

THE ONTOLOGY OF DISCONTINUITY

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to rethink the fundamental structure of existence through the lens of discontinuity. While discontinuity is often perceived as a lack or flaw, this study considers it an ontological necessity and a primordial condition of being. Existence is not shaped by continuity, but by ruptures, gaps, and disjunctions. Concepts such as infinity and nothingness cannot be understood without the framing power of discontinuity. Drawing inspiration from thinkers such as Deleuze, Bergson, and Heidegger, the text argues that discontinuity operates not only in physical reality but also in the realms of consciousness, language, knowledge, and meaning. In conclusion, discontinuity is not an external state of being, but a dynamic principle that underlies its structural continuity.

KEYWORDS: Ontology; Discontinuity; Infinity; Nothingness; Being; Deleuze; Bergson; Heidegger; Time; Becoming

1. INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF DISCONTINUITY

Much of the history of philosophical thought has tended to comprehend existence in terms of continuity, wholeness, and permanence. Being is often conceived as a seamless structure; time, as a linear flow. However, this traditional conception encounters an inner contradiction when confronted with notions such as infinity and nothingness: A model of existence built on continuity cannot comprehend infinity, because a structure in which everything is continuously integrated becomes a finite totality. Yet infinity is the name of that which is unfinished, ever-opening, and continuously reborn. In this regard, discontinuity is not an exception, but a necessary principle embedded in the very fabric of existence.

The central claim of this paper is the following: Discontinuity is not a lack or a flaw in being, but rather its fundamental structural condition. The discontinuous nature of becoming operates through ruptures, breaks, leaps, and voids. Existence is neither a geometrically closed totality nor a homogeneous and

linear temporal flow. Rather, every state of being is a finite domain that begins with birth, unfolds, and ultimately closes with disappearance. Yet the sum of these finitudes does not constitute infinity; on the contrary, although each may appear complete in itself, it is through discontinuity that the openness of existence is maintained.

Being is never completed, for once it is completed, it ceases to be infinite. Thus, discontinuity not only makes existence possible, but also opens it to the infinite. Every birth is enabled by the death of a previous form; every act of becoming is made possible by a preceding void. Nothingness and being are not absolute opposites but are mutually implied and constitutive conditions. This approach proposes to think of discontinuity not as a metaphysical problem but as an ontological necessity.

2. THE ONTOLOGICAL DOMAIN OF DISCONTINUITY

Discontinuity is not merely an abstract mental construct, but a reality that manifests across all levels of existence. Ontologically, it appears not only in temporal interruptions, but also in spatial, structural, and processual ruptures. From the large-scale architecture of the cosmos to microscopic quantum phenomena, discontinuity operates as a fundamental principle. Every domain of being unfolds within a certain boundary, which defines its birth, development, and eventual dissolution. However, between these domains, there exists no absolute transition or continuity—only separation, disjunction, and independence.

Being evolves through discontinuity. This evolution is not a smooth process of linear transformation, but one characterized by abrupt jumps, radical shifts, and unexpected ruptures. As Gilles Deleuze (1994) articulates through his concepts of “difference in itself” and “repetition without identity,” every act of becoming is unique and cannot be fully derived from the one before it. Likewise, in Bergson’s philosophy, time—conceived as “la durée” (duration)—is not homogeneous, but composed of internal breaks and varying intensities (Bergson, 2001). Thus, ontological discontinuity is not limited to appearances but forms the inner structure of being.

These ruptures are not confined to the physical level; they also emerge within consciousness and thought. The flow of consciousness is not like a continuous

stream, nor is it fully tethered to any linear chronology. Every thought is not a mere continuation of the previous one but represents its own rupture and emergence. In this sense, consciousness itself is discontinuous: each moment offers a new modulation of being. Likewise, language is inherently discontinuous—meaning always arises within absence, gaps, and exclusions. Every word opens one semantic field while closing off another.

Within this framework, discontinuity is not only an event or anomaly in the physical or mental domains; it is a defining condition of all fields of existence. Each ontological domain comes into being by differentiating itself, by breaking away from others. This act of separation constitutes a structural trait of being itself. In this way, discontinuity becomes not just something to be explained, but the very condition under which explanation becomes possible.

