

## Exam 2

Both writings of Jerome Miller, “The Way Of Suffering: A Reason of the Heart” and *In the Throe of Wonder: Intimation of the Sacred in a Post-Modern World* talk about getting out of nothingness and learning to believe in god. Wonderment and the sacred nature of life are things that people have to recognize in order to get to their spiritual goals. Jerome miller talks about getting out of nothingness to believe in God by facing the fear of nothingness and letting one’s heart truly feel emotion.

Wonder and the throe of inquiry open a person up to the sacred because these things give the world meaning, and in this meaning lies the definition of being sacred. Miller says that “I have suggested that, when one follows the inklings of wonder, one finds oneself opened up to the world discoverable through questions and inquiry, the world of being mediated by meaning...Implicit in our experience of that throe is the ambivalence of fascination and dread, longing and horror” (Miller 50). Having experience avoids emptiness in a human being, and the human being who wants to truly live will avoid the world as an empty game. “A world becomes a kind of game when those who enter it, and play within its order, do not recognize its center as sacred...if one thinks that nothing has an intrinsic worth, if one considers nothing to be scared, one empties (these worlds) to the moral seriousness they must have” (Miller 97). The world must be taken seriously, and the discovery of the world is ultimately related to recognizing that elements of the world are sacred and deserving of wonderment. People need to recognize truth through their own systems in order to use wonder and inquiry to get to truth, which is the way to belief and finding the sacred.

**Comment [DP1]:** Misunderstanding. We cannot get out of nothingness. Our problem is that we do not recognize and that leaves the ego at the center, which cuts us off from the sacred and form genuine inquiry. Nothingness is our inescapable basic condition that we hide from and it is only in facing that condition that a movement toward the sacred, toward the throe of inquiry, and away from the presumption of truth, is possible.

**Comment [DP2]:** Be careful!! The sacred CANNOT be a goal. Any trace of a goal in this path and you are going the wrong direction. You are trying to achieve something. That is the opposite of the emptying out of all beliefs, all goals, any trace of the ego and open up to genuine inquiry in order open to nothingness that is the rupture that makes movement toward the sacred possible. Complete surrender.

**Comment [DP3]:** Again, this is opposite to orienting oneself FROM the ordinary TOWARD the Absolute Other. Only in a judgment out of commitment can one speak of God, but one never has knowledge of God because the Absolute Other is the radically unknown/unknowable. The known is always within a meaningful world. Such a meaningful world must be completely ruptured and reduced to nothing to move toward wisdom and away from the ego. Ego is associated with knowledge, wisdom with undoing what we think we know. Knowledge is closure, wisdom opens. Nothing wrong with knowledge. But one must recognize is for what it is: something that can only be IN a world. Rupture that leads to wisdom and the sacred is something that happened TO a world, undoes it. Without this one cannot open to the sacred. Truth and the sacred cannot be possessed. Truth is the toward-which of inquiry and insight/wisdom and the sacred is radically other than any world of meaning in which insight can be pursued.

**Comment [DP4]:** Anything can be a hierophany, can be a sign of sacredness. The very being of a meaningful world is a hierophany and become radically other than its ordinarieness.

**Comment [DP5]:** Clarify. You might be saying something opposed to Miller’s view. I am not sure.

Dr. Miller has a lot to say on nothingness, as well. Dr. Miller says that we hide our hearts from ourselves- we don't want to know the wisdom we could learn from our heart. We really want nothing to do with it. "We do not want the deepest truths within us known to us," (Miller 23) we as human beings in our culture been taught to be strong, to manage and handle things. This paralyzes our heart. That is where nothingness comes into play. Nothingness is the empty void that lets humans live their lives without God and emotion. Nothingness takes advantage of the smallest and least noticed parts of a person's everyday life. And, human beings like nothingness because it is less scary than feeling emotions.

Nothingness is the source of all fears that prevent a person from going forward in their lives. We are taught to defy pain and heal our hearts, when really emotional wounds need to be and are begging to be recognized. It is through suffering that one learns if God exists or not, and the way to wonderment. According to Dr. Miller, the way to return our hearts to us is revisit scary and intense moments that made our emotions seem real and "open one's self up to what is horrifying, not recoil from it" (Miller 27). This will make a person stare into the nothingness and see all the pain, the joy, all the emotions that people were taught to repress. "Deeper than any belief in God, deeper than the bitter resentment such belief turns into, is the shivering horror of nothingness itself which undermines our whole world, God and all" (Miller 28).

When one can look into the nothingness and see one's self, a person is on the way to the sacred, to believing in God, and figuring out someone's true identity. Miller himself explains that the nothingness that he himself spent his life avoiding is really valuable. "When I finally accept my identity with it, it enables me to experience existence itself as an unspeakable grace" (Miller 31). Everything is capable of not existing, but we make it exist and it, in turn, makes us exist. "The experience of nothingness is, as we have seen, an excruciating ordeal which we

**Comment [DP6]:** Lack of emotion is not nothing or nothingness. Not letting anything mean the world to you is an attempt to escape from the basic vulnerability to nothingness. We do NOT like it. We refuse to even acknowledge it. Such acknowledgement is the only path to the sacred according to Miller and that requires giving up everything.

**Comment [DP7]:** You have this completely wrong. What we are is utter contingency and nothingness with the illusion that we are the center. We run from nothingness. It is only in embracing our nothingness that we open ourselves to the radical other and the sacred.

**Comment [DP8]:** This is on the right track, but incomplete. Much of "going forward with life is actually running from nothingness and nothingness does not prevent it but is a stimulus to fill one's life with success, entertainment, pleasure, etc, to avoid confrontation with nothingness.

**Comment [DP9]:** This is powerful. Comment on it. Why is belief in God part of our world that has to be left behind to move toward the sacred.

ordinarily spend our lives avoiding. But for someone who undergoes it, a miracle does happen, although it is not at all the miracle we have wanted or hoped for...it is like the birth of a new universe” (Miller 32). Miller implores us to experience, experience, experience and to live, to feel. This is the first step in the chain of events that make life less of nothingness and more of wonderment and sacredness. In wonderment and sacredness is identity and finally, truly believing in god. Miller says that most people don’t believe in god, not really. “For most of us, in our heart of hearts, God does not exist...God has never become real for us, has never ceased to be an abstraction; God is something we talk about because we have learned the word” (Miller 22). The ultimate goal is identity, believing in one’s self and in God, the creator of the world.

Dr. Miller has a lot to say in his works “The Way of Suffering: A Reason of the Heart” and *In the Throe of Wonder: Intimation of the Sacred in a Post-Modern World*. Both texts explore the way to believing in God and reaching a higher point of seeing the world and ourselves. The heart is guarded by fear and the acceptability of not being emotional in our society. Miller rejects this, thinking that ultimate feeling gets a person much farther from everyday nothingness, and into realms that are far more sacred and wondrous.

**COMMENTS: Some of what you say is right on the money. So it surprises me that on other things you are completely out of touch with Miller. I would suggest a rewrite to make this a good grade. You obviously have the ability to make this a better paper. With the comments I have made and some re-reading this should not be too big a task.**

**REWRITE**