

In the Throe of Wonder

Jerome Miller

Jerome Miller tells us his book is about “matters of the heart—certain experiences which have a profoundly transformative impact on us because they affect us in the core of our beings. Wonder and horror are such experiences, as are the experiences of anguish and awe to which they lead.” Miller is concerned with the possibility that these “experiences are disclosive in character and open up to us realities which are not accessible to us as long as we are governed by everyday practical concerns...such experiences transform our knowledge of what is by awakening us to realities of which we would otherwise be oblivious.” (Miller, pp. xi-xii)

Miller takes us on a journey of “wondering about wonder” and especially its relationship with the activity of philosophy which he defines as: “to let go of all one already knows and to surrender oneself wholly and without reserve to the throe of questioning itself.” (p. 3) Such questioning takes us into an “abyss” of unknowing. Philosophy does not assimilate the unknown to the known, (as common sense and science do), but rather makes everything questionable, takes the known away from us, and uproots us from the given and the obvious.

“It appears to be madness to relentlessly question the apparently self-evident truths of common sense rationality. But common sense rationality, by taking its own principles for granted, treats meaning and truth as givens which are simply to be accepted in their givenness. This leads common sense to criticize as irrational the whole process of being seized by wonder, being driven to question, being caught up in the eros of inquiry, unless that eros remains confined inside the presuppositions of everyday practice. But when commonsense tries to restrict the scope of wonder by appealing to the given, it is really encouraging us to betray intelligence itself. For how can it be intelligent to impose restrictions on rational inquiry? And how are we to become fully engaged by the spirit of inquiry if we repress without question the drive to wonder which animates and sustains it? To be fully rational requires surrendering unconditionally to the throe of wonder instead of clinging to the given; it means allowing oneself to be cast into the abyss of the unknown instead of trying to find a way to secure oneself from that vertiginous possibility.” (Miller, pp. 4-5).

The history of western philosophy has been the history of the metaphysics of presence. The metaphysics of presence is based on an illusion that we are able ultimately to come “face to face” with each other and with things. According to Derrida this belief in “presence” expresses a yearning hope that in spite of our always fragmentary and incomplete experience there is reason to insist on the existence of a redeeming and justifying wholeness, an ultimate notion of one-ness, essence, ground, or a faith in objective reality. The postmodern condition is one in which “philosophers have recognized the inescapability of interpretation and the centrality of its role in the constitution of meaning.” (Miller, p. 11) We can no longer look to some foundational standpoint, some in-itself, as a starting point to then assimilate everything into this known. There are no privileged, unprejudiced starting positions, no obvious grounding observations or intuitions. Thus, we now recognize that we live in a multiplicity of “worlds” and the *myth of the given*, the myth of absolute grounding no longer has coherence, we recognize it as a myth.

In this phenomenology of the primordial experiences of wonder, horror, anguish, and awe, we can catch a glimpse of how a meaningful “world” comes to be, can be ruptured and new “worlding” can emerge. It is the point of a new opening, a new meaningful orientation, the beginning of orientation required for any world. The world is not a place, but a meaning, a meaning that gives the illusion of being all-inclusive so nothingness is not a possibility. It appears that no matter what happens, the world will still be there in itself. But that “in-itself” is never the world for us. The world is a complexity of interpretations that arise from our felt sense of things with the interpretive conceptual overlay we give it, and if that meaning comes to an end so does that world. But what is really at the center of my world is the importance my center gets from its relation to me. The center is thus my own will to be an undeconstructible self. The felt sense of the possibility of the loss of self is experienced as horror, an intimation of nothingness. The fact that I can lose my world and that I am fallible belies the illusion of the ordinary world as a place, as an undeconstructible center of being. Normally we cannot imagine this nothingness. When we are living in our ordinary felt sense of the world, the self and its world appear to be an absolute reference point, undeconstructible and immune to the loss of being. We live with a felt sense of being the center of being. But such a risk free undeconstructible self never existed. Horror is the disclosure or felt recognition of the possibility of my world collapsing. It is anticipatory of the possibility of nothingness or complete deconstruction and destitution of the self, a loss of identity and the loss of a world. Such a loss costs one everything. But nothingness is an utter loss of meaning and importance, not a lack of existence. One must exist to experience this nothingness. Even horrible thoughts of loss are meaningful as possible events within my world. If horror is the experience of an intimation that my world can end, anguish is the felt lived experience of the actual loss of that world and thus of myself. But

again, one must still exist to have such an experience and such an experience discloses to us that the world is not what the myth of the given and our comfortable naïve realism tells us.

