

Test #2

Jerome A. Miller advocates an idea of wonder, language, and being that is directly in opposition to the way in which so many people have been cultured to see them. Miller suggests in the second chapter of his book, *In the Throe of Wonder*, that most people think that being comes before thought. In order to explain this in greater detail, he labels being as the signified and language or thought as the signifier. The signified is defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary as the meaning or idea expressed by a sign. This allows us to understand that the signifier must come before the signified. If being did in fact come before language it would be as if being came with language to follow, only to allow us to see being. Miller asks, "what has drawn us away from the given (being) in the first place". For example, an object that your thought has no reference to has no meaning to you, but if you give it a name or signify it by a sound, then all of the sudden it has meaning to you. Without thought there is no meaning, therefore without thought there cannot be being. Thought is what allows us to be. Without thought there is no awareness of the self and therefore thought must be a necessity for being.

Humans are beings to which things matter. It is this mattering that causes us to be vulnerable to pain, suffering, happiness, etc. It is this vulnerability that the ordinary ideas of language try to destroy. We use language to do this by eliminating the unknown, making everything ordinary and eliminating "otherness". It is wonder that causes us to be vulnerable at our core. Wonder ruptures our world, as we know it. Wonder opens the door to a world that can only be reached through deep inquiry, a world of unknown, which continues to lead toward the unknown. If we can then go back to the beginning, being wonder, and instead of going through the door of the ordinary language and meanings, go through the door of inquiry that wonder opens to us, we can then see things not as a copy of an original that we once saw, but as an original in and of itself. For example, instead of linking a basketball to the first time I understood and saw a basketball, I can contemplate about all the different aspects to the basketball that is in my hand as an original object of inquiry. Wonder leads us to inquiry which in turn will cultivate a new world of meanings through language that will remain fresh and there will always be an abundance of unknown to inquire about. This world will remain fresh through the questions that come from the inquiry opened to us by wonder. A few years

Comment [DP1]: You seem to equate the given with being here, which is the myth of the given Miller is attempting to overcome. Were you attempting to say: What has drawn us away from the given TOWARD being in the first place? (the experiences in temporality of wonder, and horror)

Comment [DP2]: I agree that without language there is no thought or meaning, but I do not follow the rest of this. It would appear to be a version of the metaphysics of presence centered on the I. And the idea that there is just thought without reference to a world of meaning also seems like a version of previous metaphysics. Perhaps I have misunderstood what you are getting at. Miller would say that being is the radical other of any and all thought/meaning. Thinking can move us toward this radical other or close us off from it.

Comment [DP3]: Typically wonder opens a new world of meaning that becomes an orienting radiating center. But that center then is subject to rupture and loss.

ago my family went on vacation to a lake in northern California. At the lake, a bunch of us took the boat to a rock to jump off of. The highest jumping point was said to be around sixty feet. Now once everyone is up at the top, we all try and get the each other to jump first. The fear of death, pain, and the complete loss of the self is what hinder us from jumping, but those who jump first get a thrill that no other jumper can obtain. The first jumper does not know whether or not he/she will survive. The jump is the unknown. Those who jump after know that survival is a probably, so their thrill is limited. After experiencing both, I know that the first jumper always has the greatest experience. The same applies to wonder, only on a much larger scale. The difference between the rock and wonder is, when you jump off a rock, you usually jump off the rocks that other people have told you about that are “safe”. When you enter into the throe of wonder, you enter a state of complete unknown that freaks the hell out of us, but at the same time allows us to REALLY experience life – awe, horror, aguish, etc. It is impossible to grasp wonder in entirety because for each of us it happens differently, but we can give examples and share personal experiences to understand some of the results of wonder.

The jumping off, or opening of the door separating ordinary from holy as miller states it, is what takes us to the sacred. The sacred is what is on the other side of the door that wonder pulls us to so strongly, and our fear of otherness and mystery try to pull us away from, therefore the sacred contains otherness, but otherness doesn’t necessarily contain the sacred. Like a square is a rectangle, but a rectangle is not a square, it is wonder that draws us toward the sacred and not the sacred that draws us toward wonder. Wonder is a necessary ingredient of the sacred. Without wonder you cannot experience the sacred. Through wonder, one can enter a life of inquiry that will lead to the sacred. Wonder is the hinge of a door, the actual door is inquiry, and inquiry opens us up to the sacred, but the sacred is not a finite destination, rather the other side of an infinite amount of doors that can be opened to us if we continue to give ourselves to the throe of wonder. This constant process of rupturing the ordinary into nothingness, unworlding, then inquiry leading to insight, which, if guided by judgment, will lead to a new world of meanings, that can once again be ruptured by wonder. It is the rupture of the ordinary that is jumping off the cliff into nothingness. The realization of nothingness is the most important step in rupturing ones world as it is in the present. This realization can only

Comment [DP4]: You know them as rocks and have some idea of the risk. They are part of your world... in your world. Wonder is an unexpected rupture of something unknown into the ordinary that opens up something that is not in your world but rather creates a new orientation of meaningful experience, such as falling deeply in love, or a religious conversion, in the case of horror, witnessing the death of a close friend in battle, losing a beloved child, your whole life is being an athlete and you lose your limbs in an accident, etc. This can all be experienced in the throe of wisdom where death is a repeated event, the death of your meaning or significant aspects of it.

