Cultivating Wonder, Guarding Against Thoughtlessness in Education

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In 1964, in an interview on German television, Hannah Arendt took issue with being introduced as a political “philosopher.” She explained that, “the expression ‘political philosophy,’ which I avoid, is extremely burdened with tradition. […] I want to look at politics with eyes unclouded by philosophy.” It is widely known that Arendt was deeply skeptical of philosophy’s ability to offer us reliable guidance for politics or for anticipating and discerning the particular circumstances of our time. And yet we could say that there is, in her work, not only an outright dismissal of the philosophical pinning for unity, order, system and unworlty detachment, but also a commitment nonetheless to something essentially philosophical: to the potential of thinking in its contingency. Her work prizes thinking amid perplexity and unpredictability in a way that opens up a world and opens up to the world of common human affairs, which has proven invaluable for thinking the educational in education.

Though Hannah Arendt is critical of philosophy’s withdrawal from the messiness of human affairs and its regard for “man” in the singular, philosophers and theorists of education readily appreciate the significance that Arendt places on the possibility of “thinking” for helping us to avoid the “thoughtlessness” that leads to suffering and “evil” in our common world. Arendt has a particular notion of thinking in mind here that both is and is not (in her sense of the term) philosophical. I want to propose that while not guided by the search for meta principles, nor concerned with establishing logical systems, her notion of thinking as the examination of “whatever happens to come to pass,” and its significance for saving our world from thoughtlessness, retains and is motivated by the fundamental pathos at the heart of philosophy – the disposition for wonder. In this paper, I consider the limiting and enabling sense in which we might invoke “wonder” for the possibility of thinking. I do so, in turn, to explore what the pathos of wonderment might offer education – an institution charged with cultivating “thinking” and, yet, constantly susceptible to the thoughtless trappings of technocratic jargon and the mechanical logic of assessment, learning processes and social reproduction. Can wonder – the very pathos of philosophy – cultivate a thinking that helps us retain an unclouded attentiveness to what is educational in education? Can wonder – as that sense which throws us and spurs us towards sensing and thinking without closure – help us to overcome the thoughtlessness that dulls our attention to what we do to each other through education?

I hope to trace an argument that answers yes, pointing to the potential of a thinking founded upon the worth and affection of the things that we wonder about. In particular, I want to consider how a thinking stimulated by wonder (a thinking that dwells and is disposed to linger and can welcome the unexpected) can help us to guard against the thoughtlessness and cruelty perpetuated in the name of education or through an education. While this thinking (spurred from wonderment) does not proceed “philosophically” from set ideas, that is, from principles or a systemized logic, it does emerge from the very pathos of philosophy that draws us to sense and make sense of a sensed relation with others and with the world – an amor mundi. Extending from Arendt, I implicitly argue, that it is the pathos of philosophy that offers us a sense (a way of thinking) crucial for guarding against thoughtlessness in education and for possibly attending to and welcoming the significance of the unexpected and the possibility of becoming in education.

Arendt’s Suspicion of Wonder

However, before venturing into the above sense of wonderment, in this part of the paper, I want to briefly engage with Arendt’s suspicion of wonder (which falls in line with her suspicion of philosophy in general) that, according to her, ends up hindering thinking and action. Arendt provides a critical and ironic account of the “wonder-struck philosopher” who, as it were, falls
into the Thracian well while contemplating the heavens (and who we might rightly assume is
Heidegger). In this way, she exposes the risk of philosophical wonderment that can cloud our
attentive relationship to and responsibility for the world in front of us. Arendt critiques the
philosopher’s excess of wonder as an overly abstract way of thinking that ends up foreclosing the
possibility of thinking itself. The philosopher’s overindulgence with wonder self-encloses his
thinking within an alienating solitude and rapture that is “too general for words,” ultimately
abandoning the world of human affairs for an otherworldly like sense of perfection. Explicitly
identifying Heidegger this time Arendt writes,

Heidegger speaks once, wholly in Plato’s sense, of the
“faculty of wondering at the simple,” but, differently from
Plato, he adds, “and of taking up and accepting this
wondering as one’s abode” (Vorträge und Aufsätze, 1954,
Part III, p. 259). (...) However, the faculty of “taking up this
wondering as one’s permanent abode” is a different matter.
This is extraordinarily rare, and we find it documented with
some degree of certainty only in Plato, who expressed
himself more than once and most drastically in the
Theaetetus (173d to 176) on the dangers of such a
residence.