A common response to horror and anguish instead of seeing through the illusion is to hold on to the self through belief in such notions as an eternal soul, heaven, and paradise: The myth of overcoming time, achieving permanence, security, and salvation from vulnerability. But such beliefs are illusions, artifacts of this more basic illusion of an undeconstructible self. Nietzsche says such myths and the desire that motivates them arise from "chronophobia" which is a symptom of resentment toward life and fear of not having lived fully. When the great philosopher David Hume was dying, it is reported that he had the greatest equanimity. When asked why he had no fear, he said he had lived fully!

If we embrace and affirm our fallibility and deep vulnerability, we move out of these illusions and toward the sacred. But in affirming ones nothingness, fallibility, and contingency on a center of meaning, it appears that we lose all rational meaning. But it actually is the beginning of liberation from the arrogance of finitude, from the illusion of permanence, an illusion by which we have attempted to avoid our vulnerability and the abyss of unknowing and nothingness. To open oneself to this is to open oneself to the sacred. To move toward the sacred is to move away from the illusion of control and possession of truth. But typically we cling to our habits, to our illusions of reality and permanence and prevent any movement toward the sacred. In clinging to these illusions we try to hold on to some form of absolutism or we retreat to skepticism and relativism. Neither of these views are warranted and ultimately neither are even rational.

How, then, do we pursue wisdom in this post modern condition when there is no truth or reality in the traditional sense to which this wisdom can aspire?

The person who is wise in this postmodern sense is not held fast by the constraining limits of one particular universe [of meaning], nor does he pretend to have achieved a transcendent vantage point outside all our universes; he lives rather in the very midst of them, aware of their irreducible multiplicity, ready to use them but not believe in them, not depressed by his rootlessness but happy to enjoy the freedom it gives him because it enables him to be at his ease in every world he enters. (Miller, p. 15)

Our insurmountable condition of finitude, fallibility and vulnerability does not cut us off from being. Ironically, it is the ordinary mundane world that does this, the so-called "real world" of the everyday. "Of all our worlds, the everyday is the closest to being completely dead." (Miller, p. 99). The ordinary world, the myth of an objective "world in itself" however conceived, gives us the necessary fixity that human life requires. But this safe and controlled world cuts us off from the sacred. Once we see through the myth of the given and the ocular ideal, we no longer identify being with presence. Rather,

"being is that which becomes accessible to us only in and through the throe of inquiry....Therefore, we can know being only by surrendering to the throe of inquiry and embracing the fallibility to which it exposes us. When we try to escape the mortifying danger of fallibility, we sever our relationship with being and wrongly identify it with presence... Our fallibility, far from being a barrier to our knowledge of it [being], constitutes our only possible bond with it." (p. 24)

"This realization, that we have no access to being outside the throe of inquiry, is the pivotal moment, the fundamental principle, the starting point of wisdom: but far from providing an arche, an unshakable ground, it requires giving up the hope of ever standing on an irrefragable foundation...Only by suffering such exposure does one give oneself over wholly to the throe of questioning [the throe of unknowing] and it is only by surrendering completely to the throe of questioning that one is caught up in the throe of being itself. To find being one must remain inside the process of questioning and follow where it leads instead of seeking some magical exit from it; for any such exit, precisely because it promises us a way to escape our fallibility, closes us off to being, instead of opening up a way to it." (p. 26) (See chart below of wisdom versus the attempts to exit from wonder)

