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Humans seek to fulfill themselves. Whether this fulfillment comes from ones the seeking of knowledge or the satisfaction that one has taken their abilities to the greatest of their extend all humans search for what will create a life where they feel that they have found what they are searching for. How does someone know that they are fulfilled? If one person feels that they are truly satisfied with their life in one profession, but another feels completely empty in the same profession then how can fulfillment be pinpointed? Furthermore the man who feels satisfied in their profession could become unsatisfied when becoming exposed to some knowledge that he was not aware of before. In this way fulfillment is a moving target that can change whenever new knowledge has been attained. In order to examine fulfillment and its relationship to the gaining of knowledge the reference of literature is necessary. Primarily the use of the *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* by Himselfand *Silas Marner* by George Eliot will be used.

Before using these references I am proposing a situation in which to help examine fulfillment. The situation was stated before, but I will extend the circumstances. There are two blacksmiths, one of who is satisfied with his position because he feels that he being a blacksmith uses all of his ability, and one who is unsatisfied. The unsatisfied blacksmith feels this way because his profession does not challenge him and the actions that he goes through each day are monotonous in his mind. This situation I will simply call the blacksmiths. When looking at these two cases we must consider the potential of these two people as well as the requirements for one to heighten himself above his current position. Meaning the effort that comes with changing from a profession in which you are comfortable to a position that gives you fulfillment. The blacksmith here that is content, which I will now call the ignorant blacksmith does not know of anything that will make him questions his own life; he does not seek to learn or change his ways. His work is everything and consumes him wholly. This blacksmith is likened to Silas Marner during the time that Marner has not yet discovered Eppie as well as Frederick Douglas before learning of the terrors of slavery.

Marner is a man of habit whose senses have been dulled. He has not yet learned to truly think; to “severe” the bonds of his mind separate “the form and the feeling.” Here is a man who has become to content with his activities that they are all that he is as a person. Rather he has stop being a person and has instead become a beast of habit. His only “impulse” is “to weave, like the spider” without a thought as to why he is weaving or to what ends it will bring him. This is a mind nulling habit that consumes him. The distinction between habits of great good and great bad become apparent here. Marner has no habit of thinking and “knows nothing of abstractions,” so he completely become a slave to repetition, an animal because he works off of instinct. This is the life that the ignorant blacksmith lives. He knows nothing of the life outside of his routine so he believes himself to be fulfilled despite his stationary nature. This notion that he who does not seek to expand himself is an animal is also present in Frederick Douglass.

Douglass becomes more discontented the more that he learns about his condition. So much in fact that he “envied” his “fellow slaves for their stupidity” and “wished” himself “a beast” in mentality just like his fellow slaves. Though his discontent pushes him finally towards his freedom this is the point where Douglass can hardly stand to be alive. Further his pain is amplified because he knows what true kindness is. He “suffered” more because he had “known what it was to be treated kindly” and “they had seen little of the world” and had no kindness to compare to. He wants to again be like his fellow slaves because they do not know the great pain and suffering that is taking place, but he also pities them more because they do not know the things that he does. The slaves are just like Silas. They are at such a low level hat not only are they at such a low level that they cannot imagine the terror that is coming to them. They know nothing and are kept at this low level with no chance of escape. They do not know their birthdays or anything else about themselves, truly just animals of instinct. Even worse, the slaveholders have given the slaves a false sense of kindness. The holidays are given to the slaves in order to fool them; they are given “by the benevolence of soldiers” because “it would be unsafe to deprive them of it.” The slaves are so ignorant that they believe that holiday has been given as a gift to them. This is the level of darkness that the slaves have been put down to. Even if they were given the chance to run away, none of the slaves would know where to run because the direction in which to run is not known to them.

