



Existence in Jeanne Hersch (1910-2000)

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Existence emerges for the first time in Hersch's reflection in *L'illusion philosophique*, when the philosophical problem "Will I be or will I not be?" arises and the alternative is posed, depending on whatever we decide (Hersch 1936: 25-26). Such a problem is a crack in everyday banal life and in the perfect system of cause and effect, guiding the natural flow. Through the *image of the waterfall*, Hersch shows that every material object can appear to be impenetrable in its thickness: "an abyss has been opened between life, which is near and understandable, and the inaccessible matter" (Hersch 1936: 36). Things do not go by themselves anymore and the alternative is between *not being*, turning the other way and becoming an object in our own turn, or *being*, fixing the distance that separates the subject from her object. The real philosophical problem thus becomes whether I will be or I will not be *subject*. In front of the crack in everyday life, not-being corresponds to an objective *biology* that ignores it and lives in a fullness where no decision is possible, while being corresponds to a subjective *existence* where freedom can be actualised.

The subject can exist only de-ciding his object (Chello 2007) and taking a position, looking for a way to reach her worthy object, thanks to his freedom. To exist, the subject must be faithful, because she has to confirm her choice and to actualise it continuously. In conclusion, existing means deciding a *metaphysical truth* (Hersch 1936: 44), namely a worthy object that is actualized freely in always-different modes (Hersch 1946). In this sense, existence is monotonous, because it tries to reach the "core, unique, simple, voluntary and free" (Hersch 1936: 52) of metaphysical truth day-to-day.

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