Let us recall Eliade's notion of the sacred as the *ganz andere* (wholly other) that we are unable to express, but which can show itself in anything and in everything at once, the cosmos in its entirety, an experience of power and reality that can rupture the ordinary mundane or profane world. Such hierophanies (appearances of the sacred) are "saturated with being." The sacred is MORE real than the mundane profane world, and evokes our sense of mystery, awe, and humility. But we are attached to that which is familiar, mundane, ordinary, and we feel safe in it. So such surrender of the control we exercise through our meanings seems like madness. Rather, we seek knowledge and answers. Just as we can cut ourselves off from the risk of falling in love, we can cut ourselves off from the sacred by cleaving to the illusion of the possession of truth. Since for primitive man, the experience of power was so immediate and undeniable as an unknown other, this

could only elicit his sense of amazement or wonder and so he was drawn into the throe of being. He participated in it, rather than knowing it theoretically. Sophisticated modern humans have explained and reduced the world conceptually/logically through theories and have largely bent the forces of nature to their will through technology which arises from theoretical understanding. We now live in a world that is “knowable, and (at least theoretically) secure.” Of course, that is an illusion. We are fundamentally finite, fallible, historically situated, and vulnerable, and a recognition of this, is the first step toward wisdom and the first step toward the sacred.

Miller reveals the path of unrestricted inquiry as the path to being because such inquiry frees us from the “prisons of our truths” and opens us to the kind of primordial experience that primitive man was capable of and was thus open to the mystery of being, open to the sacred. All religions at their core, aside from their dogmas, teach something like this deep humility and surrender that is a necessary condition for reaching out from finitude to the sacred, that which is “*ganz andere*” wholly other. We do not need to nor can we return to any archaic state of innocence in order to open ourselves to the sacred. As modern sophisticated human beings it is now open to us to turn our critical skills in on our own presuppositions and liberate ourselves from the arrogance of finitude, the illusions of metaphysical realism, and the irrational illusions that we can either possess absolute truth or that truth makes no sense at all and we ought to embrace skepticism and relativism. Both these cut us off from the sacred. They either try to possess a connection to the sacred via some dogma or reject the sacred as a superstition connected to the metaphysics of presence that came to dominate religions. In contrast, this wholly transformed relation to the pursuit of wisdom Miller speaks of opens us to the possibility of an experience of the sacred as the source of the possibility of meaning and importance at all. Philosophy merges with myth and metaphor here rather than theory and literal truth... but not by abandoning reason, rather by following reason unrestrictedly to its most radical undoing of what we thought we knew which shows itself under this scrutiny to be illusions driven by insecurity. Such pretensions to truth ironically cut us off from the mystery of being and from the sacred.

Philosophy at its most radical is an unrestricted inquiry that shatters the ordinary world and opens us to an encounter with the unknown. Philosophy uproots the given and ordinary world and makes us aware of the whole of being as wholly unknown. Science can only appropriate the unknown to the known. Science when it is successful leads to knowledge within an already enframed or interpreted domain of inquiry under a guiding method. Philosophy when it is successful leads to wisdom, which is not any kind of knowing. It is wisdom, literally seeing, at the boundaries of meaningfulness. Philosophy reawakens the very eros that leads us to develop science and pursue knowledge at all and also to see the limits of such theoretical understanding so we benefit by it but do not get trapped in it as if it pokes through to something called “reality in itself.” Philosophy is undoing, emptying out, radically undermining our most cherished assumptions and our habits of thought. Only philosophy is unrestricted inquiry that confronts the unknown as radically unknown. The unknown cannot be assimilated into the known, the given. We can only become aware of the unknown by acknowledging its difference from the known. The role of philosophy is to remain in the throe of the unknown other and to reconnect us to our spiritual core through this openness of inquiry. It does not strive for answers, so much as for questions that open us to wonder. Answers can be deadly, are only temporary resting points. To engage in this radical inquiry is to move toward awe in the presence of something deeper than all meaning, that obliterates all meaning, yet out of which meaning arises and is made possible, the sacred, the mystery of being, the mystery that there is meaning at all.

