



ISSN: 3085-6434

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.71263/b6gt8d72>

## THE QUESTION OF NOTHINGNESS (OR: TOWARDS AN ETHICS OF INTELLIGENCE) FROM BERGSON AND BACHELARD

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**ABSTRACT:** Our intention is to investigate in detail the enriching philosophical dialogue between the works of Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941), focusing on the concept of Nothing and its connection with the idea of

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Duration. First, we will address the central thesis presented by Bergson about Nothingness, which is described as a *being-more* in his final chapter of the work *Creative Evolution* (1907). Next, we will address Bachelard's ideas about Duration and Nothingness, as presented in *The Dialectic of Duration* (1936), highlighting that this work represents a critical reevaluation of Bergson's meontological-temporal perspective. In the third chapter, we will analyze, from Bachelard's perspective, the renewal of our intuition and understanding of time, reflecting on the phenomenon of temporal superpositions ordered by intelligence capable of producing a kind of rational ethics. In the conclusion, we show that it is the question of nothingness that leads us to characterize an ethics of intelligence in Bachelard.

**KEYWORDS:** Bachelard; Bergson; Nothing; Duration; Ethics of intelligence.

**RÉSUMÉ:** Notre intention est d'étudier en détail le dialogue philosophique enrichissant entre les œuvres de Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) et Henri Bergson (1859-1941), en nous concentrant sur le concept du Néant et son lien avec l'idée de Durée. Nous aborderons tout d'abord la thèse centrale présentée par Bergson au sujet du Néant, qui est décrit comme un *être-plus* dans le dernier chapitre de son ouvrage *L'Évolution créatrice* (1907). Ensuite, nous aborderons les idées de Bachelard sur la Durée et le Néant, telles qu'elles sont présentées dans *La Dialectique de la durée* (1936), en soulignant que cet ouvrage représente une réévaluation critique de la perspective

méontologique-temporelle de Bergson. Dans le troisième chapitre, nous analyserons, du point de vue de Bachelard, le renouvellement de notre intuition et de notre compréhension du temps en réfléchissant au phénomène des superpositions temporelles ordonnées par l'intelligence capable de produire une sorte d'éthique rationnelle. Dans la conclusion, nous montrerons que c'est la question du néant qui nous amène à caractériser une éthique de l'intelligence chez Bachelard.

**MOTS-CLÉS:** Bachelard; Bergson; Néant; Durée; Éthique de l'intelligence.

## Introduction

For Marie Cariou (2008, p. 23), who elaborated the prodrome of the book that received the same title and who reluctantly suggests: "Bergson and Bachelard, discontinuity *and* continuity...", the philosophy of time proposed by Bachelard was not restricted to definitively breaking with the spiritualist and epistemological tradition of France, which goes back to Brunschvicg — his doctoral advisor — and Bergson, which were pillars of the French "philosophical moment" in 1900 (Worms, 2006, p. 39). In fact, this metaphysical reflection can be seen as a reassessment of Bergson's temporal philosophy, which recognizes its spiritualist influences through a philosophy of rest in *The Dialectic of Duration*, while presenting more incisive and forceful criticisms of the concept of continuity. The critique of the notion of temporal continuity can be seen as one of the most profound analyses of the dilemma of

nothingness, a legacy of the ancient nature thinkers of Elea. It is relevant to mention Zeno and his antinomies, as in the cases of the bow and arrow, and of Achilles and the tortoise. To this ontological tradition of thought to which Bachelard and Bergson are linked, even if indirectly, the notion of the change of time and instant vs. duration is once again discussed . Bergson's appropriation of Eleatic concepts and their transference, as a question, to Bachelard's philosophy are not limited to a mere reverberation of the problem or a solution to the fundamental question about temporal reality, but to their origin, that is, their effective provenance from being or non-being.

For Bachelard, while what can be intuited is the instant, duration is presented in a verifiable way, which implies a restructuring of the concept as a temporal phenomenon. By contrasting these ideas with Bergson's descriptions, one can find the correspondence between different moments of reflection, the notions of discontinuity and nothing in collation. According to Bachelard, intuition has been expanded and supported by reason, which differs from Bergson's merely instrumental perspective of intelligence and its vicious circle: the duration that "reigned as a mistress" can now "be employed as a servant" (Bachelard, 2010, p.45).

