

True Matters of the Heart:

Every time I engaged in “The Throe Of Wonder” and spoke in my mind I instantly became lyrically critical, the book felt like the pinnacle of being revolutionarily pivotal; this was beyond anything ever studied that’s metaphysical. My mind started to wonder, and my body started to become warm; not only was I engaged by my wonder, I felt somewhat scared to enter that “unusual” way of thinking when I realized that what we usually think as present in hand and right here in front of us right now is not true “being”; what is always present in hand might not always be what we think as “reality”. Dr. Miller made me think maybe there was something more, something else instead of being in the ordinary sense, something more we have been longing for other than the everyday mundane world as we know it. I was introduced to a turn, a turn that did not just attempt to transform the meaning of “object” but the meaning of being itself. Wondering about wonder and the horror it brings about lets us engage into an abyss and away from the given, the myth of the given. Dr. Miller gives an astonishing example of a childhood experience; an experience which many can relate to. The child is carried by his wonder to open the door to the other side, to the side of the “unknown” which the child is aware of as the unknown. Just as wonder beckons that child to open that door fully, horror of the unknown as the unknown both pushes and pulls that child to open that door simultaneously. Like that child we have a choice. The question we face in choosing between the from-which and toward-which of wonder and horror and awe is also a choice we face regarding our very being as questioners; we either let the process of questioning set in motion by the experiences of wonder and horror become our way of life, or we suffer the alternative and live a life we always have, a life of accepting the myth of the given in which we suffer a kind of death. To choose to hold onto the known and the present would be to seek an escape from our very being as choosers. Holding onto the myth of the given and the from-which of wonder is to choose a life of a kind of death. Instead of recoiling and repressing wonder, or horror, or awe we must seek the toward-which of wonder, and surrendering to its throe we give ourselves over to the sacred unknown. It has become our habit to equate truth with the given; the fact is the myth of the given does not and cannot provide us with an immovable truth. Being is not the given, being is not the right here, right now in front of us that we have become accustomed and subservient to; instead being is the unknown toward which of all our wonder and questions; being is allowing ourselves to follow the intimations of horror instead of recoiling from it. Wonder projects us toward the unknown and fills our desire to know it, horror deconstructs our world as we know it; horror, not terror individualizes the person who experiences it. Horror can teach us our kinship to nothingness and our liability to it. Nothingness is unlike any experience in our ordinary lives, but it is not an experience that ever becomes present to us nor does it ever become more understandable to us. The only thing that

Comment [dp1]: How does this ordinary world and the scientific world that explains it, get constructed and why are any theories about it reductionist and derivative and not able to open us to what even makes theories themselves possible? What is that core in each meaningfully aware human being and what is the source of meaning and intelligibility that gives rise to any ordinary as well as theoretical world?

Comment [dp2]: Explain this more clearly. Why can't it be IN our ordinary lives? Why is horror an “intimation” of nothingness that IS in our world, but nothingness cannot be? What would it be to experience nothingness? What would such anguish be as a meaningful event, or rather why could it NOT be a meaningful event, but is nonetheless ironically a possible experience? In what sense? As you say anguish turns to awe and the self ceases to be, as in Parmenides’ incubation/stillness where a rebirth is not yet, but underway.

changes is our *relationship* to nothingness *not* the *meaning* of nothingness. In opening ourselves up to and accepting our destitute we can embrace our nothingness; the self is nothing in and of itself but we cannot think of nothingness in ways the myth of the given has us familiar with as an absence of something. The radical reversal of our experience to nothingness is just that; we can never become one with nothingness if we keep craving our ordinary truths and beliefs while recoiling from horror in an attempt to find any way possible to grasp our comfortable ordinary beliefs, the immediately present; we are constantly trying to fill our emptiness. On the other side of this though is sheer awe; which is the point where we confront being without meaning in order to fully experience and engage in the sacred. Nothingness is experienced once we have let our worlds be ruptured by wonder and horror and continuously experience devastating joy. The knowledge of wisdom only becomes possible or “real” when we leave behind and retreat from our grasp on the given and open ourselves up to those truths which cannot be reached except by reaching the errors of inquiry. We flee from the sacred because they are beyond us, other than us which become devastating for us to know. Ironically like the example of the curious child experiencing both wonder and horror behind the door, the fact is we are drawn to the unknown because it awakens such a dread in us; that same experience which the toward which of wonder takes us. It is wonder that makes the other unknown and accessible to us as just that, the unknown other. Being is not the from which of wonder but that which wonder makes accessible to us for the first time, the toward which of wonder. If we are able to trust where wonder will lead us then the doors will open to a universe in which being is possible; a universe of being in which reality shall manifest itself.

Comment [dp3]: What might it be to go all the way to this emptiness? Do you think it can be approached the way the Buddhists do, not so much through horror into anguish that empties us out and abolishes the self, but through concrete careful awareness of the processes of consciousness itself in such a way that “mushin” or no mind is actually achieved? Can such an experience have any meaning while in such a state? What is the potential for the impact of this kind of experience when one enters back into ordinary awareness?

Comment [dp4]: This and the next phrase are powerfully important and central.

Comment [dp5]: Spend some time with them.