To move toward the sacred is to move toward a rebirth, a new beginning and the possibility of a new world. To move toward the sacred is to give up all orientation, all truth, and all sense of the ordinary. It is to move into the abyss of the completely unknown. Any interpretation of this, any attempt to possess it and make it a source of security, is to lose it. But that is exactly what we do. So we are left with our “truths,” with the illusion of safety, security, and are spiritually dead. To move toward the sacred is to risk everything, give up all security and presumption to truth. Without this, one does not move toward the sacred. The most radical philosophy is an attempt to make contact with this and engender a spiritual transformation, to remain in an intelligible world but with the capacity for seeing it as radically unknown. Radical ignorance of the Sacred is the only possible bond with the sacred through an attitude of humility, openness, listening, receptivity. When we open ourselves to such “*aletheia*,” such disclosure, we do not lose our ability to live in the world. Rather, we can now live in the world more fully, freed from the terrible fear of losing the truths that we never had to begin with. Thus we can now be far more effective in how we relate to and understand *the other* (other people, no longer merely interpreted and judged through our fears and truths.) We can move toward the unconditional love and compassion taught by Jesus, the Buddha, and others, experiencing *the other* through our lived sense of the golden rule rather than merely seeing this as a rule, an ought imposed from outside by abstract truth.

Stray Thoughts:
Wonder>Curiosity>Inquiry>
Philosophy/Religion/Science

Wonder - Being thrown into an unknown present and future. *Aporeia*: condition of being disoriented. Wonder is the door between self-awareness and dissolution of self...

Philosophy begins in wonder, love of wisdom is a response to wonder...To be in a state of wonder is to be situated between the known and the unknown. It is to become aware of the unknown *as* unknown. This requires a stable world of meaning that has been significantly ruptured or called into question without losing the meaningful framework of this world from which things can still be somewhat intelligible and from which inquiry can proceed. Genuine thinking requires a world, but genuine thinking calls that world into question

Myth of the Fall: Separation from the ground of the known. Drawn away from the given...separation ...need to return, desire for a return...all happens in the domain of the known - thought driven by something deeply felt... Religion and the desire for Salvation is about feeling, a deep sense of vulnerability, a need to be connected, secure, especially in one's identity and meaningfulness. One's "world" is secure, safe. Religion from *Religare*: reconnected. The sacred is about the fundamental capacity to feel, that things matter deeply. *To seek the sacred and salvation from a feeling of separation, vulnerability, insecurity, guilt/debt/sin, in "the True" is to open an unbridgeable gap between ourselves and the sacred. We never live in the presence of the sacred, rather in the conviction that we will.*

