Bachelard, Gaston, 1884-1962

French philosopher

Born in Bar-sur-Aube, he had an unusual range of interests and influence in the history of science, psychoanalysis and literary criticism, which were connected in such works as *La Psychoanalyse du feu* (1937, "Psychoanalysis of Fire") and *La Flamme d'une chandelle* (1961, "The Flame of a Candle").

Summary Article: Bachelard, Gaston

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(gästôN' bāshlär'), 1884–1962, French philosopher. He held degrees in physics, mathematics, and philosophy and taught at Dijon (1930–40) and the Univ. of Paris (1940–54). Bachelard regarded knowing as a result of the interaction between reason and experience. He rejected the notion of the empirical world as entirely random or senseless. At the same time he rejected the Cartesian idea that the larger view of reality is preordained and progressively uncovered through the accumulation of new scientific facts. Bachelard argued that new scientific knowledge may lead to a fundamental reformulation of reality, just as the preexisting formulation of reality that the observer imposed on the natural world may have predisposed him to entertain some hypotheses but not others. Given the dialectic of reason and experience, reformulation of reality involves not the rejection but rather the recasting of previous formulations. Bachelard was not, despite his scientific orientation, a thorough-going rationalist; he considered imagination and reverie as well as reason to be creative forces in knowing. Psychoanalysis and literary criticism figure prominently in his work. Among his books are *La Psychanalyse du feu* (1932; tr. *Psychoanalysis of Fire*, 1964) and *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie* (tr. 1971).


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