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Androgyny and a Dream: Gaston Bachelard’s Question about a New Anthropology

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Abstract

Androgyny as the idea of unity and wholeness appears in the thought of Gaston Bachelard in the context of a poetic dream. It is in this dream, as we learn from “Poetics of Dreams,” that the reconciliation of *anima* and *animus*, female and male in one psyche, takes place. Bachelard calls the *anima* dream the philosophy of androgynous existence, which shows us a double idealization of humanity. The *anima* and *animus*, confirming the androgyny of the psyche, are Self-moments. This dual nature of mental being is expressed through two antagonisms represented by the function of reality (adaptation to reality and social life) and the function of irreality (the loneliness of dreams); supervised thought (criticism, censorship) and free dreaming (liking, acceptance, attachment); work (effort) and rest (relaxation); anxiety (project, anticipation) and peace (presence in oneself), especially around the duality that crystallizes in the distinction between the scientific mind (*l’esprit scientifique*) under the sign of the *animus* (concepts, knowledge) and the poetic mind (*l’esprit poétique*) *anima* (images, communion of souls). Androgyny, understood as the integral life of the psyche, is for Bachelard both a perspective and valuable, and he identifies attempts to seek it with the question of the meaning of human existence. The study of the dream shows its fundamental importance for the

balance of the psyche. The power of images understood in this way then creates the art of living. In this sense, Bachelard becomes a precursor of a new perspective in the field of reflection on the issue of the image—it turns out that the image is responsible for the relationship between man and the world.

I am alone, so there are four of us.
Le 'double' est le double de son double.

Gaston Bachelard

The concept of androgyny, the combination of male and female characteristics in one being (Greek *andro*—male, *gyne*—female), in the broader understanding of the idea of unity and whole, appears in Gaston Bachelard's thought in a non-obvious way. He does not recall the mythological story of the bisexual Hermaphrodite—the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, with whom, after an unsuccessful attempt to seduce him, the nymph Salmakis merges into one character in the water; nor the myth of Androgyne from the Platonic *Banquet*, telling of the primeval spherical, two-headed, four-handed and four-legged being, male and female at the same time, so powerful that the gods, out of fear of her, decide to separate her into male and female.

Instead, Bachelard wrote *La Poétique de la Rêverie*, in which he devotes an entire chapter to *anima* and *animus* (Bachelard, 1960, pp. 48–83). He is guided by the understanding of the archetype of androgyny as the primordial cosmic unity that existed as a whole before the division took place (Singer, 1976, p. 20). This whole is a combination of opposites and often explains the cosmological myth that represents the origin of the world from a sexless or gender-specific deity. This duality appears in Bachelard's poetics. In it, he focuses primarily on the poetic dream (*la rêverie*), daytime and conscious, so significantly separated from sleep (*le rêve*), this tavern of phantoms, dragons, lizards, after which there is a need for a break. "The rest of the night does not belong to us. It is not a good of our being. Sleep opens up an inn of phantoms in us. In the morning we have to sweep the shadows; psychoanalysis to ask for backward guests, and even from the depths of the abyss to ask monsters from another era, dragons and lizards, all these unassimilated—non-digestible—animals of male and female Fusion" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 54). The dream study turns out to be extremely

feminist, pointing to the positive aspects of the female element. The dream is made of *anima*: It gives peace and relaxation, eludes criticism and competition; but it is in it that the dreaming self meets its *animus*. Male and female are united in the form of one I; what's more, during a dream, this dream self discovers its *anima* and its *animus*. This is an interesting idea that multiplies the existence of our self in search of fullness. From the *Poetics of Dreams*, we also learn about the multiplicity of the human condition: The human of the day (*l'homme diurne*) and the human of the night (*l'homme nocturne*), the thinker *cogito* and the dreamer *cogito*, the human of poem and the human of theorem. This multiplicity may be a contribution to the attempt to present a new anthropology: androgynous, holistic, total, which in my opinion echoes Bachelard's analyses.