Alienated from what is common and from what calls us to think our love and obligation to the
world, from what could possibly give us an orientation in the world, the “wonder-struck”
philosopher is susceptible to being carried off unthinkingly, and in “awe,” by the romantic-
fantastic “storms of their century.” But worse, a wonder-struck philosopher seduced by an
otherworldly sense of awe that has no connection to the contingency and plurality of our world,
and who cares not for thinking’s obligation to others and the affairs that ground us together, ends
up with an immobilized capacity to tend to and make appropriate judgments about the world.
Writing on the occasion of Heidegger’s eightieth birthday, Arendt concisely summarizes the
dangerous foolishness we risk when the otherworldly tendencies in philosophy inevitably attempt
to take residence in the world, she writes: “[w]e who wish to honor the thinkers, even if our own
residence lies in the midst of the world, can hardly help finding it striking and perhaps
exasperating that Plato and Heidegger, when they entered into human affairs, turned to tyrants
and Führers.”

This quick and cursory foray into the limiting and dangerous susceptibility of philosophical
wonderment helps put into relief the significance of our needing to pine towards a different sense
of wonderment. At issue is the possibility of recovering a sense of wonderment that can help us
stay attuned to one another and accountable to our dwelling in the world, a world that pushes
back with more than we can know or firmly and finally grasp.

The Disposition of Wonder and Attending to the World

While needing to be vigilant to how making our abode in philosophical wonderment can alienate
us from our capacity to be attentive to the world, I don’t think that this can be the last word about
wonder. We implicitly sense that wonder has something more to offer than simply making us
stupid and blind to the common world. There is certainly ambivalence in Arendt’s thinking about
the pathos of wonderment, and such ambivalence invites us to further engage with this term, whereby we may spur a form of thinking committed and grounded in the world. And, to be sure, there is an intuitive imbrication between wonderment and education that we cannot simply dismiss as wholly pernicious or fallacious for education. In this section, I start with the intuitive link between education and wonderment and move to consider why a mode of thinking motivated by the pathos of wonderment might matter to education.

In one way or another, those vested in education readily recognize the fundamental importance of wonderment for education. Although we come to desire to be teachers for a variety of complex and perhaps unexplainable reasons, we seem to share a latent commitment in wanting to somehow tap into, sustain and cultivate a sense of wonder in our students. No one, we could perhaps agree, would want to be the type of teacher who sets out to kill-off the force of wonderment in students. But, while we sense that wonder is important for education, what we might mean by wonder remains a rather vague and generally unexplored sensibility. Why does wonderment matter to education? Is it different from curiosity? What exactly is it? What would it mean to cultivate it? And why should education concern itself with cultivating wonderment? Because wonderment has such an important place in philosophy’s inception, philosophy can help us to begin to engage with these questions.

The exemplar of “the” philosophical-teacher, Socrates, as is well-known, does not claim to teach anything, only to inspire a thinking that leads one to the aperetic thinking of wonder: “I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think.” Socrates’s educational method, if we want to call it that, engages the gradual process through which our thinking, partly by its own effort, partly in contest and dialogue with other minds, attempts to give an account of itself, that is, attempts to trace to an other how we have come to think that something is desirable or true. As we all know, if Socrates came across anyone who made a pretense to knowledge he set himself the task of getting the person to become accountable to their thinking, eventually convincing the person of his or her ignorance by persistent questioning. The point of course was not to demean or dismiss the person as a complete ignoramus, but rather to initiate another way of thinking that turns any firm answer back into questions, back into uncertainty, back into thinking.