In his writings, Bergson, who was strongly influenced by the reception of Husserl's phenomenological thought, which had crossed the Rhine and spread to France, argues that duration is continuous and is immediately connected to consciousness (pure intuition/simple thought). For this reason, in any case,

duration and nothingness are concepts structured from a certain performance of the human psyche in Bergsonism.

Faced with this scenario of discussion, Bachelard develops one of his most sagacious statements about time, which can be summarized as follows: duration is only continuous in the form of impressions, being essentially defined by a series of discontinuous instants and by the various "nothings" that separate them. In other words, for Bachelard, duration must dialectically include nothingness in its composition, just as reason integrates discontinuous moments within the same thought, to the detriment of an act, that is, a voluntary choice.

We are led, finally, in the face of this dispute around the question of nothingness, to plead why, for Bachelard, duration is a reality thought rather than lived and, therefore, full of gaps. On the other hand, when we observe this reality from the perspective of nothingness according to Bergson, it reveals itself as a mere philosophical pseudo-problem of the supplementary attribute (*being-more*) of objects. Thus, our intention is to explore in depth the rich philosophical dialogue between the views of Gaston Bachelard and Henri Bergson on the concept of nothing and its relationship with the notion of duration, which we imagine to be supported by an ethics of intelligence in the second more than in the first.

We will begin with the exposition of Bergson's central thesis on nothingness, presented in the last chapter of his work *Creative Evolution*, where it is defined as a *being-more*, in addition to its connection with the concept of continuous duration, fundamental to his philosophy. After that, we will highlight Bachelard's contributions in relation to the ideas of duration

and nothingness, as developed in *The Dialectic of Duration*, emphasizing that it is a criticism of Bergson's meontological-temporal approach discussed earlier. Finally, we will analyze how, from the perspective of Bachelard's philosophy of rest, the alternation between being and nothing can provide a renewal in our intuition and understanding of time, based on what we call the *ethics of intelligence*.

### **1. Bergson's analysis of the pseudo-philosophical question of nothingness: nothingness as a *being-more***

Worms and Wunenburger (2008, p.45) highlight a very relevant point that we should explore, they write: "Bachelard anticipates a phenomenological critique of Bergson, showing us that it is necessary to insert the gaps that Bergson did not know how to see in our experience and knowledge about time". These gaps can be seen as voids that form time. According to Bergson, the idea of nothing (non-being) is only a construction elaborated by our static reason, which resorts to emptiness to define what is full (Bergson, 2005, p. 297). For him, this represents a big problem, because continuous duration is never delayed, never fails or stops flowing and running.

The theme of nothingness, in his philosophy, was discussed in *The Creative Evolution* (1906) and, the previous year, presented in the form of an article in one of the volumes of the *Revue philosophique*. The concept of nothingness – which Bergson considers a pseudo-philosophical problem and an initial error – is rescued by the philosophy of time proposed by Bachelard, who recognizes that duration can be directly structured by

nothingness: "our first task should be to postulate metaphysically – against the Bergsonian thesis of continuity – the existence of gaps in duration. [...] (Bachelard, 1994, p.7). Therefore, "let us say right away", Bachelard concludes, "that from Bergsonism we accept almost everything, except continuity" (Bachelard, 1994, p.16).

In turn, thinking about the negative moment of time became one of the main tasks to be accomplished in *The Dialectic of Duration*. Bachelard himself points out: "our first task should be to postulate metaphysically – against the Bergsonian thesis of continuity – the existence of gaps in duration. [...] (Bachelard, 1994, p.7). This philosophical movement seeks to complement the task enunciated years earlier in *The Intuition of the Instant*, namely, to "clarify this new intuition", in which "time is a reality enclosed in the instant and suspended between two nothings" (Bachelard, 2010, p. 14; 16)

And as much as most pre-Socratic philosophers of nature have not yet dealt with the question of nothingness rigorously, Bergson will say, in accordance with Heidegger, it remains "the secret spring, the invisible motor of thought [...]" (Bergson, 2005, p. 299). After all, "*Porquoi il a plutôt quelque chose que rien?*" (Leibniz apud Heidegger, 2008, p. 393). Moreover, a significant statement in *Creative Evolution* reflects this assertion of Bergson's: "Existence appears to me as a conquest over nothingness" (Bergson, 2005, p. 299). Such a statement could go unnoticed in the text of *L'évolution créatrice* if we did not deduce from this such an answer from Leibniz's fundamental question: How can our life, according to Bergson's theses, seem to be a conquest over nothingness if it exists, according to Bachelard,

consists in admitting it? Well, I choose something instead of nothing. But how to make the temporal dialectic go, according to Bachelard (1994, p. 12), "from being to being, without causing nothing to intervene"?, since to stop "passing is to stop subsisting", he says.