Belief - Dogma - Cognition
The Felt - The Sacred

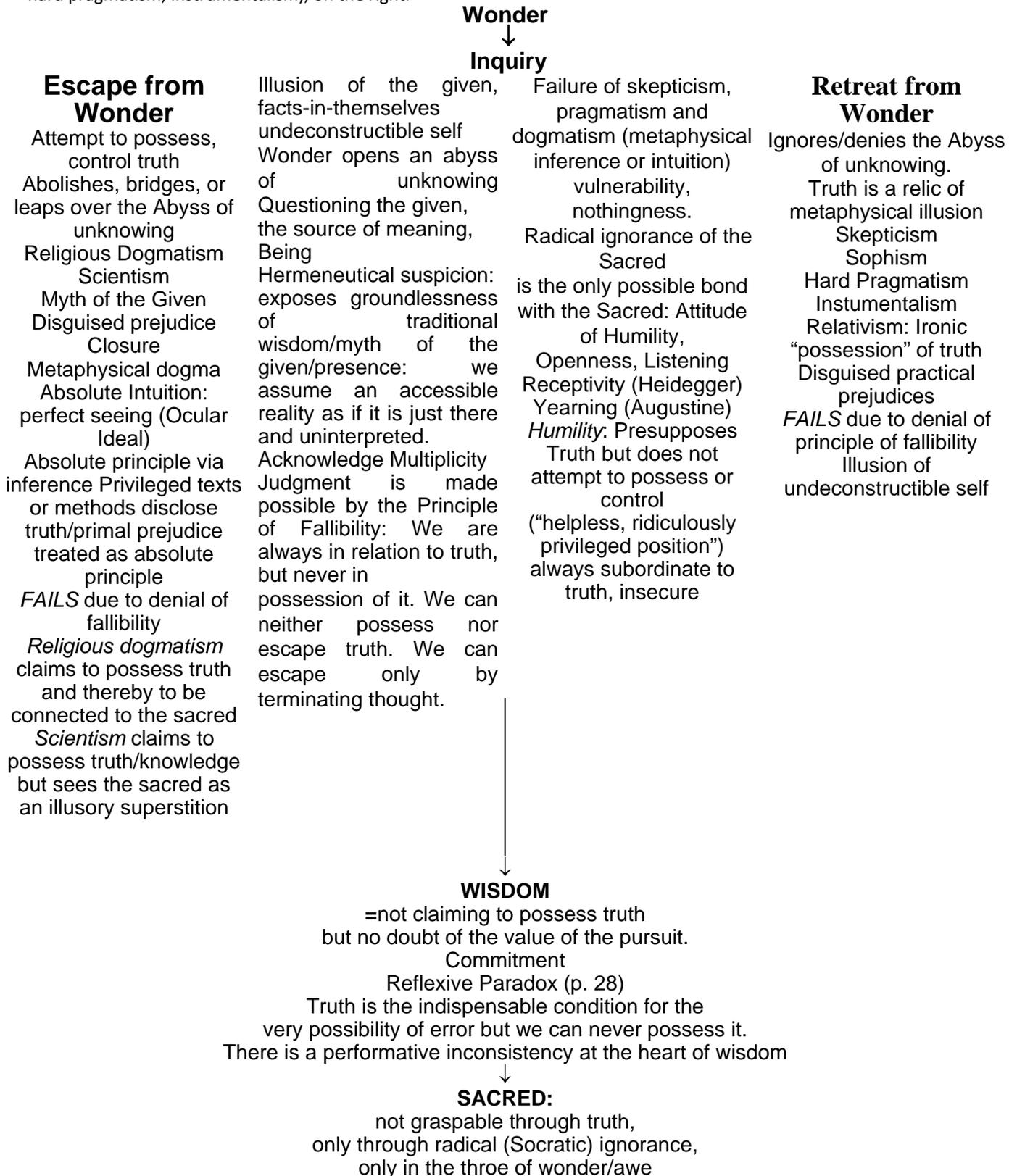
The sacred is not power beyond us, but the power *in* us to create in the abyss of unknowing. Religion, philosophy, and science attempt to reach and secure the truth. But the abyss swallows up every "truth." We seek salvation from the abyss. But it is precisely the abyss that is the "place" of the sacred and all desire to know and be connected. Safety and security [truth] is the opposite of the sacred which is terrifying and dreadful - when one steps into the sacred, *all is lost*. We lose ourselves. One cannot approach the sacred and hold onto oneself. To move toward the sacred is to lose oneself in the abyss, the wonderful, terrible abyss. One must lose oneself to be found, one must die to be reborn. The sacred is the possibility of renewal from the source. The source is not knowable or graspable, but gives rise to all that is intelligible, knowable, and graspable. There is no sense of self or meaning without some fixity, some limit imposed on the abyss of unknowing.

Wonder at the given/familiar that becomes strange and other - unknown arises from a shift of rupture in perspective->Wonder->inquiry>Dread of loss of identity, loss of the known, but also possibility of being reborn, renewed...paradox: to find security in the wisdom of insecurity. To try to finally fix anything or hold on to it is to arrest the sacred, separate oneself from it and increase suffering. Feeling is in constant flux. Ideas attempt to arrest this flux, give it an identity over time. It is an attempt to overcome and master time. Time and change is a threat to identity. Identity and stability is necessary to life, but the point is not to get trapped in this necessary but temporary stability of meaning.

If the true is something that is known (via faith or reason) then God is knowable (via his words, acts). But the sacred is precisely what is most significant and least knowable. It is not known via faith or reason, but via a felt sense of its power to destroy or transform us, i.e., a deep sense of awe and wonder/dread, something felt, not a known object of that feeling. It is something wonder aims at or moves toward or draws back from. It is precisely the most profound *Unknowing*...the infinite abyss that faith cannot leap across, reason cannot bridge, direct intuition/mystical insight cannot abolish or fill up, and skepticism and pragmatism can only ignore but not refute.