It is important to note that the Socratic dialogue is not a “rhetorical foil.” Socrates never uses the foolishness or ignorance of another person simply as a prop. Moreover, he does not engage in a dialogue in order to affirm and confirm already established doctrines, definitions or axioms. There would be no dialogue if the conclusion were already in place and known to Socrates before the conversation started. Rather, what we see happening in the twists and turns and aperetic impasses exposed through the Socratic dialogue is thought in the making: we gradually come to consciously admit that we really don’t know what we thought we knew for certain, and consequently we start to turn away from the prejudices of our convictions clearing the way for thinking. In this way, we are offered the grace, that is, the Socratic dialogue gives us a chance, as it were, to start to take apart the rhetorical tricks and logical ploys that we are susceptible to using when we are not held to give an account by another. Without feeling the need to give an account of what we think, we too easily can come to convince and entrap ourselves in a self-enclosed certainty that shuts out the contingency and always more of the world. Consciously recognizing our ignorance ends up producing a type of shock, one that shakes our certainties (and even our soul) and thus opens us up to a wonderment that spurs us to think, and so begets the possibility of our education. As Dennis Quin has pointed out in his book on the history of wonder, “It is frequently forgotten that wonder arises not from ignorance but from consciousness of ignorance. Many people are ignorant who do not know that they are. We call such people complacent, and they are ineducable. They are impervious to teaching because they ‘already’ know.” He continues, Socrates “taught that consciousness of ignorance begets wonder, the very principle of
philosophy, and lacking that principle, one can never grasp everything else that proceeds from it."9

The Socratic method thus educates by rendering our thinking accountable and in relation to a world that pushes back with its mystery. It casts philosophy as an aporetic experience whereby things lose their “self-evidence” and “sureness,” and what we think we know comes back to us as something strange and uncanny, consequently asking us to dwell and wonder about it again. Also of significance here is that the opening to this sense of wonder arises not only in appreciating the limits of our claims, in knowing that we do not know, but also in being with others who are differently positioned and allowing them to approach us, to indeed educate and open us up through their particular difference. This is a sense of wonder that educates us from the very plurality of the world that calls us to see, listen, and reflect from positions other than our own.

While educational literature and teaching manuals often emphasize the importance of “stimulating the student’s curiosity,” they often conflate “wonder” with “curiosity,” treating each as interchangeable terms meaning generally the same type of experience or disposition.10 The philosophical tradition has generally kept these two terms apart and distinct from each other. I think, pursuing and preserving the distinction between these two terms can help us to better appreciate what might be at stake when we try to cultivate wonder in education.

Let’s turn to Heidegger who aptly sums up and captures an important distinction between “curiosity” and “wonder.”11 In Being and Time, Heidegger speaks of curiosity as, “seeking novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty… not tarrying along side what is closest.”12 Curiosity does not allow us to take one’s time with things. For Heidegger: “Curiosity has nothing to do with observing entities and marveling at them. To be amazed to the point of not understanding is something [in] which [curiosity] has no interest. Rather, it concerns itself with a kind of Knowing, but just in order to have known.”13 In this way Heidegger speaks of curiosity as a type of attitude that seeks to “know” the world by grasping and possessing it: seeking to understand everything by objectifying everything. When curiosity “obtains sight of anything, it already looks away to what is coming next: it never dwells anywhere.” Heidegger characterizes curiosity by its frantic pace, and by its inability to stay and give time to what remains incalculable in the world. Rather than dwell with the incalculable, curiosity moves from one thing to the next, resolving each puzzle as quickly as possible before moving to something newer and more tantalizing. Curiosity thus has a particular frenzied temporality, which does not allow us to sustain any care or engagement with the world. It does not dwell, but simply disposes of one thing and moves to the next as soon as its purpose has been fulfilled and it has conquered its object.

Encouraging teachers and students to transform themselves into “curious explorers” would thus mean urging them to work on attuning themselves to the world in a particular way and through a particular sense of temporality. That is, the promotion of curiosity as learning sways us to comport ourselves so that the world appears only as a resource to be worked upon and easily disposed of in our self-aggrandizing venture. The point is that with this sense of curiosity, the attitude of possessively grasping and discarding things for this or that purpose prevails so exclusively that one does not have time – or gives the time – to dwell with things so that we might come to care about what it is that we are doing when we do what we do. Consequently, the attitude of curiosity predisposes us to a carelessness and recklessness towards each other and the world as we become restless and disregarding, as it were, of that which takes time or troubles my time with its strangeness, complexity and uselessness. Under the economy of curiosity what appears must have “prompt verifiability” and must be readily rendered useful for my immediate purpose of knowing and possessing.
In contrast, through the attitude of “wonder,” as we might have previously glimpsed with Heidegger, one does not see or relate to the world possessively. Rather wonder retains an un-mastered relation with what turns up in the world. In other words, wonder dwells with things in a type of “rapt attentiveness and care.” It does not seek to know in order to posses or firmly grasp the object in place, but rather can linger with the feeling of otherness or mystery that the world can provoke. Wonder thus attunes us to give time to what exceeds our conceptual grasp and so can come to foster a comportment towards the world that can better prepare us to welcome the unexpected that might be coming. Wonder gives time to what calls us to attend, to what is running out of time, and to what remains precarious precisely because it can only appear in its retreating ungraspability, as that which would exceed our plans, intentions and schemes.