All these questions are pertinent. Let's analyze and compare the answers provided by Bergson and Bachelard.

Bergson presents an answer through a clear statement, which will serve as the basis for our exploration: "I tell myself that there could and even should be nothing, and then I am astonished that there is something" (Bergson, 2005, p. 299). Therefore, the author offers a bold answer to Leibniz's question transcribed above, even if in a provisional way, supposing that if something exists and is capable of astonishing us with its presence, "Existence seems to me a victory over nothing" (Bergson, 2005, p. 299).

This statement could be ignored in Bergson's text if we did not deduce from it the answer to the central question raised by Leibniz (and also Heidegger's question). The evident weight of Bergson's response (as we perceive it) to the supposed question about the existence of nothingness establishes an essential break with the conventional metaphysical conducts of thought that emerged from the meontological speculation of Heraclitus, considered as its great initiator; since consciousness is a faculty capable of revealing the world and the things that are given there through a mediation between *psyché* and matter, whose moving flow of duration fulfills the function of connecting them, in Bergson's view, the reflection on nothingness confuses us in term, leading us to a fruitless search for solutions to



unnecessary questions, that bequeath us illusory philosophical problems.

Bergson summarized the problem of Heraclitian metaphysics from the following statement: if something endures, that is, if something exists, then it must have arisen from nothing. But his criticism rests on the fact that reality is always interpreted as an event that extends over nothingness or as a substance deposited in it: "first was nothing, and being by addition" (Bergson, 2005, p. 299). This suggests that, at first, there is only emptiness, and later something must arise. However, according to Bergson, duration does not need to, and cannot encompass this something that is nothing to develop continuously. Duration does not need, nor can it embrace that which is non-existent in order to manifest itself continuously. The unbreakable essence of the spiritual flow, which metaphysically perceives reality, is not subject to a movement that introduces nothingness into the dynamics of life in order to understand reality in consciousness. In other words, Bergsonian philosophy does not allow the establishment of an action mediated by any dichotomy or contradiction (negation/affirmation), because, as we will see, reality is always an affirmation *about* existence, it is an absolute fullness (affirmation of affirmation).

However, Bachelard (1994, p. 16) disagrees, he says that, for Bergson, I quote:

being, movement, space and duration do not contain gaps; they cannot be negated by nothingness, by rest, by point, by instant; At least, these denials are

doomed to be indirect and verbal, superficial and ephemeral. In short, whether in our intuition of duration, or in our conceptions of being, or even in the service of our functions, we are delivered, according to Bergsonism, to an immediate and profound continuity, which can only be broken superficially, externally, in appearance, in the language it claims to describe. Discontinuities, parceling, denial appear only as procedures to facilitate an exposition; psychologically, they are located in thought, never in the very interior of the psyche. [...].

If we did not have the ability to remember, the terms "emptiness" and "nothingness" would have no meaning, since "what we perceive is the presence of one thing or another, never the absence of anything" (Bergson, 2005, p.305). However, the notion of nothing arises, according to the tendency of Bergson's thought, when we replace one element with another. In fact, our subjective consciousness comprises the nothingness in the flow between past time and the future. In concrete experience, since the characteristics of our state of consciousness are directly connected to what is in motion, they do not manifest themselves as an ontological unreality, but rather as a specific actualization of conscious states. This is an aspect that does not seem to contain "gaps", as Bachelard mentions when referring to what

he considers a psychologism of anteplenitude (Bachelard, 1994, p. 16).<sup>2</sup> On this issue, Bergson (2005, p.309) also writes:

To represent this object as non-existent cannot consist in removing from the idea of this object A the idea of the attribute "existence", since, once again, the representation existence of the object is inseparable from the representation of the object and is one and the same thing as it. To represent object A as non-existent, therefore, can only consist in *adding* something to the idea of this object: by adding to it, in effect, the idea of the exclusion of this particular object by actual reality in general. To think of object A as non-existent is first to think of the object and, consequently, to think of it as existent; it is then to think that another reality, with which he is incompatible, will supplant him.