The Androgynous Psyche

The terms *anima*, *animus* immediately bring to mind Carl Gustav Jung's depth psychology. They are one of the many archetypes—Great Mother, Sage, Shadow—with which we have the ability to adapt to the world. The Self (*le Soi*) functions as a true matrix of archetypes. *Anima* and *animus* as bisexual archetypes reveal ideas of complementary opposition. *Anima* is the female archetype; *animus* is the male. They are their opposites and are rooted in the unconscious of each person, i.e., each man carries an imprinted image of femininity; each woman has an image of masculinity. The *anima* understood as the *psyche* is the opposite of the *animus* understood as the *logos*. Nevertheless, their combination brings unity. In his *Psychology of Transference* and in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung writes about the Self not understood as the center, but the whole, encompassing the consciousness and the unconscious, as an alchemical *complexio oppositorum*, the unity of opposites. He uses this alchemical term alternately with *unio mystica*, *coincidentia oppositorum*, *coniunctio*. “*Coniunctio* is an image given a priori, which has always occupied a prominent place in the history of the development of the human spirit. If we look at the ancient history of this idea, we find two sources in alchemy: Christian and pagan. The Christian source is undoubtedly the teaching about Christ and the Church, the Bridegroom (*sponus*) and the Bride (*sponsa*), with Christ having the role of the Sun (*Sol*) and the Church the role of the Moon

(*Luna*). The pagan source is, on the one hand, the idea of sacred nuptials (Greek: *hierós gámos*, *hierogamyi*), and on the other, the wedding union of mysta and deity” (Jung, 1997, p. 14). For Jung, this is the true fulfillment of the Self in the process of individuation. The process of becoming oneself takes place through recognition and getting to know the Other precisely in the context of *anima* and *animus*. It is the realization of the masculine and feminine in each person, it is a mental whole that goes beyond the biological and sexual level. He understands the term *androgynia* no differently. In depth psychology, it is the unity of femininity and masculinity, the spiritual fullness of both sexes. The unity of man and woman is considered a symbol of the spirit (divinity, transcendence). The cultural and social aspect of androgyny expresses the love of a man and a woman, marriage, and gender partnerships. The state of androgyny is the goal of marriage and spiritual development (for a woman, the unconscious includes the male element, and for a man, the female element). The ritualistic aspect of androgyny, often found in dreams, is expressed by the wedding ceremony. A natural symbol of androgyny in dreams, religion, or art is the circular serpent (ouroboros). The unity of femininity and masculinity can be expressed in dreams by the harmonious complements of bipolar symbols (yin and yang, sun and moon, earth and sky, night and day, etc.), (Jung, 1967, pp. 198–223).

Bachelard thinks a lot like Jung. He invites us to think of male-female duality as a gender duality present in every human being: “Man and woman speak in the solitude of our being” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 60). Each human soul contains a significant difference in relation to the action of two mental forces. Bachelard calls them *anima*, *animus* to escape from physiological, sexual, or social reductionism. He believes that this duality appears at the level of mental life as a constitutive category for our loneliness and our intimate existence. He repeats, after Jung, that the human *psyche* at its beginnings is androgynous. It also emphasizes that the unconscious is not a repressed consciousness but a primal nature that “holds up the powers of androgyny within us” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 70).

Bachelard uses the terms *anima*, *animus* to make us aware of the dual nature of mental being. They are expressed through two antagonisms presented by the function of reality (adaptation to reality and social life) and the function of irreality (the loneliness of dreams); supervised thought (criticism, censorship) and free dreaming (sympathy, acceptance, joining); work (effort) and rest (relaxation); anxiety (project, anticipation) and peace

(presence in oneself)—especially around the duality that crystallizes in the distinction between the scientific mind (*l'esprit scientifique*) under the sign of the animus (concept, knowledge) and the poetic mind (*l'esprit poétique*) the sign of anima (images, communion of souls). In the words of Bachelard, from the introduction to *La Psychanalyse du Feu*: “Initially, the axes of poetry and science are opposite. Philosophy can only wish to render poetry and science complementary, to bring them together as well-founded opposites. We must therefore oppose the exuberant poetic mind with the stern scientific mind—antipathy towards the former is healthy caution” (Bachelard, 1938, p. 12). From *La Poétique de la Rêverie*: “Two dictionaries should be organized, one for the study of science, the other for poetry” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 13) and “two opposing fields of mental activity, which are reason and imagination” (Bachelard, 1960, pp. 46–47). He therefore calls for the separation of reason and imagination, concept and image. There must be clearly defined boundaries, both objective and methodological, between science and poetry (or art in general). Everything that in the field of scientific cognition is an element related to the imagination, toward which humankind—as a scientific subject—must be extremely careful, appears in a completely different light when we enter the domain of poetic creativity. Imagination does not succumb to the disciplinary power of reason here.