To say that we want to cultivate wonder would thus be completely different than saying that we want to cultivate curiosity. As Paul Martin Opdal puts it, “curiosity is a motive that operates within definite frameworks and can be satisfied using standard procedures. (...) Wonder, on the other hand, always points to something beyond the accepted rules… [evoking] a certain uneasiness towards the given.” Curiosity and wonder would apprehend and open their object in totally different ways. We become curious, let’s say about watches, because we want to know how they work, or how we can fix them or how might be able to do something with them. To satisfy our curiosity about watches we might consult manuals or decide to take one apart and put it back together so that we might better understand how it works as a certain type of apparatus.

Wonder, in contrast to curiosity, is not necessarily motivated (only) by our striving to understand how the object functions or what we can do with it; wonder would not treat the object as an apparatus that can be taken apart and put back together once we grasp its workings or uses. With wonder we would look at a watch in a very peculiar way, perhaps wondering about our human relationship to time and our curious attempt to parcel and measure time in this way rather than that way. Wondering in this way, the watch starts to look very strange and uncanny to us. Wondering in this way doesn’t satisfy merely an understanding about the object’s functionality as an apparatus, but rather it opens the watch to its inherent strangeness begetting questions rather than answers, questions that make us attentive and admiring of an object so that we may light up its possibility in a world of significance and reflect on our own position in it. Wondering does not merely open up the perplexity and puzzlement of what appears, but broaches our admiration and care for what we light up in the world. In this sense, we can say that wonder is really a certain disposition and attentiveness to the world, an experience or state of mind that comes about when everyday things and everyday affairs loose their functional self-evidence or use value so that we may “wonder at that which is as it is,” so that we may see again the depth and inexhaustible complexity of the world in the guise of the familiar.

But why would we want to cultivate this sense of “worldly wonder” in education? Or, why would we even want to wonder in this way about education itself? And how might we really go about cultivating something that is not even a skill, something that more aptly can be described as a disposition, an orientation, a type of pathos or a sensibility of sorts? In what follows, I turn to engage with the question of “why we would want to cultivate wonder in education” because it seems to me that the risks here are high and that such questioning offers us the possibility of warding off thoughtlessness in our institutions.

Guarding Against Thoughtlessness in Education
Throughout Arendt’s work, there is a clear concern for the “thoughtlessness” to which we are susceptible, particularly how thoughtless we can become through the guise of institutions – like education – and through the technocratic abstractions pervading their operation. For Arendt, “evil” is not due to a deficit of goodness or our “lack of brain power,” rather, it is a problem of “thinking,” and emerges from a cultivated thoughtlessness that is “an ever present possibility for everybody – scientists, scholars, and other specialists in mental enterprises not excluded.”

Considering what could possibly curb the cruelty and harm that comes from not thinking through what we are doing and that threatens to overtake even those charged with cultivating “the mental enterprises,” she muses: “Could the activity of thinking, as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually ‘condition’ them against it.” In other words, Ardent wonders if cultivating thoughtfulness can help prevent evil in the world. Thoughtlessness is thus a problem for thinking itself and so too a problem for education, perhaps especially for education, which is charged with cultivating a certain disposition for thinking – an unclouded attentiveness towards the world.

Arendt is decisively critical of philosophical first principles or speculative systems that promise to guide thought. Yet, her notion of thinking as the ability to hold “whatever happens to come to pass,” as a way of possibly safeguarding against thoughtlessness, is partly motivated by a certain pathos at the heart of philosophy – the disposition for wonder. In distinction to her worry over a philosophical overindulgence with wonder (as described above), Arendt broaches another path for conceiving of the significance of wonder for initiating thinking: a sense of wonder that is wedded to the world through the pathos and admiration of what may usher forth: of what is unexpected and remains to come. She writes, “the wonder that is the starting-point of thinking is neither puzzlement nor surprise nor perplexity; it is an admiring wonder.”