According to Bergson, reality understood as "All reality", in fact, as a full reality, dispenses with nothingness as the absence of

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<sup>2</sup> For the discussion on this topic, see our papers: MACHADO, F. Bachelard and Bergson: a temporal psychology. *Kalagatos*, Fortaleza, V.17, N.2, 2020, p. 122-148. MACHADO, F. Duration and memory: Gaston Bachelard's critique of Bergsonian temporal psychologism. *Kínesis*, Marília, Vol. VIII, nº 18, December, 2016, p.109-125.

reality, because the negated object would imply, against all expectations, in a partial withdrawal from the Whole, a retreat in meaning, a meontological turn. Therefore, "what we perceive is the presence of one thing or another, never the absence of anything" (Bergson, 2005, p.305). The "negative" notion of nothing arises when our intelligence, in exchanging the image of one object for another, interprets a partial nothing as being an absolute nothing and not as an additional categorical representation of the mentioned object. In these terms, the idea of nothing is a *surplus-being* of the Whole, rather than a partial annihilation of the past object. The perception of an existing object is thus accompanied by the consideration of a non-existent object, which validates the exclusion of a previous reality and enriches the structure of duration. What happens here is a substitution and addition of a new image immediately perceived in consciousness from a phenomenon experienced in its actuality. Therefore, in Bergsonism, memory must always come to the aid of static intelligence.

In other words, and strange as our assertion may seem, there is more and not less in the idea of an object conceived as "not existing" than in the idea of that same object conceived as "existing", because the idea of the object "not existing" is necessarily the idea of the object "existing" *with*, in addition to the representation of an exclusion of this object

by the actual reality taken as a whole  
(Bergson, 2005, p.310).

When memory is able to differentiate and recognize states that go from the present – such as moments in the past, for example – everything that has been experienced and remains in memory are memories of life in its various nuances; They can include memories of possessions or feelings that have dissipated, love, or trauma. To this end, according to Bergson, the perception of refusal or annihilation of certain images is more linked to the manifestation of the past in the present moment, in view of new perceptions and memories, than to disconnected divisions of these same images generated by a supposed nothingness. According to Bergson (2005, p.319): "The idea of abolition is not, therefore, a pure idea; implies that one misses the past or that one conceives oneself as missing it [...]". If we ask the question "why is there something?", Bergson would answer: it is "a question devoid of meaning", because something consecrated to some existence is always consciousness of something given, to speak in a Husserlian tone, because "riding the body of positive reality to which it is linked, this phantom objectifies itself" (Bergson, 2005, p.320).

But we would ask, together with Bachelard: how can existence be seen as a victory over nothingness, if this nothingness is a conquest over life itself, either with death or with its constant insinuating presence? Or, if existing implies recognizing its presence, wouldn't nothingness be the fuel of one's own will to start over? Furthermore, Bachelard (1994, p. 22) will say: "Destruction is often done and its construction never ends. [...]".

The real is analyzed with denial blows. To think is to make abstractions of certain experiences, it is to voluntarily immerse them in the shadow of nothingness." The idea of contrasting the notion of nothing with that of the Whole is reduced, according to Bergson, to opposing the full to the even fuller. This leads us to the concept of gap and risk that Bachelard explores in his work on time from 1936, where he proposes to examine Bergson's theses on nothingness, pointing out that he did not go to the very essence of the answer to the question. In the next topic, we will show how this happened.

## 2. The primacy of gap and risk according to Bachelard

According to Bachelard, a temporal phenomenology puts in open opposition each phenomenon of time that manifests itself according to a very particular rhythm, and that includes the gaps and intervals that are convenient for them, as the author says: "time is a reality enclosed in the instant and suspended between two nothings" (Bachelard, 2010, p.15). The thesis we will discuss, based on Bachelard's philosophy about the notion of nothing (in the light of Bergsonism), will in no way constitute a "futile debate", in fact, it is through this critical rereading of Bergsonian ideas about time that Bachelard seeks to philosophically reestablish the "balance between the passage from being to nothing and the passage from nothing to being" (Bachelard, 1994, p.7).