Guide for *In the Throe of Wonder* by Jerome Miller

The following Chart reflects the middle path toward wonder and the sacred by avoiding the excess of absolutism (the myth of the given, scientism, religious dogmatism, etc.) on the left, and the excess of skepticism and relativism (sophism, hard pragmatism, instrumentalism), on the right.



Terms for *In the Throe of Wonder*

Hermeneutic of suspicion: (p. 15, 20-22): suspicion that claims to truth and wisdom are merely primal prejudices, the unmasking of these disguised primal prejudices, exposure of groundlessness of dogmas, exposure of ignorance parading as wisdom, the denial of any privileged positions/beliefs, the acknowledgment of fallibility and the openness of inquiry. Recognition of the inescapability of interpretation and the centrality of its role in the constitution of meaning. Associated problem: hermeneutical suspicion frees one from naive assumptions and beliefs, claims to truth, but it also makes it difficult or impossible to commit, to enter a world as more than a "tourist" to become radically vulnerable and approach the sacred. It cuts off wonder and the sacred.

Myth of the given: The belief that there is some reality that is just there independent of our language and conceptual frameworks, that there are just facts-in-themselves, a world-in-itself, God, the world that science merely discovers, some absolute moral right and wrong, etc..

Metaphysics of presence (pp. 11-24): The view that what is given to us in our immediate experience, what is present to us, reveals a unified complete reality, in other words being, the belief that we are always experiencing being itself, even if only partially. It is the equation of presence with being without regard for the interpretive process of consciousness and language. The hermeneutic of suspicion reveals this as merely a wish. Being is not merely what is present to us. Nothing could change if that were so. If all of being were present, there could be nothing new or different. We mistake newness as merely what is already there that we discover. Being, however, is not merely what is actual. It is always revealed to us only by being interpreted, that is, hidden in our interpretations, meanings, concepts. Being is discoverable only by allowing oneself to be completely carried away by the throe of having one's "world" undone, dying, which ruptures that dream of completion and totality. Only with an attitude of openness and receptivity can we respond to being in a felt way without utterly enframing it as we usually do. This attitude is only possible, however, for a being such as ourselves who lives in its interpretations, and then lets go of these at the same time without losing consciousness altogether. Being is accessible through the felt sense that a thinking being has. Thought alone cannot reach it, feeling alone cannot reach it and it is never captured by either.

Ideal of intuition/ocular ideal (p. 11-24): the presumption that whatever truth is, it is fully available, wholly and immediately given/available, the possibility of perfect seeing, no separation between knower and known if we just achieve the right standpoint. Assumes a metaphysics of presence in which we have direct access to being, unmediated by interpretation. Sees the possibility of fallibility but believes it is overcome in some special way so that we can "see" directly what is true, real. Arises from the desire to escape fallibility and achieve absolute certainty, security, completion.

horizontal ideal of wisdom: (20-21) assumes that wisdom is approachable by knowledge, that it is like reaching a destination, that wisdom is accessible without becoming lost, rather than the idea that wisdom requires a loss of orientation and meaning, a recognition of utter fallibility with regard to ultimate questions and that real wisdom lies in realizing that the distance between our questions and the "right" answers is not traversable. Contrast with the metaphor of an abyss and three dimensionality.

Hermeneutical circle: (22) meaning made possible by already employed language and interpretation, the recognition that meaning is always already under way and constantly mutating. The particular facts and events of our world are interpretable because of a kind of unconscious or partly conscious sense of its whole meaning. That whole meaning constantly changes due to the malleability of the meaning of its particulars, which in turn changes our sense of the whole. There is no fixed starting point of meaning.