Given that an “admiring wonder” is grounded in a sensed relation with whatever happens to appear in the world, such wonder saves us from the “stone-cold” abstraction and non-thinking that can befall a certain philosophical-logical reasoning. The worry for Arendt is that such mechanical reasoning deals less with what appears to our senses or what is activated through conversation and more with the mental process of “deductions from axiomatic and self-evident statements” that foreclose the unexpected. “Admiring wonder” not only helps us to counter the withdrawal from the world, which can happen through our falling prey to a “stone-cold” abstraction that accompanies a certain logicality, but also counsels us against the retreat from the world by a “speechless wonderment” that simply ends in a mute sense of “awe.” The problem with reveling in “awe” and “perplexity” is that, in such a state, we would feel no compulsion or pull of accountability to communicate to others. On the other hand, a way of thinking spurred by an “admiring wonder,” which does not settle in the paralysis of “puzzlement” or “perplexity” or what amounts to a “speechless awe,” attunes us to a willingness to affirm thought’s commitment to the world: a commitment that necessarily “breaks out into speech” towards others who can grant common sense to what one might be wondering about.

A disposition for wonderment based on a sensed relation towards the world thus helps guard against a paralysis of thinking that can come about either by logical “processes of deduction” that abstract the world away, or through a speechless fascination with an otherworldly awe. Against these two unthinking tendencies, wonder can kick-start thinking when it brings us back to the world: when it attunes us to admire – to give worth and affection, and forge relationships with – that which attracts our attention or what happens to come to pass unexpectedly beyond general rules or principles. Attuned to a world that can push-back with its complications and unpredictability, a thinking forged from wonder prepares us to welcome and receive the unexpected – the miracle of the new – which affords us the possibility of beginning again and of finding another opening that can interrupt processes already set in motion.
Fostering the disposition of wonderment, which prepares us to welcome the unexpected and attunes us to a world that has depth and complexity, is quite significant for education. The sense of wonder discussed above might help us avoid (or perhaps begin to broach) the thoughtlessness that we are prone to cultivating and committing behind the guise of our institution and of our technocratic language.

In a very literal way, teachers are wholly and directly involved in “welcoming the unexpected.” Every year teachers prepare their courses, open the classroom door and give a place to the unexpected, which comes about through engaging with students and material. The very gesture of opening the classroom door and saying, “welcome,” is admittedly rife with uncertainty. Uncertainty abounds in the pedagogical event as the teacher does not really know who exactly is coming through the door, and also, because opening the door to the unexpected is exactly what an education is supposed to do, if we hope to transform and become transformed by our interactions with the material and each other. However, whereas an education inherently requires teachers and students to work at welcoming the unexpected in all aspects of running a course together, we often devise pretty efficient ways of foreclosing this welcome, of thoughtlessly shutting the door to what might be coming.

Claudia Ruitenberg, who has extensively explored the philosophical and educational complexities of this welcoming gesture in education, tells us that: “education… ought to be concerned with giving place to students and with receiving children and adults who arrive, who are, in spite of the best attempt at preparation by teachers and administrators, unpredictable and wholly other.” Yet, as Ruitenberg points out, the prevailing technical-rational approach to education, as exemplified by the “outcomes-based model of education,” turns out to be wholly inhospitable and quickly shuts the door on the sense of the unexpected (on the unpredictable becoming singularity) that is necessary for education to be educational. Consequently, “by standardizing outcomes and assessing the same behaviors and products for each student, outcomes based education does not address itself to any particular student.” In foreclosing the welcome of what is unique, singular and unexpected, education shuts the door to the educational event of existential becoming; the student’s particularity is abstracted away in a technocratic process of “deductions from axiomatic or self-evident statements, subsumption of particular occurrences under general rules, or the techniques of spinning out consistent chains of conclusions.”

The worry, of course, is that, armed with technical-rational jargon and approaches for assessing and determining student performance, that is, through the very language that we have developed as a profession (and that has come to define us as a profession), we get pretty thoughtless about what we do to each other through an education. Without wonder and attentiveness to the depth, complexity and inevitable ways in which the student’s mind (thankfully) resists our assessments and understandings of their particularity, we run the risk of concluding that we can indeed know and subsume our students according to assessment models, general rules and predefined caricatures that serve the forgone conclusions of a certain apparatus. The foreclosing of the unexpected possibility for a student is grotesquely at play when a teacher would cruelly claim: “I know what type of student you are;” or “I know what so and so is capable of.” In one of the opening scenes in the French film Entre les murs, directed by Laurent Cantet (2008), the closing down of singularity and becoming in education is aptly portrayed. In a seemingly benign but ultimately thoughtless exercise, exemplary of the workings of a pedagogical dispositif, one of the senior teachers in the film goes through a list of students with the new hired teacher checking either “gentil” or “pas gentil,” nice or not nice, before they meet the students in class. This rush to shut the door on educational becoming is all the more pervasive, all the more thoughtlessly easy,
when teachers and administrators are armed with technocratic assessment models to apply to a pedagogical space that has been rendered into an apparatus to decipher and improve.