For Bachelard, Bergson's philosophy would be a philosophy of the plenum sustained by a psychology of plenitude. In this context, everything is perceived as extremely "rich", "nuanced"

and "dynamic", which would ensure that both his system of thought based on the notion of continuity and his idea of duration are not subject to threats and discontinuities. In Bergson, the "psychological stage is never empty", Bachelard would say (Bachelard, 1994, p.11). Bachelard also contests this statement when he states that life in "full" conditions, according to Bergson's philosophy, has no reason to fear, since there are no reasons for definitive failures, since one action will always follow another continuously, whether active or passive (Bachelard, 1994, p.11). For us, this is the central idea that underlies Bachelard's critical interpretation of Bergsonism. And with that, let's start our discussion.

Contrary to what Bergson thinks about life, this trust in the "psychological stage [that] is never empty" is described by Bachelard as the "security of the somnambulist" (Bachelard, 1994, p.11); vital energy, a concept dear to Bergsonism, which always moves our actions, will do so even without us being aware of when or how they are carried out, accumulating the "ease of all substantialism", that is, of all continuity, where everything is already available, complete, fully formed, yet absolutely stagnant (Bachelard, 1994, p.11). Thus, everything that persists is part of an unfolding of a primordial action of states and occurrences that *do not* alternate at all from their causality (*élan vital*), characterizing all "*pansiquism*" as a "*panchronism*", in the Bergsonian context. I quote Bachelard:

We know that, for Bergson, the idea of nothingness is, after all, richer than the idea of being, for the simple reason that

the idea of nothingness would only intervene and clarify itself by adding an additional function of annihilation to the various functions by which we expose and describe being. Thus, the idea of nothing is, according to Bergson, functionally richer than the idea of being. In this way, no substance could, in the face of the knowledge we have of it, have a void, no melody could be cut by absolute silence. [...] Somehow, all the possibilities of human thought and action become infallibly attributes of the substance under consideration, taking into account an ingenious doctrine of negative attribution (Bachelard, 1994, p.13).

If we analyze this quotation from Bachelard, which seems to us to be extremely faithful to the meaning denoted by Bergsonian psychologism about the plenum, we find that this overly substantialist philosophy does not allow any "balance", any "fluctuation", any "oscillation" (Bachelard, 1994, p.14). According to a terminology widely explored in *The Intuition of the Instant*, all substantialist philosophy does not include the notion of novelty (of the instant). The transformation of a state of consciousness, which replaces the impression of a given, does not admit gaps in the flow of this fluid continuity, hence, for Bergson, according to Bachelard, "I am either thinking or I



am acting: I am a thing or a philosopher" (Bachelard, 1994, p.14). Bergson's philosophy would also be a kind of philosophy of success, a success that requires "ontological compensations" that firmly prevent and oppose any collapse of the being that lasts (Bachelard, 1994, p.14).

If, therefore, consciousness and successful life are not part of the nothingness of the instant of novelty, in Bachelard's sense, what pure and real risk does life run, according to Bergson's doctrine, in the face of so many ontological compensations? If life is susceptible to evolution, how can we evolve (in creative ways) if in the precise moments of the decisions that test us we are not thrown to the edge of the abyss and uncertainty by nothingness? These are questions that the philosopher himself seeks to answer.

Bachelard claims that Bergson never thought of life from this perspective, rather, Bergsonism is a philosophy that is indulgent with life, because, as much as behind a vital impulse there are guarantees of success – if, for example, intelligence failed, in the face of *élan vital*, there was instinct or torpor to make up for the absence of this function – the risk of living would be curtailed by an action that never ceases, that is, a conduct that never rests, where the risk would respond more to its supporting function, but never to the discontinuity of an instant of novelty. There is never a real risk that responds only to nothingness in Bergson. I reproduce another enlightening quote from Bachelard about Bergson's thought:

All these theses, as we see, do not go to the essence of risk and in favor of risk:

the philosopher wrote nothing about risk in favor of risk, about absolute and total risk, about risk without objective and without reason, about this strange and exciting game that leads us to destroy our security, our happiness, our love; about the vertigo that attracts us to danger, to novelty, to death, to nothingness.

