1. Common sense attributes the label of "matter" to everything that has substance or consistency, and which can be perceived by our senses, particularly by touch and sight. The concept of matter is then combined with the concept of the body, and its meaning is constructed in the context of an opposition between matter and spirit. This opposition lies at the origin of the many dualisms which constitute the horizon in which we organize our language (body/soul; passive/active; sensitive/intelligible; negative/positive; materialism/idealism...).

In its theoretical rigor, philosophy assumed this conception and gave the name of "matter" to contingency—a contingency which constitutes a gray area, condition, and limit of knowledge. Matter has always posed a problem for philosophy: it is connected with the senses and shares its boundaries with them; it is opposed to form and it is a space of passivity and becoming; it is a cause of the instability of knowledge, constituting a threat to the irrefutability of the episteme. Matter, as a stumbling block for philosophy, renders mathematics inoperative in its relation to the world of nature, hence leaving unresolved the numerous problems of physics, which are necessarily linked to nature.

Matter consequently comes to be regarded as an obstacle to the construction of knowledge. But in the modern era this problem (which had previously been highlighted by Galileo) finds some resolution through Descartes’s re-definition of matter as *res extensa*—a conception which overcomes the effects of matter's resistance to cognition and radically reorganizes scientific knowledge. Such knowledge now comes to be structured in relation to a new notion of matter considered as a mathematical-geometric object.

Thus brought back to the objectivity of geometric extension via Descartes’ rationalist mechanism, or to the abstract ideal of subjective perception via Berkeley’s “esse est percipi”, matter again comes to be regarded as a perceptible given in the era of positivism. Yet not long thereafter, in the contemporary era of the new scientific spirit, matter is to become an
element that drastically departs from—and indeed subverts—the previous interpretive paradigms by virtue of the fact that it can no longer be traced back to substance nor to extension, but instead loses all substantial and geometric determination, revealing itself as a complex energetic dynamism that requires a restructuring of rationality.

In several of his works (beginning with *Atomistic Intuitions*, followed by *The Philosophy of No*), Gaston Bachelard critically reviews this history of matter by highlighting transformations and discontinuities, while analyzing its different scientific and philosophical representations over time. How is Bachelard’s original historical epistemology built? What are its key categories and paradigmatic shifts? How is matter a factor in the evolution of epistemological investigation and at the same time an obstacle to its realization? Bachelard’s historical epistemology not only describes matter as a pre-scientific obstacle, but also clarifies its role in mathematical rationality with particular attention to geometry, and highlights its function in chemistry and physics. What elements of comparison emerge through this process? What type of dialectic is carried out between the different methodologies and approaches to matter that he outlines (idealism, realism, empiricism, etc.)? What is the heritage of Bachelardian thought regarding this question? What is its reception? What remains of his critical/historical epistemology in today’s contemporary debates?

2. In Gaston Bachelard's texts, matter is granted a central and often provocative place, which tends to go beyond the presuppositions of defined cultural paradigms. Bachelard’s earliest works are particularly focused on chemistry and physics, and his investigation presents itself as an ongoing struggle with our views of matter. On the other hand, from the perspective of aesthetic production, he will attempt to evoke the oneiric and poetic imagination through the natural elements of reverie.

Can we speak of matter as such, in the singular? Can we claim that there is only one unifying category of matter, perceptible via common sense, which we can deal with both scientifically and poetically? Or are there two different categories altogether: one scientific and the other dream-poetic? How can we analyze Bachelard’s different conceptions of matter concerning common sense, philosophy, science (ancient and modern), poetry, and the arts?

Again we ask: Is there a single type of matter, or are there several types of matter? If several, then is it possible to list and catalog them? Should we not think that every material element offers itself in multiple ways both to the imagination and to scientific rationality? Should we not therefore deepen our investigations into the different “regional” materialisms and different material elements?

3. Re-evoking the etymology of matter (Lat. *mater*), Gaston Bachelard abandons the concept of its passivity and suggests the presence of a "generative" dimension closer to the Platonic *chora* than to the Aristotelian *hyle*. For Bachelard (ever-more explicitly in his later writings) matter is not an obstacle but a source of "nourishment"—poetic nourishment in the dreamy dimension of an uncertain relationship with the subject, and rational nourishment by the
separation of the epistemic subject which generates complexity in its inter-materialist action and its ongoing dialectical rectifications. Through these fecund explorations of matter, Bachelard brings novelty by opening up unprecedented paths for both epistemological reflection and poetic reflection, thus becoming a significant interlocutor for his contemporaries.

What type of "materiology" (i.e. "study of matter") is being proposed here? In what sense may it be referred to as "materialism"? How are we to differentiate Bachelard’s varying terminology on this topic (matter, elements, substance, object, thing, etc.)? Matter is also associated with forms, movements, colors. What is the relationship that connects them? Is there a hierarchy between them? Furthermore, how do we articulate the relationship between matter and space, between matter and time, both from an epistemological and an aesthetic perspective? How are we to highlight the novelty of such a "materiology" in the context of European culture, which lost the certainties of the nineteenth-century conception of knowledge, yet is still largely dominated by the models of positivism and neo-idealism? How can we speak of matter in scientific terms without the certainties offered by the Cartesian res extensa? How do the material elements create a poetics and go beyond the status of simple narrative content? How does Bachelard’s debate with his contemporaries contribute to modifications of the French and European cultural climate in the fields of epistemology and imagination?

4. Bachelard develops complex and original paths. Besides developing new definitions of matter and materialism, he is interested in relations with the subject, modalities of experience, and structures of reason which produce matter as a poetic or epistemic issue. How can science be both objective and material? How is this possible after the epistemological rupture, defined by Einstein's theory of relativity and microphysics? Where can matter be found, and where is it produced? What are matter’s consequences on the subject--or in what sense can we speak of a materialistic consciousness at work, constituting a deeper dimension of the human? On the other hand, from a poetic point of view, how does poetics feed on material elements while dematerializing them? If matter, the elements, and the world do not immediately offer themselves to the transfigurative functions of the imagination but resist them, then how does this continuous reorganization that undermines imaginative subjectivity take place?

5. Matter is also the source of active oneirism. Is it possible to conduct a psychoanalysis of the material elements, as Bachelard first suggests in *The Formation of the Scientific Mind* and then in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*? What are the representations related to "material" practices (poïesis, praxis)? The material that is shaped is valorized differently than the material which is contemplated. Is the same cogito involved in these two processes: shaping vs. contemplating matter? What is the function of the body in relation to matter? What is the role of "gesture" and "hand" in technique and art? The craftsman, the worker, the artist, as well as the scientist—each "manipulates" matter in different ways. They each energize it according to vectorial lines of force which show that it is a source of "provocation". But is it possible to define in what sense we can speak of matter’s provocation, and how it acts upon
the subject? Does matter’s dynamism constitute a challenge to the Promethean aspect of humanity, as it counters or restricts the human desire to manage and control the world?

6. The insistence on matter (material phenomena, material qualities, material clarity)—whether it be as a parameter for constructing an epistemology of rational materialism, or as the poetic solicitation of the four elements experienced in a nocturnal or dreamlike fashion—requires the deployment of a "phenomenological approach". How does phenomenology work both in the direction of rational materialism and poetic reverie? What are the characteristics of a "phenomenology of imagination"? How does the scientific approach intersect with (or differ from) the phenomenological approach? How does the phenomenological approach and method operate within the epistemology of Bachelard’s subject? Does Bachelardian topology, when faced with rational materialism, manage to overcome oppositional logic, or does it ultimately intensify this opposition?

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