I think with thoughtful wonderment teachers would be in a better position to keep the door open to the unexpected and unpredictability that an education must strive for and sustain. An attunement that would wonder and light up the world with affection and care (rather than decipher the workings of an apparatus) can help temper what it is we do to each other in education. It might be that, by cultivating a sense of wonder about what it is that we are doing when we educate, we can courageously come to admit that neither our students nor even what we teach can be finally and firmly really known to us. Our students and our teaching are thus in some ways always unexpected and always something to come; they are inherently ungovernable and exceeding the workings of an apparatus.

There is thus something significantly educational about cultivating wonder so that we light up what it is that we do in an education. Margaret Buchmann thoughtfully helps us to admit that the more that we educators tend to wonder about the subject we teach, the less sure we become of our ground, and, if anything, we start to get clear about the limits of our understanding. Of course, to have one’s teachable subject return back in this uncanny manner, which would make us feel not quite at home with what we are supposed to do in education, can be a rather frightening experience that can make us defensive and rigidly guard our “expertise” or our claims to know. However, if we get over this initial shock and defensive paralysis of thought, that is, if we learn to keep the door open and dwell with the wonder and ambiguity unleashed, our uns sureness can be a good thing to admit. Indeed, to have an encounter where we sense that things start to loose their self-evidence and sureness is, as Socrates gestured, a way of getting us to ask better questions that can prompt us to give an account of ourselves, questions that help to make sure that our thinking is attentive and attuned to the world rather than dull or withdrawn.

Buchmann also tells us to consider that the more teachers look at their students with thoughtfulness, the more teachers recognize that their knowledge of their students is imperfect and unfinished, that they really only have a limited projection that is inadequate because people change and are supposed to change when they undergo an education. Being disposed to admit as much is to extend a welcome, to give a place to the radically unknown, the ungraspable depth and complexity of who or what turns up and can become through an education that is something more than an apparatus. Disposed to wonder in this way, the teacher might hesitate in thoughtlessly ever saying: “I know what type of student you are.” In tempering our claims to know our students, we might be able to facilitate a pedagogical place “where freedom can appear and where singular, unique individuals can come into the world.”

References


7 Ibid. Arendt goes on in the same breath “This should be imputed not just to the circumstances of the times and even less to preformed character, but rather to what the French call a déformation professionelle. For the attraction to the tyrannical can be demonstrated theoretically in many of the great thinkers (Kant is the great exception). And if this tendency is not demonstrable in what they did, that is only because very few of them were prepared to go beyond [citing Heidegger] ‘the faculty of wondering at the simple’ and to ‘accept this wondering as their abode.’”


11 In *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger discusses the distinction between wonder and curiosity, noting how our present age has lost the sense (feeling) of *thaumazein* (wonder) of the early Greeks leading us, among other things, to misapprehend thinking as arising in terms of curiosity. In order to point us to the necessary attunement required for thinking (philosophically), Heidegger takes us through a thirteen theses exploration regarding *thaumazein*. He does so in order to attempt, at one level, to show how wonder is an attunement to the world that uncovers the most unusualness in the usual. In other words, unlike curiosity which privileges the remarkable beyond the ordinary, wonder which attunes us to the unusualness of the usual is truly what can get us to ask (think) about the question of being, the remarkableness of usual beings. While there is much here that is significant to unpack, and that no doubt inspires my own thinking about wonder, my interest in this paper ultimately goes elsewhere than an exegesis or step by step application of Heidegger’s complex treatment of *thaumazein*. M. Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”* Trans. Richard Rojcewicz & André Shuwer (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).


14 P.M. Opdal, “Curiosity, Wonder and Education” p. 331.


18 H. Arendt, Life of the Mind (One), p.143.


20 H. Arendt, Life of the Mind (One), p.143.


22 Ibid., 271.

23 H. Arendt, Human Condition, p. 171


25 Ibid.