And, since "continuity or continuities can be presented as characteristics of the psyche, but these characteristics could not, however, be taken as finished, solid, constant" (Bachelard, 1994, p.16). The dialectic of realization and annihilation, according to Bachelard, originated the first explanation of life by the philosophers of pre-Socratic Greece, especially those coming from the philosophemes of the Eleatics, with a special focus on the Ephesian Heraclitus. Based on them, Bachelard, finally, will argue that: "Pure thought must begin again with a refusal of life. The first clear thought is the thought of nothingness" (Bachelard, 1994, p.17).

When analyzing the two types of attributive judgments, one affirmative and the other negative, as in the examples "this table is black" and "this table is not white", Bergson had argued that, according to the philosophical perspective he defends, the negative judgment is considered inferior by its nature. However, by suggesting that the first judgment is related to the idea of nothingness, Bachelard (1994, p. 20) will argue that "it is necessary to transmute all the values of verification, and it is to

the negative judgments that we will above all grant the value of proof". In other words, the epistemological perspective that a controversy arising from an error shapes the true understanding of what really is, regains its value. Reality is recognized precisely by what it lacks, its coefficient of nothingness, if we want to evoke Heidegger, that is, that which gives truth its consistency of normativity.

Finally, we have a way, quite paradoxical, to refute the Bergsonian thesis: to generalize it. In fact, the intervention of a destructive thought, which Bergson proposes to account for the very special idea of *nothingness*, seems to us to be the rule for all concepts. [...] Thus, the real is analyzed with blows of negation (Bachelard, 1994, p.22-23).

Therefore, "a method to legitimize the primacy of affirmative judgment, [...] it would be very little Bergsonian [...]", rather, it is from the negation of a choice that our judgments can be nourished, affirmed: "Negation is the nebula from which the real positive judgment is formed" (Bachelard, 1994, p.21). The sciences show that each piece of evidence is the result of an effort and a departure from first impressions. The misunderstanding, based on a controversial doubt, reserves the desire to understand and examine the epistemological impetus in Bachelardism, given that the truth always emerges "in front of a background of errors" (Bachelard, 1994, p. 21). Not only

does it make risk the limit of real experiences, but it is also turbulent and controversial, necessary. In suspended moments, among nothing, only a discontinuous choice can give rise to a new beginning. Therefore, Bachelard's philosophy is a philosophy of refusal, of "no", in favor of life, in favor of its own continuity. In this sense, I quote Bachelard (1994, p. 34): "Our temporal hesitation is ontological".

### **3. The question of nothingness (or: towards an ethics of intelligence) from Bachelard**

One of the main objectives of modern rationalism is to demonstrate that the ontological void that separates cause and effect, that is, the subtraction of experimental reality that arises from cause to effect, should be the focus of discursive thinking, which is essentially dialectical. This statement has been known since Bachelard's famous work *The Philosophy of No*, which was once highlighted in *The Dialectic of Duration*.

In this sense, it is essential to begin this topic by emphasizing that the rational approach to time proposed by Bachelard is at odds with Bergson's philosophical causalism. For Bachelard, the rational activity of contemporary science is always the result of a refusal that rejects inert and prejudice-laden thinking. When investigating the causes of time, which can be psychological, physiological or intellectual, as discussed in chapters three, four and five of *The Dialectic of Duration*, the author assumes that there are no regularities or even simultaneities between the various causes of temporal

phenomena, it is, therefore, a failure of realization between the determining causes and effects.

These superimposed temporal phenomena (temporal superpositions) are combinations that form a duration that encompasses not only a philosophical but also a scientific view of time, as evidenced in Einstein's theory of relativity, since it is not possible to relate the primary causes to the effects considered secondary by means of a linear and continuous thinking that escapes the very idea of discontinuity. *In fact, Bachelard (1994, p. 23) will write: "the intervention of destructive thinking, which Bergson proposes to account for the very special idea of nothing, seems to be the rule for all concepts. [...] A clear concept must bear the imprint of everything we refuse to incorporate into it."* Between the first and second temporal states mentioned above, a void arises that generates a certain isolation and relativism in sensible — and also cognitive — perception between the various phases of a present moment. This "emptiness", as we know, he calls temporal gaps, or the act of "*emptying*" a positive action, whose mark and gift of the instant impose its temporal absolute, marking the negative rhythm of being (Bachelard, 1994, p. 18). Modern physics offers clear examples in this regard, indicating that the different states of a single atom over time are exactly equivalent to those of a set of atoms at a specific time (Bachelard, 1994, p.61).