There is thus a significant problem regarding the unity of the human mind. Gilbert Durand, a student of Bachelard and a critic of his thoughts, believes that Bachelard's philosophy deals with the problem of the “psyche divide into ‘noumenotechnics’ of science and the happy awareness of phenomenological poetic inadvertences” (Durand, 1980, p. 7). The subject can therefore transform the world in two ways. He has at his disposal the objectification of science, which is oriented toward the practical and technical mastery of nature, or the subjectification of poetry, which brings the world closer to the ideal or leads humans to (fleeting) happiness and freedom “from-the-world,” offering a moment of rest on the basis of a poetic moment and respite.

The following question arises here as to whether the duality of the human being should be limited to its two activities of the mind, science and art. Female-male dialectics, *anima-animus* belong to the antagonism of the rest of the dream and the effort of cognition. Bachelard thus contrasts the rest and tranquility of the loneliness of the dream in *anima* with the efforts

and projects of thought in the *animus*. Importantly, according to Bachelard, there is no hierarchy between these two fields of the psyche; they are opposite and complementary. He himself emphasizes the value of dreams and the importance of active, creative imagination for the psyche, which for the rationalist tradition are the domain of fantasy and illusion. Bachelard likes the idea that relaxing in *anima* is not the end of *animus* thinking. A dream is a dimension of the original activity of the psyche. The distinction between *anima* and *animus* is not based on sexual, biological, psychological, or social division; it has nothing to do with gender division or with the categorization of men and women in everyday life. For him, these divisions are brutal and reduce the essence of humanity.

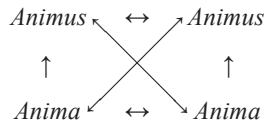
On the other hand, Bachelard writes that all deep dreams are essential femininity, that “the poetics of dreams is the poetics of *anima*” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 53). This is corroborated by the key phrase from *La Poétique de la Rêverie*: “And here is the central thesis that I want to defend in this essay: Dream is under the sign of *anima*. When a dream is truly deep, the entity that dreams in us is *anima*” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 53). The dream reveals itself as a certain state that does not have to build projects; it is finally completely disconnected from the *animus*. “A dream frees every dreamer, man and woman, from the world of demands” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 73). The human being finds a place in his dream which is a respite, and it is from *anima*. We have no doubt that Bachelard clearly uses the mind’s division into the work of the *animus* and the rest of the *anima*. This is clearly seen in the different ways of reading poetry. You can read *animus*, be mindful, critical, and ready for a retort; one can read in *anima* while dreaming, and then “the pictures will appear to us as transcendental gifts” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 56). Poetic images make us dream. “Here we read and suddenly we dream” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 77). How else can you read poetry without dreaming?

The Androgyny of the Dream

Bachelard clarifies the analyses of the duality of human existence using the two categories of real and ideal being. The first being is everyday, real, factual life; the second is poetic life. By this he means “a life in speech, a life that makes sense by speaking” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 49). It is especially

poetic language, poetry that goes beyond censorship and supervision, which allows us to recognize ourselves as a double being. We then meet male and female duality within one soul. "The further we go down into the depth of the speaking being, the easier the otherness of all speaking being will reveal itself as male and female difference" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 50). The duality of being is thus revealed most fully in speech: Obviously not colloquial, not ordinary, but poetic. In order to join this essential duality, one must abandon the prose of life and place oneself in the axis of dreams.