Comment [DP5]: The sacred is not the object itself. Once you go through the door, what was unknown may become know. That is never the case with where an experience of the sacred leads us which is through our deepest vulnerability to the mystery that there is meaningful world at all that we can never know but can only approach with reverence and awe.

Comment [DP6]: What is the sacred? Is it not finally what opens us to wonder and a meaningful world at all yet is never known in our world? It can only show itself as a hierophany, something that breaks through the ordinary profane world regardless what it might be as an object. It is not its status as an object, but as a toward which that makes us aware of its radical otherness. This capacity to be astonished is itself what is at stake. That vulnerability and the rupture of wonder or horror opens us to the experience that we are not an undestructible self, at its extreme, obliterates the ego, takes away the context of a world by which we can recognize and experience anything at all as in the world. The sacred is something that happens TO our world, not IN our world.

come to one whose entire world has come to an end and he/she stands at the edge of the cliff looking down into nothingness. Nothingness cannot be described in words, for words are simply meaning, and nothingness does not exist in the world of the present. I suggest that nothingness can only be related to and cannot be put into words. There are experiences in my life that have taken me to nothingness and I can try to explain my feelings, emotions, thoughts, and actions, but none of these will describe the place of nothingness that I was at. Nothingness is different for everybody, yet it is the same necessary condition that all of us must encounter in order to have our world of ordinary ruptured and brought back to new meanings. Nothingness cannot be explained nor can it be understood, but we can see the effects and outcomes of nothingness. It is when we experience nothingness that we can have a somewhat more real view of ourselves and that nothingness is at the very core of our being. It is through nothingness that we can be legitimately humble and be thankful to the unknown other for mere existence. Nothingness leads to insights, which become the foundations of our “new” world(s). If we are not open or vulnerable at our core, we cannot experience the rupture caused by wonder and the nothingness that comes only through the complete end of our world/reality as we presently see it. The greatest hindrance to allowing one to be caught up in the throes of wonder is the fear of nothingness. As vulnerable beings, nothingness is the very thing that makes life more real, yet it is the most terrifying of experiences. Our society has created a false sense of security in the idea that reality is not devastating and that the painful experiences in our lives are not “normal”, but it is this very idea that causes us to scar rather than to heal. It is not easier to be open to nothingness and to absorb the painful experiences, yet it is in that nothingness produced by these experiences that we can obtain insight from an ultimate other, allowing us to heal and accept life the way it is and allow each devastating experience to change our ordinary world into a new and more real world. It is through this process of falling into nothingness that we can look toward an ultimate other and experience devastating joy. Men have tried to capture this experience of falling into nothingness into devastating joy as falling in love, but we cannot capture nothingness with words, because it is not in the present and cannot be reduced to meaning. Nothingness remains to be unknown, but I cannot say that a door accessible through wonder cannot lead me to the insight of nothingness, for a part of

Comment [DP7]: Right, happens to a world and cannot be made into a meaning in a world. What is on the other side of this and in what sense does one survive such an experience if it can be called an experience because the self is obliterated in the process?

Comment [DP8]: Philosophy as radical inquiry can understand nothingness as the radical other of the ordinary, of the self as the center, the other that makes the myth of the given and metaphysics of presence untenable.

being caught up in the throes of wonder is to understand that each door leads to new insights and a new world of meaning that was never there before the previous world became ruptured. The only way to assure that one's ordinary world will be ruptured is to remain vulnerable and open to wonder and inquiry – in one sense, keep the door (that leads to the sacred, nothingness, and insight) unlocked.

Comments: You deal with many of the important issues often reasonably well, but in some places are off the mark a bit. Overall a good paper with some good examples. Take a look online at the papers and comments for more insight about all this.

Grade: B

Comment [DP9]: Remember that wonder worlds. Only horror gives us an intimation of nothingness while we still have our world. The actual devastating loss of the center of our world leads to anguish.

Comment [DP10]: Temporality itself is a constant rupture that we control with the ordinary. One does not have to be open to rupture, vulnerability is openness to rupture. Rather one needs to be open to rupture in the sense of embracing one's vulnerability in order to love most vitally with an open/wounded heart. All of life is wounding and healing. When we attempt to arrest that process, deny it, protect ourselves from it, that is closest we come to the only sense in which we can be dead while being alive. (My biological death is not in my world. I can only experience such "objective death as the death of the other. The only death I can experience is either the deadening security of the metaphysics of presence and superficiality of the same in the attempt to protect my world from temporality and rupture OR the real and only death I can experience which is the death of my world. We all suffer this in some way or other in a lifetime. The question is whether we are authentic about it, achieve wisdom from it... not knowledge)