Sacred: (pp. 49-51, 88, 92, 97, 99-100) What matters deeply. The felt sense of awe, reverence and terror toward something ultimately unknown that we feel can undo us, in the presence of which or in relation to which we are nothing. One cannot approach the sacred through the ordinary, through knowledge, through any "truth." It can only be approached via "emptying out", becoming radically "ignorant", insecure, connected only by one's yearning and complete unknowing.

heaven/paradise: (pp. 43, 49) expression of a wish for ultimate security, permanence, a wish to be connected to what is ultimately powerful, true, right, permanent, safe, secure, what would make us invulnerable and infallible. Heaven means to be in a final unobstructed connection to the sacred. But heaven is a paradoxical notion and the terms “sacred” and “heaven” are mutually exclusive terms, given what the sacred refers to (see above). Heaven turns the sacred into a concept and “truth” that arises from a wish for security and salvation from vulnerability, fallibility and suffering. The sacred, on the other hand can only be approached through radical insecurity, only through radical risk of all that secures us. To move toward the sacred means to move away from “oneself”, one’s “truths,” exactly what we are not usually willing to do. Heaven is a projection of the given onto the sacred, is an attempt to move toward the object of wonder, i.e., being, but actually moves us away from it.

hierophany: (84), appearance of the sacred

hinge: that condition of being in between the known and the unknown

to be “**in the throe of wonder**” could be over anything that deeply captures our attention, disrupts or overwhelms the ordinary and has the potential to create a new “world” of meaningfulness. It is to be cast into an abyss of unknowing...

Wonder: the rupture of the same by the other, the unknown itself in its difference from the known. To experience the unknown as unknown, an awareness of the other in its very otherness. To know nothing of an other than that it is unknown. (35)

Relation of wonder to temporality (as experienced and understood through the process of wonder and inquiry): p. 36-40: To be situated between *the present*, *the from which* and the *toward which* of wonder, Wonder engages us in the throe of temporality, it suggests that time itself is a kind of exploration and longing in which we are permitted to actively participate. We are caught between the past and the future, known and the unknown, the same and the other in a felt sense of withdrawal and venturing, retreat and longing, reluctance and urgency, delay and hastening. The future is not merely another yet to be present or presence which is the same to come and is homogeneous.

It is heterogenous, radically other. Wonder is a response to what is present but unknown. It is both present and as yet unknown. It is the opening to another meaning or world that can only come through inquiry: What is it? Wonder opens up the absolute future, a future that is not another now, a future so different from now that opening the door to it is really the beginning of a new world and a disruption of the same by the other.

Being: the unknown toward which of wonder. Being comes first, before our understanding of it. Knowing, it seems, comes after it. “Being itself is not the given to be known by looking at what is right here in front of us; being is what is to be known through enchantment and exploration, wonder and inquiry, reverie and the questions it prompts. “Wonder, which even as it uproots us from the given, points us toward the other in its otherness. The word for that other, in its otherness, is being.” (49)

The given: the whence of wonder, the ordinary, familiar, known, that operates inside the world of language taken as what is prior to language as the *from which*, the given is the world of language itself in which we create this projection of a *from which* that is prior to language

world: “the end of my world is not an event that can be integrated into the context of meaning, the web of relationships and connections, that constitute its very worldhood. “ (90)

language: could not exist prior to wonder... (45) When wonder frees language from the given, it does not give it free rein...it frees it, rather for a higher calling... (47) What is “beyond language has two possible meanings: the given that is understood as a *from which* of language and being, *the toward which*, that is opened to us by wonder freeing language from the myth of the given

escaton: goal

parousia: (p. 20) arrival, completion, achievement, realization, presence, final coming, involves the belief in closure

Truth: If “truth” is not a dogma (e.g., religious or scientific) and if it refers to something “more” or in addition to the ordinary everyday sense of “truth” (a world of order, control and pragmatic security and non commitment), then what is it?

Study Questions for *In the Throe of Wonder* (and Plato)

