**Abstract: Hans Jonas on Perception (*Wahrnehmung*)**

Gianluca Garelli (Università di Firenze)

According to H.J.’s philosophical biology, perception ranks among the few criteria based on which one can distinguish between animal and vegetal life. The distinction between plant and animal occurs in gradual and progressive forms. The more an animal has evolved, the more it is characterized by that *principle of mediacy*, on which individuality’s distinctive features of isolation from and contrast to the world-environment also depend, with different degrees in terms of autonomy. A real world-relation emerges only with the development of specific senses, defined motor structures, and a central nervous system.

More than an Aristotelian echo resonates in the observations devoted by H.J. to the phenomenological analysis of feeling. A special attention is given to the topic of *Bild-Leistung*. Sight’s peculiar ability to allow the production of images implies three characteristics: (1) *simultaneity* in the presentation of a manifold, (2) *neutralization* of the causality of sense-affection, (3) *distance* in the spatial and mental sense. Sight is the sense of standing back from the world scene, and therefore it gives animal beings the possibility to choose somewhat in advance between alternative behavior options. On the long run it also decisively determines the formation of human mentality and culture, and our idea of truth as well (since the ability of judging about true and false depends itself, according to H.J., on the biological core of experience, and must therefore be connected to perception).

The analysis of the perceptual phenomenon, and the different levels it can be articulated in, requires then an in-depth acknowledgement of the functions that – according to J.’s aesthetic anthropology – belong to *memory* as a particular human faculty. In the form of immediate short-term retention, memory enters into the very constitution of sensibility – but it also opens up *historicity* as a specific human dimension. J. claims that only human beings embrace the cultural task to reconstruct the phenomenon of life and thus also of consciousness in their whole processes, from biology to anthropology, through history and ethics. In these latter two contexts, however, J.’s use of the term «perception» sometimes assumes more complex and partly even ambiguous nuances.