



Existential Freedom in Jeanne Hersch (1910–2000)

Piergiacomo Severini

Università G. d'Annunzio di Chieti-Pescara

In Hersch's theoretical reflection on *inner freedom*, developed mainly in the 1930s and 1940s, *existential freedom* is the capacity for an act that recognizes the value of something "that is not, but that deserves to be" (Hersch 2006: 78). This freedom is called *existential* "because it is only in the very existence of the subject" (Hersch 1956: 165) and it constitutes the foundation of the human nature, being "the presence of a subject that intervenes in what she is-not to transform it, to give it meaning and value" (Hersch 1956: 164).

In *L'illusion philosophique*, the human being does not resemble other beings of nature that are only pushed from the outside, because she is capable of an act unrelated to cause and effect relationships. When trying to know the world as a unitary horizon, the human being experiences the impossibility of penetrating her object and knowing it in-itself, so she faces the *philosophical problem* "Will I be or will I not be?" (Hersch 1936: 25). In front of the unattainable object, the human being's cognitive abilities are insufficient, so she has to take a subjective decision in order to overcome the cognitive *impasse*.

Thanks to freedom as the ability to conceive the possibility that things can go differently, the human being can, in front of such a crack, turn and dive again into indeterminate causality, or she can *de-cide* (Chello 2007: 75) herself as the subject of the object that stands in front of her. She can *ex-sist* from deterministic natural world in the name of the value she sees in her object, actualising her freedom. The yes to the philosophical problem is the beginning of existence, when the subject accepts the responsibility of a free, personal, not-objective way for reaching her object. Given the impossibility for the human being to reach the Truth, the worthy object decided by the subject becomes the *metaphysical truth* (Hersch 1936: 44) that guides her existence. The subject will try to give different immanent *forms* to her transcendent metaphysical truth all existence long (Hersch 1946).

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