting. In an impressive comparison with Ahab (in *Moby Dick*), Bartleby is also fascinated by walls - a persistent emblem in the story. Bartleby's character can be seen as a sort of wall in a sense that no one really knows what he thinks, what he likes, what interests him, and whatsoever. Almost all things about him and about his actions are unknown and hard to explain. This description is unveiled by the character played by the lawyer, who eventually becomes Bartleby's boss. The lawyer all throughout the story attempts to discover the absurdity of Bartleby's character which is depicted in several scenes of the story.

All throughout the story, Bartleby constantly refuses to follow what his boss asks of him. Consistently, he also refuses to state why he refuses to do so. Such attitude becomes the fundamental frustration of the lawyer in the story. He does not know how he could make Bartleby follow his orders as how his other employees do. The first impression that would justify why the lawyer does not fire Bartleby is the idea that he is probably so surprised of Bartleby's attitude of being nonconformist such that it becomes a big challenge for him to be able to make Bartleby follow him. He does everything

to do this but he always fails. To his surprise, he could not find in his heart the motivation to dismiss his eccentric employee.

Lots of scenes suggest how the lawyer pays so much sympathy for Bartleby though the latter never gives him the chance of knowing the reasons why he keeps on refusing to obey his orders and why he keeps on refusing telling him the reasons.

The first scene where the lawyer shows care and concern for Bartleby is when the former finds out that the latter is staying at the office even after office hours. When he learns that Bartleby does not have a home to go after work, he just lets him stay in the office.

The next scene is when the lawyer refuses to agree to get Bartleby out of the office by a stranger. Probably, the lawyer feels that the stranger would not do good for Bartleby that is why he does not agree to the stranger's proposal.

Another scene is when the lawyer finally decided to relocate his office to another place and find out Bartleby standing in an empty room. He is touched by the scene and in the end gives Bartleby money but leaves him as well.

The last scene is when the lawyer pays sympathy for Bartleby when he learns that he is sent to prison and he is dying because of his refusal to eat. He visits him and even pays the warden to make sure that Bartleby would eat his meals.

Until the end of the story, Bartleby does not reveal his reason for behaving like what he does. No one succeeds to unveil this information not even the lawyer who becomes so frustrated of making Bartleby disclose his feelings about what is happening in his life.

Towards the end of the story, the scenes between the lawyer and Bartleby suggest the tolerance and at the same time the aggravation that the lawyer feels towards Bartleby. Some critics say that it could be the case that the lawyer somehow understands Bartleby's behavior for the reason that he too also wants to go against what the trend during that time asks them to do. But just like Bartleby, the lawyer could not find the exact words to explain the feeling that he has in his heart and the thoughts that envelops his mind. So he tolerates what Bartleby is doing.

To give a conclusion, Bartleby serves as the direct representation of the wall which is the main theme of the story. He never reveals anything just like the wall - as how the wall does not make any response whatever one does against it. Bartleby refuses to reason out for he believes that no one would understand him as he himself could not his own way of thinking. When he dies, he gives the lawyer, his boss, the lesson not to become a puppet of anyone else.

Bartleby is able to show how nonconformist he is to the point of embracing death for the sake of upholding what he believes in. It is implicit in the story that somehow the lawyer is starting to realize how disgusting the trend that he is currently following (the trend of Capitalism). But he refuses to express it for the reason that he knows that when he do such, his life would be in

peril. But as he sees the dying Bartleby, he understands that it is much better to die keeping one's own principles than continue living trying to fit in with somebody else's standards.

Reference:

Melville, H. (2006). *Bartleby, the Scrivener, a Story of a Wall-street*. Lightning Source Inc.