3. THE EPISTEMOLOGY AND PHENOMENOLOGY OF DISCONTINUITY

Discontinuity is not only an ontological structure but also a foundational principle in the formation of knowledge and experience. To know is not to affirm continuity, but to make sense of ruptures. Every act of knowing draws a distinction, marks a boundary, defines a gap. In this regard, knowledge is not a continuous accumulation of data, but a discontinuous process in its very mechanism. Each concept emerges by excluding another; every judgment suspends an alternative possibility. Thus, discontinuity is not merely located in the voids of knowledge, but at its generative core.

Phenomenologically, discontinuity manifests as interruptions, transitions, and leaps within experience itself. Although consciousness may create the illusion of flow, experience is formed through perceptual shifts, breaks in attention, and sudden intensifications. No experience is absolutely linked to the previous; each presents itself as a singular moment, a distinct now. Discontinuity is, therefore, not only a conceptual or theoretical abstraction but a directly lived condition. As Heidegger (1962) distinguishes between *Being* and *beings*, the phenomenon itself always carries within it a zone of invisibility, an undecidability, a structural openness. Discontinuity is not the source of this ambiguity but its very form.

In language, too, discontinuity is not an exception but a rule. Meaning is produced through interruption and segmentation. Each word cuts across semantic space; each sentence alters or redirects the one before. Meaning,

therefore, is not fixed—it is born out of displacement, deferral, and transformation. As Derrida's concept of “différance” suggests, meaning is always deferred, always in motion, never complete (Derrida, 1982). Language is discontinuous because thought is; and thought is discontinuous because being is.

From this perspective, discontinuity appears not only in being but also in knowing, feeling, and interpreting. The stream of consciousness is segmented, the structure of language is broken, and the production of meaning is unstable. Rather than signalling disorder or error, these fragmentations reveal the inner dynamic of becoming. Discontinuity is not an interruption of a pre-existing wholeness—it is the mode through which existence itself unfolds.

4. CONCLUSION: THINKING DISCONTINUITY AS AN ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

This ontological primacy of discontinuity can be further elucidated in relation to the process of individuation, as articulated by Gilbert Simondon (2020). For Simondon, individuation does not proceed from a fully-formed whole but arises from metastable fields marked by tensions and incompatibilities. In this light, discontinuity is not merely a break in a prior continuity, but the very ontological condition that makes individuation — and thus existence — possible.

This study has sought to position discontinuity not as a peripheral anomaly or a deficiency within being, but as a fundamental ontological principle. Existence does not arise from a pre-existing, seamless whole, but rather from ontological ruptures, discontinuities, and fragmentary emergences that render any notion of original wholeness itself a retrospective illusion. Every act of birth begins with a break; every continuity is shaped within and through a void. In this sense, discontinuity is not a deviation from the nature of being—it is the very dynamic that enables the unfolding of existence. Continuity emerges as a temporary configuration within the broader structure of discontinuity. Universal laws, flows of energy, and systems of information may construct self-consistent and highly stable orders within particular finite domains. However, none of these systems are absolute. All are subject to decay, transformation, or dissolution over time. These impermanent structures demonstrate the creative power of discontinuity to produce finite forms while simultaneously rendering them contingent and open to change. Discontinuity is not limited to the cosmic or

physical realms; it is equally active in consciousness, language, meaning, and thought. The mind does not process information in a continuous stream; it operates through shifts, gaps, and leaps. Language does not produce meaning through smooth flow, but through contrast, absence, and displacement. Meaning is not fixed but dynamically constructed across spaces of difference. In all these cases, discontinuity is not a breakdown—it is the structuring force that makes meaning, identity, and transformation possible. Infinity itself is not the product of totality, but the never-completed, the forever-in-process. What makes infinity intelligible is not seamless continuity, but the interruptions that allow novelty and regeneration. Discontinuity is not the negation of existence, but its very condition. Without it, nothing could emerge, evolve, or renew. Being would collapse into closure; time would resolve into stasis; meaning would evaporate in uniformity. Therefore, discontinuity must be rethought not as a flaw to be corrected or overcome, but as a vital force at the heart of being—a principle that gives rise to life, death, difference, and the very possibility of becoming.

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