

Structure of the talk

- The strangeness of objectless moods: the case of wonder.
- Forms of wonder: the distinction from ordinary cases.
- What do we mean when we say that the object of this wonder is nothing?
- Wittgenstein's worries about intelligibility and why Heidegger is not worried.

Passages cited

When I wonder in this way—it is strange, isn't it? Materially the world is completely the same as before, there are the same things, the same surroundings, the same chairs and tables, people and stars, and nevertheless there is something here completely changed. No new thing has been discovered, no new reality; what has been discovered is not a thing, not a reality, but the fact that this everything is. But this 'everything is', is not a thing (Patočka 2022, 298).

'For the most extreme wonder, anything whatsoever as such and everything as everything become the most unusual' (Heidegger 1994, 144).

'In this way, wonder now opens up what alone is wondrous in it: namely, the whole as the whole, the whole as beings, beings as a whole' (Heidegger 1994, 146).

'The right expression in language for the miracle of the existence of the world, though it is not any proposition in language, is the existence of language itself' (Wittgenstein 1993, 43–44).

The most usual, which arises in wonder as the unusual, is not this or that, something particular that has shown itself as objective and determinant in some specific activity or individual consideration. In wonder, what is most usual of all and in all, i.e. everything, becomes the most unusual [...] in this one respect: that it is what it is. (Heidegger 1994, 144)

To say 'I wonder at such and such being the case' has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. In this sense one can wonder at the existence of, say, a house when one sees it and has not visited it for a long time and has imagined that it had been pulled down in the meantime. But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing. I could of course wonder at the world round me being as it is. If for instance I had this experience while looking into the blue sky, I could wonder at the sky being blue as opposed to the case when it's clouded. (Wittgenstein 1993, 41–42)

Feeling the world as a limited whole -it is this that is mystical (Wittgenstein 1974, §6.45).

It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it is (Wittgenstein 1974, §6.44).

There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical (Wittgenstein 1974, §6.522).

Apropos of Heidegger:

I can very well think what Heidegger meant about Being and Angst. Man has the drive to run up against the limits of language. Think, for instance, of the astonishment that anything exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is also no answer to it. All that we can say can only, a priori, be nonsense. Nevertheless, we run up against the limits of language. Kierkegaard also saw this running-up and similarly pointed it out (as running up against paradox). [...] the tendency to run up against shows something. The holy Augustine already knew

this when he said: ‘What, you swine, you would speak no nonsense? Go ahead and speak nonsense – it doesn’t matter!’ (Wittgenstein 1979, 68–69, translation modified)

To be sure, man’s prescientific and extra-scientific activities also are related to beings. But science is exceptional in that, in a way peculiar to it, it gives the matter itself explicitly and solely the first and last word. In such impartiality of inquiring, determining, and grounding, a peculiarly delineated submission to beings themselves obtains. (Heidegger 2011, 49)

References

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