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Inner Freedom and Outer Conditions of Liberty in Jeanne Hersch (1910–2000)

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In *Mensch sein: Freiheit oder Willkür*, Hersch writes explicitly that we have to distinguish between *inner freedom* (Hersch 1982: 2) and *outer conditions of liberty* (Hersch 1982: 1).

From the inner point of view, freedom is a gift (Hersch 1975: 126) of “the very ability to engage” (Hersch 1975: 126), which the subject must *actualize* in her existence. In *L'illusion philosophique* (Hersch 1936), she states that the subject cannot know the matter in itself, but she can *decide* upon the meaningful value of her object, thanks to her freedom. In Hersch's *L'être et la forme* (Hersch 1946), the subject tries to *incarnate* the *ciphers* of transcendent value that she freely reads in her objects.

From the outer point of view, freedom is an unnatural capability that must be preserved. Human beings are not only freedom but also a body, so they have biological needs in a deterministic world in which the law of the strongest reigns. Politics and human rights should strengthen *justice* that educates natural *force* through *morals*, promoting outer conditions of liberty as a void space to be subjectively filled with everyone's inner freedom (Hersch 1956). When reasoning on human rights, Hersch states that it is essential to understand that every human being has a *fundamental exigence* to be *incarnated* thanks to freedom (Hersch 2008): on an intersubjective level, we have to enhance always-better liberties that make it easier to incarnate one's fundamental exigence; on a subjective level, we have to be free and to incarnate our fundamental exigence *while* respecting the other's fundamental exigence.

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