How, then, are we to describe a human being as a dual existence apart from sexual, gender, and social oppositions? Bachelard finds a hint in the dynamism and transformation of a dream: "By taking a dreamer to another world, a dream makes a dreamer someone other than he is. Meanwhile, the other one is himself, a double of himself" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 68). The question here is, in what sense can we discover what is different in relation to our self? Does not moving a dreamer into another world make them someone else than themselves? Bachelard believes that in the dream there is a transformation of the dreamer's being, which is their division, as a result of which they find their second Self. However, this has nothing to do with the pathological, abnormal doubling, which we have to deal with, for example, in schizophrenia. The oneirism of the day is full of awareness and clarity, different from the oneirism of the night, in which It is dreaming, not Me. This is nevertheless a highly paradoxical situation, because "in order to analyze all the psychological possibilities that the dream loner has to face, one will have to start with the motto: I am alone, so there are four of us. A lonely dreamer comes face to face with quadripolar situations" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 95). We are dealing here with a duplication of being, caused by the activity of a dream. Since my I possesses both the *anima* and the *animus*, my dreaming self also has them. "In this way, a being designed by a dream—because our dreaming self is a projected being—is doubled as we are; he is, like ourselves, anima animus. Here is the knot in all our paradoxes: "The 'other' is the doubling of a double being. I am alone, so there are four of us" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 95).



Source: G. Bachelard, *La Poétique de la Rêverie*, p. 64.

In support of his theses, Bachelard includes the above diagram in the book. A dream turns out to be a life doubled. What does it mean? This means that being designed in a dream is also doubled in *anima* and *animus*. Bachelard understands the everyday human and the dreamer as beings who realize this androgyny. The first case appears when considering the psychology of being in love. In the communion of two beings in love, the dialectic of *anima* and *animus* is manifested in the form of one psychological projection, or even more precisely in the form of two crossed projections. When a person projects his own animus properties on a woman, the woman projects her animus values on the man. This process enables mutual recognition. It happens in the field of imagination, not in social life and its tragedies (imagined life and idealization processes). A dual existence doubles in a dream, in the frame of ideal interpersonal relations. The second is about the construction of the dream itself. The quadruple dream is therefore the secret of androgyny and integral being. Androgyny exists in the coexistence of opposites, hence, Bachelard's reference to Jung and the reference to the scheme of psychological design through the relations of the four polarities between the two psychisms.

The Anthropology of Anima

“It is essentially about going out of oneself, going beyond a specific, historically deeply entangled individual situation, and regaining the original, superhuman and suprahistorical situation, which preceded the creation of human society; for the recovery of a paradoxical situation that cannot be maintained in a secular existence, in historical time, which, however, needs to be re-integrated from time to time in order to recreate, if only for a moment, the initial fullness, unborn source of holiness and power” (Eliade, 1999, p. 136). This is what Mircea Eliade writes about androgyny in *Mephistopheles and Androgyne*. Androgyn reveals himself

as an ancient symbol of humankind's longing for unity and harmony with the cosmos. This longing is felt in Bachelard as well. Everything he writes about the dream is really meant to show us a possible state of reconciliation between humanity and the world. In this sense, he seems to be practicing a kind of anthropology.

In the order of *anima*, not *animus*, Bachelard seeks the source of value. Shaping dynamic dreams and then fully devoting oneself to them turns out to be beneficial for the subject (*bienfaisant*). Poetic dreams have a beneficial and soothing effect on a person. Their symbolic power is therapeutic, as well as fundamental, to the balance of the psyche. The power of images understood in this way creates the art of living. In this sense, Bachelard becomes a precursor of a new approach in the field of reflection on the problem of the image—it turns out that it is the image that is responsible for the relationship between the human and the world.

Anxiety and fear, and other existential-emotional states can be balanced and soothed through the interaction of images. As Bachelard points out, this allows us to transcend the fragile and tragic nature of our human condition. The dreamlike creations of the imagination confirm the power of human imagination. Despite the appearance of negative images, the imagination prefers “happy dreams” that follow the directions set by the dynamic images of verticality and desires that Bachelard talks about at length in *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* (Bachelard, 1948, p. 344). The human psyche, equipped with emotionally marked pictorial representations, determines its attitude toward the world. It is thanks to them that a person can poetically enrich his or her emotional, emotional, and imaginative states. Personal, subjective, and intimate image creation turns out to be the key to human existential well-being. This means that the image has a very important function to fulfill. Acting in a person's emotional sphere, it can lift their spirits, indicate the meaningfulness of their existence, or detach them from negative reality. Being immersed in its dream, the I cuts myself off from knowing the hostile and unfavorable world, non-being and non-me. So the person situates themselves in the space of happiness, in the “center of the world” (M. Eliade), where only they and what is closest to them exist. “Through irreality, we enter the world of trust, the world of trust, our own world of dreams” (Bachelard, 1938, p. 12). In this way, dreams of intimacy support human existence; and the imaginative activity is characterized by

usefulness. The dream world is primarily therapeutic. The respite flowing from it becomes an inseparable element of the mental health of an individual.