Therefore, the analysis of the cause-and-effect relationship in a quantum system also demonstrates that the physical causality of atomic time is both formal and efficient, challenging the notion of causal succession. It is from this that Bachelard draws his thesis that there are nothings between the various

inappropriate and discontinuous instants. Thus, if this principle of causality remains constant at the same absolute instant, depending on the state it presents, sometimes as a wave, sometimes as a particle, if we restart an action, due to its variation, metaphorically, in the image of quantum and relativistic time, its origin and memory do not matter, since, for Bachelard, novelty imposes a restart on life.

In fact, there is a temporal dialectic restricted to an ontological causality of a really intensive character for Bachelard. In other words, time possesses wealth, and is not only richer than being itself, as in Bergsonism, because it is and is not (Being-nothing); phenomenally, it is subject to a principle of uncertainty and ontological instability that founds it. Thus, the immediate perception that accompanies the causal sequence of a temporal phenomenon, through a classical consciousness—both in discussions of modern physics and in the psychophysical theories of the late nineteenth century—is incomplete to explain, for example, the intellectual causalities that guide the two moments that Bachelard considers to form the temporal structure of all forms of life. which represent moments of intensity of being and meontological interval (Non-being).

Taking its analytical aspect in this way, a temporal movement will not be entitled, at first approach, to the continuous qualifier; or, at least, for the continuity of a temporal movement to be very faithful, very real, very certain, it will be necessary that the intervals be properly

arranged. It is therefore always necessary to sustain continuity by solidity. It will be possible, in this way, varieties in their own continuity, [...]. Thus, we will continue a temporal movement, either by increasing the density of interval acts, or by regularizing the appearance of these acts. Roughly speaking, rich duration and regular duration are two very different types of continuity (Bachelard, 1994, p.80).

Like the foundations of a structured work, the solidity of the building, for example, analogous to the network of time, which encompasses everything, allows its intervals to vary, with this, the construction rises arithmetically determined. Likewise, to take diverse densities and hierarchically organized spacings of the time of our being as finished, based on refused or continued intervals of our acts, is, in the face of the complexity of life, to "sustain the continuity through the solidity" of our best personal decisions (Bachelard, 1994, p.80).

In any case, the diversity and multiplicity of our acts guarantee a kind of ethics that makes our time richer and not necessarily more regulated, as we imagine there is in Bachelard. Hence the instant and the gap are constitutive of a certain duration that is never reduced to the maintenance of our life that runs safe and full. In Bergsonian terms, a life without risks, that is, one that does not respond to instants of novelty to the detriment of twists or turns.

Parallel to a causal investigation of organic time (i.e., of the intransigence of the instant in the face of life through the risk of novelty imposed on it), according to Bachelard, a multifaceted study of the non-continuous reveals internal time in its higher (formal) dimension. This theme is explored in the fifth chapter of *the work The Dialectic of Duration*, based on the idea of the intellectual origin of time and its causal aspect, according to a qualification of duration by reason. Here duration is explained from its dialectic. The premise defended by Bachelard is that, through physical phenomena, at first glance, we can observe the duality of duration from its perceived interruptions on a material level. Now, when we consider the higher activity of intelligence, we approach "[...] our intimate experience", of time interpenetrated by the intellect (Bachelard, 1994(a), p.67).

The title of our article, which carries the expression "towards an ethics of intelligence", names the dynamics between reason and act, or intelligence and decision in time (will), according to the theses presented in *The Dialectic of Duration*. We explain them. From Bachelard, we know that in each temporal sequence that suggests a sense of continuity of duration, we perceive only a progression of the moments of mechanical successions; it is, therefore, simply a "physiological consequence" (Bachelard, 1994, p.68). On the other hand, the act that generates this physiological causality of time and all others, apart from its effect, originates from the initial impulse of thought, which organizes and directs our duration in its various manifestations through the rational act of choice. In this individual context of each subject who chooses, according to Bachelard, intelligence acquires a concrete causality. The will, as the motive force of



intelligence, is undoubtedly the very obstacle to time; however, "there is a place for a psychological rationalization, which will give the act of intelligence a special efficacy" (Bachelard, 1994, p.68).