1. How does Miller address the problem of what it might mean to seek philosophical wisdom in the pluralism of postmodern culture? Discuss the basic problem of the book: is wisdom/wonder/pursuit of truth still possible? Why is this a problem?
2. Distinguish questioning that arises from wonder vs questioning that arises from suspicion.
3. Why is there no direct access to truth? Why does the possibility of fallibility presuppose truth, but why can truth not be possessed? See truth p. 28 and possibility of error: Socratic irony.
4. Explain what Miller means by "Of all our worlds, the everyday is the closest to being completely dead." (p. 99.)
5. Why is "the world" a meaning, not a place? How do wonder and horror reveal this? (See Ch. 4, esp p. 23-24 and Supplemental Text p 8-9.
6. Question on Apology w/Miller p.28 self-referential argument. See my article *The Sacred and the True*, parts 1- Sacred, Death and being, unworlding, throe of wonder and throe of questioning (philos)
7. Discuss the notion of insight on p. 26 and the humility of fallibility p 27
8. Discuss the "transcendental signifier", p. 48 and Being as the toward which of wonder p. 44, and "the word for that other is being." (p. 49)
9. Discuss the relation of wonder, wisdom, truth, and the sacred. What does it mean to be in "throe of wonder"? How do we try to escape wonder? Why can't we succeed? What does it mean to say wonder is a hinge? Why is it a "rupture"? What is wrong with the representational view and the correspondence view of reality and truth? Why is paradise or heaven an impossible notion? What is the difference between "the given" and being, and the relation of being and the sacred? Based on this phenomenological view of wonder, what is the purpose of all genuine thinking?
10. What is the relationship between the experiences of wonder, horror, anguish, and awe, and the sacred and truth? Why are these basic feelings considered to be essential to authentic humanness? What do wonder and horror have in common? How are they different? How do they disclose what common sense and our ordinary sense of things disguise and prevent us from seeing? What is their relation to awe, anguish and dread?
11. Explain why a "world" cannot be observed, it can only be lived in. What key definition of world does this depend upon? What kind(s) definition is this? In what way does religion, belief in God, scientism, and absolute truth, (that try to fill up the abyss or build a path over it) on the one hand, and skepticism, relativism and hard pragmatism, on the other,(that try to escape by denying or explaining it away) hinder or prevent access to the sacred? What is the sacred? Why is it central to being human?
12. Discuss the "reversal" on page 59. How is wonder the very condition of our world/meaning? (pp. 55-60) Why can't there be pure wonder?
13. What does "world" mean? In what way are worlds *heirophanies* (indications of sacredness). What structure does a world take as it is being constituted? What does "the tragic quest for an undestructible world" mean? What is hermeneutical suspicion and the postmodern problem of not being able to surrender to a world? Why, of all our worlds, is the everyday the closest to being completely dead? What does "return of the repressed mean"?
14. Discuss: At the bottom of depth is insecurity in both the best and worst sense. The challenge for a human being is to bring art to this. Discuss this in light of what you have gained from chapters 1, 2, 4 and 6 in *The Throe of Wonder*.
15. What is lost in the liberation of the postmodern (p 95) "liberating to be exposed to so many worlds and yet be held fast by--imprisoned in--none? ..." Joyous affirmation of the play of the universe." (Derrida) willingness to surrender wholeheartedly to its gravitational field. The passionate character of such a surrender enables a world to mean the world to us. But it is just the absence of just this kind of *eros* that characterizes our postmodern kind of openness..." in which nothing is experienced as sacred. "What matters most is to be in control; and the only way to be in control is to let nothing mean the world to you. The distinguishing trait of the everyday "world," what makes it everyday, is precisely the fact that there is nothing in it that matters ultimately. ...If we love nothing with uninhibited enthusiasm, there can be no danger of suffering a terrible loss...someone completely in control is completely invulnerable. But the "world" of practicality is not a world at all...for its center is not something sacred...Of all our worlds, the everyday is the closest to being a completely dead one." 98-99 It is not a choice between life and death, anymore than it is a choice between love and suffering. Only by being open to both in their inseparability are we in the world at all." p. 100
16. What are the main points in *Apology*, *Symposium* and in the Prologue and Chapters 1 and 2 of *In the Throe of Wonder* regarding truth and philosophy? What is relativism? What is absolutism? What problems are there with each view? (Ch 2 from Pickard Text) What light do *Apology*, *Symposium* and *In the Throe of Wonder* shed on this issue? In what way does Miller show that it is a kind of attitude, rather than any belief or "truth" that is emancipating and transformative? What attitude is this? How does Miller express this? How is phenomenology a path to this awakening? Is there any direct access to truth? ? What kind of seeing is wisdom? What role does questioning play in this? How is attitude the final most important issue? How is an attitude different from a belief or truth? (Quote p xi-xii "certain exp...concerns.?"