We are all vulnerable beings to whom things matter; we are all beings who engage in the throe of “worlding” and live in our “meanings”. Rarely, if ever, do we allow ourselves to be beckoned by the throe of wonder which will allow our everyday, ordinary world to be ruptured in order to gain a notion of insight to enhance our lives. We don’t realize how confined we remain, how preoccupied we are with setting up barriers and merely protecting and guarding our core values and our deepest felt matters of the heart. These core values of ours, these feelings which *are* and *mean* the world to us are our world. We tend to grasp onto our core values and hardly, if ever, allow our meanings to be questioned or altered; they mean everything to us, everything which even language has a hard time justifying and defining. We are all beings who live in our habits and unfortunately have become slaves to them; our everyday, mundane way of thinking and “being” in the world has kept us subservient. We must remain objective and allow the throe of wonder to bring about inquiry and horror so we can question our intuitions and engage in true and sheer liberation; “to let go of all one already knows and to surrender oneself wholly without reserve to the throe of questioning itself.” We become wise only by letting go of our secure foundations and abandoning

ourselves to the abyss opened up by our wondering and questions. We must despair from our dreams to have the truth given to us. True wisdom does not seek truth or even concerned with such. To gain wisdom we must become questioners, we must make a fundamental conversion, a turn in which its characteristics do not provide us with an immutable, indestructible and unshakable foundation or an unquestionable truth on which to base all we think and do; it pulls that foundation that we have become slaves to out from under us and throws what we thought were our certainties into question. The irony remains intriguing; we love and grasp our core values as truths and we do *anything*, I truly mean *everything* and *anything* to set up barriers and guard these deep sense felt matters of the heart so nothing can harm our "world" and how we make sense of our "world." We as vulnerable beings crave "totality"; we are in the basic condition of always dreaming of a structure what would be immune to deconstruction. But in being so preoccupied, so "slave-like" and subservient to control and fear, we don't allow our core values to be questioned; to do so would mean the "end of our world." We have suffered a kind of death as we habitually utilize our typical rituals; in such a process we become susceptible to becoming no more than a spectacle. We have become so comfortable, so at ease in our worlds and how we make sense of our lives that we don't want anything to harm our core values; we don't realize that when we're always constantly trying to protect these core values and setting up our immunity barriers we are already killing them and cutting ourselves off from them and engaging in a form of death ourselves, a horrible death as we know it to our limited worlds. We have become attached to that which is familiar, mundane, ordinary, and we feel safe in it; such surrender of the control we exercise through our meanings seems like madness and death. Whenever our core values are at stake we try everything in our power and have an automatic desire to return back to homeostasis; we try to "rationalize" with ourselves in order for our core values not to be in scrutiny so we can return to our everyday, comfortable "ordinary lives." The unknown is nothing to fear; the unknown which wonder and horror beckons us to bring about delight, re-birth and liberation. We must cast ourselves "into the abyss of the unknown instead of trying to find a way to secure oneself." The constant barriers we put up to protect the radiance of our core values which attempt to never allow our deep felt matters of the heart to come into scrutiny are symptoms, symptoms of the myth of the given which invoke the death of us as we know it. But loss of control, inability to understand and terror add up to some of life's worst moments, even if they do not also involve suffering. But loss of control, seeking understanding only later, and abandoning oneself to the vastness of an emotion even if it does involve suffering are good and needful things for "being". Staying in total control is not only a fantasy; it's no way to be a human. Our recoiling must end so we can engage in the voyage and not fear where wonder and horror shall lead us.

Usually we live in the world of the given, the right here right now in front of us. Our worlds can be known by the immediacy of our senses or that which is known and accessible to us in our immediate

experience such as the from which. These are theories or thoughts that we *want* to believe are true about the universe; our beliefs come from a particular interpretation, a particular point of view which operate within the limits of presuppositions that we have about how the world ordinarily operates. We are confronted with wonder and horror however; the world changes as we know it, our worlds rupture. We are forced to make judgments based *outside* what is normally known and familiar to us. Our thoughts are forming and in the making which are driven toward meaning because they are animated by awe, not by what we normally see and practice in everydayness; the possibility of losing one's world in toward which wonder and horror reawakens the real world of being. Rather than remain in the illusions of our comforts of a universe of *our* own meaning, we may face horror and wonder, which help us love our ordinary way of understanding everything, so that reality can appear and true being beyond that which is normally known can become accessible to our minds.

Experiences of wonder, horror, and awe, and an exploration of their ontological import are experiences that are *not*, as our mundane culture often presumes, merely subjective, emotive responses to events that happen in the world. Rather, they are transformative experiences that fracture our ordinary lives and, in so doing, provide us access to realities of which we would otherwise be oblivious. Wonder, horror, and awe, like the experiences of love and death to which they are so intimately related, are not events that happen *in* our world but events that happen *to* it and thus alter our life as a whole. "The turn" we must make is a deconstructive effect on our ordinary sense of our selves, but a breakthrough to a new understanding of being which it makes possible. *Difference* beckons as well as threatens; the end of one's ordinary mundane opens us to another, a world of reality and being.

Nothingness is experienced once we have let our worlds be ruptured by wonder and horror and are experiencing devastating joy.

COMMENTS: I have not commented on most of the paper, but gave you some idea how to improve and/or further pursue Miller's insights that you have already drawn attention to or achieved and developed about these issues yourself. You have engaged many of the important issues, but could improve your writing and thinking about them. You often make important statements but rush past them without carefully examining them and making further connections, inferences, or observations. You also lump various important ideas that are related, together without exploring them fully enough and showing their relationships. You should strive to introduce more reasoning in the way you connect your ideas. Miller does this throughout his book. You do achieve this, but need to do much more of it. It is easy to be pulled in by the power of Miller's ideas and not see carefully enough the lines of reasoning he develops about these things. Nonetheless, good job of engaging these challenging issues.

GRADE: A-