What seems to us is that to think about time is first of all to think from a supposed ethics of intelligence in Bachelard, given that the question of nothingness, which serves as a prelude to the question of time (what is duration?) also evokes the very propaedeutic to which *The Dialectic of Duration* alludes right from the start, namely: a propaedeutic of rest, to the extent that to think about the question of time (and of the instant in relation to nothingness) is, essentially, to ask ourselves about the intensive and rich action of our acts of intelligence. Such acts may or may not last, but it is certain that they are constituted, sooner or later, and the enduring ethics of our acts in time, always organized on the basis of acts of intelligence, may very well, in the face of various risks, reveal nothingness instead of wanting nothing.

## Conclusion

It seems to us that rest is the Bachelardian concept that establishes what we call an ethics of intelligence. This rest is the result of actions that organize the various moments of our existence, being acts aimed at personal and intimate experiences. They are not directed to the outside, to social issues and, by extension, policies that affect the collectivity, but focus on an ethics of the individual.

It is an adjustment of our own rhythms in the face of the need to act for our own benefit, accepting the risks linked to life, even in the face of limitations, interruptions, discontinuities and absences, without losing rational control over our structured choices. These choices are capable of integrating the different experiences that form our complex network of duration, regulating our spiritual rhythms, whose analysis carried out by Pinheiros dos Santos serves as inspiration for Bachelard himself in the last chapter of *The Dialectic of Duration*. Therefore, he ends the work by validating his clinical practice.

In any case, we do not speak here, conclusively, of a political *ethos* as we see in Foucault. In Bachelard, who dealt little or almost nothing with political issues, the concept of nothingness makes it possible to reflect on an ethics of intelligence, since at every moment we are challenged to act in time. And, faced with the need for action, in one's own cause, most of the time, in this act of will to which our vital energies respond to this dialectic of time, the thinker seems to maintain that a program of rationalization of our temporalities is necessary. That is, a rhythmic organization of our spirit through the ordering of our various temporal causes, aiming to achieve a philosophy of rest from nothing, that is, from nothing, from wanting nothing, which has nothing to do with laziness or stillness, but with the incessant search for a new beginning in the face of the instant. Thus, resting, according to Bachelard, means precisely, as we read in the introduction to *The Dialectic of Duration*, that:

A philosopher cannot quietly seek stillness. It needs metaphysical proofs to

admit rest as a right of thought; it needs multiple experiences and long discussions to admit rest as one of the elements of becoming. [...]. It is in the impersonal part of our person that a philosopher must discover zones of rest, reasons of rest, with which he will make a philosophical system of rest (Bachelard, 1994, p. 6).

Furthermore, the discussion about nothingness and being, based on the considerations of Bergson and Bachelard, does not seek only to revisit a problematic of the ancient reflections of the Eleatics before Socrates, nor to verify whether it is just a pseudo-philosophical problem or to validate a positive judgment as *being-more*, according to Bergson's perspective, or even the dilemma between life (*lived x thought*) and the rest provided by the voluntarist ordering of our intelligence, according to Bachelard. But, as all nothing is rather an absence of instants, or, at the ethical level, a lack of action in time, a mismatch of our conduct or lack of rhythmic regulation of our most particular temporalities, this same nothingness as an idea (as a concept) will always be a quantifier of our conduct.

A stimulating habit of starting over at every moment that, by weakening the being and exposing it to the risk of living, will never admit that any "metaphysics of the full" breaks the "supremacy of form" (Bachelard, 1994, p. 74). Rather, it will require it, in the form of an act of intelligence, to take up an expropriated Bergsonian terminology in *Philosophical Intuition*:

Re(senhas)

*contact, sympathy* (out of nowhere with life); which consequently translates into an ethical posture of intelligence.

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*Submitted in month July 2025*

*Approved in August 2025*

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