La Poétique de la Réverie and *La Poétique de l'Espace* ask about human existence. In the pages of the poet, Bachelard defines the soul/*anima*, opposing and escaping reason/*logos*, as one that shows and explains meaning to humans. The soul, not defined in a religious way, but close to the psychological approach to the psyche, discovers the field of our current and future possibilities. Transcending one's Self is synonymous with sublimation, when a person discovers the strength to go beyond it, when it finds the possibility of rising above its real existence. Then, human existence would not be a complete existence. In the opening pages of *La Poétique de l'Espace*, Bachelard emphasizes the difference between the mind and the soul in the context of French philosophical vocabulary: "The philosophy of the contemporary French language—having strengthened psychology—is presented in the duality of soul and spirit. They are somewhat muffled from a subject perspective, vast in German philosophy where the difference between spirit and soul (*der Geist* and *die Seele*) is so obvious. However, the philosophy of poetry (...) does not facilitate or hinder anything. For philosophy, spirit and soul are not synonyms. By treating them synonymously, you close to a precise translation and distort the documents provided by the archeology of images" (Bachelard, 1957, p. 4).

Referring to Charles Nodier's *Dictionnaire Raisonné des Onomatopées Françaises*, Bachelard connects the soul with the word *souffle*. It draws attention to the relationship between the soul and breathing. The soul as such has a lot to do with the breath, and therefore with the rhythmic action that brings to mind rhythm analysis, as well as the philosophical and religious Indian *Upanishads*. In Bachelard's works it takes the form of a kind of human relaxation: "In a poetic dream, the awakened soul, without tension, rests and activates" (Bachelard, 1957, p. 5). The analysis and practice of rhythm shows that every being, not only human, has its own rhythm. The whole universe, the cosmos, is the rhythm of the general vibration of life. As Bachelard writes, "Life must have deeply rhythmic properties" (Bachelard, 1950, p. 138). Thus, the analysis of rhythms leads, in Bachelard's terms, to discovering what is for him the essence of life itself. Undoubtedly, the understanding of the human soul and the universe as a breath comes to mind. In the realm of poetry, the soul plays the role of an inspiration that triggers the creation of a work, a new linguistic form of intentional being.

Anima turns out to be imbued with imagination as the power involved in each poem. “Anima is the principle of unity in the idealization of man, the principle of the dream of being, a being that wants peace and, consequently, continuity” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 74). A dream, which is a process of idealization, has the role of enriching life, making a person able to live integrally. In a solitary dream, we get to know what is male and what is female. Idealization is understood here as an undeniable psychological reality within which the dreamer meets the ideal man, the dreamer meets the ideal woman. In the dream, therefore, there is a reconciliation of *anima* and *animus*, female and male. One can risk the thesis that Bachelard’s process of self-individuation would take place in a dream, through imagination, and would be under the sign of *anima*. This is where the androgynous perspective is realized. Bachelard calls the research on *anima* the philosophy of androgynous being, in which the double idealization of humanity is analyzed. *Anima* and *animus*, two instances dwelling in the depths of the human soul, confirm the androgyny of the psyche. In this sense, it is better to talk about the separation of being into moments of *anima animus*, and not into being *anima animus*. Androgyny is not behind us, in the distant past of the primal being. It is perspective. Idealized masculinity and femininity become Bachelard’s values. For this reason, he understands the search for androgyny as the meaning of human existence.

If the meaning of androgyny reveals itself as the meaning of the whole, and the whole is the point at which humankind is heading, then Bachelardian anthropology is androgynous. In the last of his works, *Fragments d’une Poétique du Feu* (Bachelard, 1988) published posthumously, Bachelard writes again about androgyny. He writes about the Phoenix, a hermaphrodite bird to whom myths and legends about the whole are devoted. Therefore, the famous critics of his thoughts, J. Poirier and J. Libis, speak not of two—scientific and poetic—but three Bachelards (Buse, 2004, p. 27). The third is a metaphysician of the rest of *anima* and androgyny as a whole.

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