At this point Douglass has crossed the line from the ignorant blacksmith into the blacksmith that questions whether or not he should be in his profession. Monotony has begun to be replaced by thought. What begins to form within him is absolute necessity to rise above and free and step into freedom, but his next step is paramount because the difficulty of changing from a creature of bad habits into a man of free thought is so high that most men will not transcend the boundary. This is a step that stops many people from living fulfilling lives. They are afraid of making the leap. Moving into the examined life is what truly makes life worth living and is what Plato preaches in the Apology. Douglass realizes he must live an examined life when he learns the truths of slavery and is what Silas realizes when Effie comes into his life. For Douglass to being living a life that he believes is worth living he must continue to examine it and sever the animalist notion that feeling and form are the same. The final step to him personally being able to step over the barrier is his fight with Covey. Covey attempts to drag him back down to the level of a slave and almost succeeds. Douglass becomes “broken in body, soul and spirit” and his “intellect languished” leading to him being “transformed into a brute.” However Douglass has such a will that he defeats covey and we see “how a slave was made a man.” This is the greatest piece of the puzzle for Douglass becoming fulfilled.

Likening this back to the blacksmiths, Douglass has now transcended even the blacksmith that know he is unfulfilled by taking the steps towards becoming content with his life. This blacksmith is now more like Silas Marner at the time that his gold was taken away. There is a deep void that cannot be filled. Unlike Douglass, Marner’s fulfillment comes at the hands of Effie’s arrival. As Eppie arrives Silas remembered what it was before Raveloe, back when he was more than the repetitive soul that he is now. The “presence” of this other being in his house brings an “inexplicable surprise and a hurrying influx of memories” that he has been trying to hide for so long. Simple real human contact, something not accounted for in fifteen years, has broke the monotony and starts to bring him back to being a real human being. So, then fulfillment does not solely come from a person’s own commitment to become enlightened. Silas’s simple mindedness would have probably ever arrived at this enlightened state. What Silas realizes is that the people around him are his fulfillment; starting of course with Eppie, but also coming with his acceptance into the community of Raveloe. Human contact fills the void because people are ever changing. Eppie grows and Silas is forced to grow with her. Eppie’s age is important here because if she had been any younger than the companionship that she would give to Silas is close to nothing because she is so fresh to the world, and if she was older then she would have been on a level greater than that of Silas.

The change from beast into man does not happen as quickly for Silas as is does for Douglass. Silas has forced and comforted himself with the monotony out of his own previous pain. The steps that Silas takes are many, starting with his insistence on keeping Eppie. He says he is “a lone thing” and that Eppie is “a lone thing” so they are perfect for each other. At this point Silas has had a taste of fulfillment just as Douglass had and he cannot stand to give up the possibility of continuing on the path to fulfillment. As I have stated before Eppie is ever changing with “endless claims” and “ever-growing” in which to expand herself and to keep Silas alert. Silas’s knowledge here is every changing unlike the gold that kept his mind locked for so long. The gold was “leading to nothing beyond itself” in a circle that stayed constant, but Eppie slowly forces Silas to grow. This growth turns Silas into a man of good habits where the people around them fulfill him as they pull him into the community. A major turning point is when Silas takes up smoking. The influence “by the sages of Raveloe” have turned him to something that he does simply because he has friends that have the same habits. Another turning point is when Silas tells his past to Dolly. The final point at which Silas has reached his complete fulfillment is when he is able to give away that which has brought him fulfillment. He says, “my child, speak. I won’t stand in your way,” and you know that he has reached the end of his journey into fulfillment. Though the real payoff to Silas is that Eppie is fulfilled by him in the same way and therefore rejects Godfrey’s offer of adoption. She says, “I can’t think o’ no happiness without him,” and you know that Silas has not only fulfilled the happiness in his life, but also gone beyond and shown others what happiness is.

For Frederick Douglass the end of his journey to fulfillment comes not when he becomes free, but when he connects with other to spread the knowledge that he has attained. His work to free those that he knows cannot think for themselves is what gives his life purpose. What both Silas and Douglass realize then is that to have your life have meaning that you must not only strive to live at the extend of what you know, but also to share what it means to live with the people around you. The blacksmith that was not satisfied with his own profession and life would have to seek his happiness elsewhere. He would then have to share what he has learned to find his fulfillment with others, in turn helping them to decide if they are happy or not with the current situation of their lives.