

Book II, Endnote 43. On the Senses Not Sensing Themselves (Line by Line Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima Eugene T. Gendlin, © 2012 PDF Page 272 (a))

Aristotle seems to contradict this later, when he says something that may at first sound as if the senses do sense themselves. He says "we sense that we see and hear." The difference is: When we actually see something, then we also sense the fact that we see. But it is always something else we see, and only thereby also that we see. We cannot see the color of our eyes, except by seeing a mirror. We cannot sense the hot/cold of the flesh with which we are sensing something. We can sense the cold of the snow, or the cold of the air, or some other part of our flesh. A finger can feel the cold of the face. But if we want to sense the cold of the finger, we need to attend from the face, to sense the finger as an object.

Sensing senses the things, not itself, even when it is actively sensing. We see that we see only by seeing some color.

The external thing is needed in two ways: It moves the potential sense into activity and it determines the form (red, cold, or middle C). Without a particular thing, the sense makes no sense-forms. It has potentially all forms and actually none. The activity of sensing is the form-having, e.g., seeing is seeing color. The object-form defines the activity.

Sensing is ready for the whole range of colors, sounds, and touches. Therefore sensing is inherently potential in regard to any actual thing that can determine an active sensing. To understand Aristotle from here on, let us keep with us the fact that for him sensing always requires an external thing. It is not as if we sense "sense-data;" rather, we always sense an externally existing thing. In the next chapter he takes up how we can err about what that thing might be. But he asserts here explicitly that if there is sensing, some external thing is involved. (For Aristotle images, dreams and hallucinations are not sensations but memories

moving back to us from a storage bank. See Mem&Recoll.. We will discuss this in III-3.)

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* Reading Group: Line-by-Line Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima Eugene T. Gendlin, Ph.D. ©2012 https://thinkinginmovement.ca/focusing_principles/gendlin-on-aristotles-de-anima/

* Reading Group: Mike McCullough "Self Organizing of Growing and Perceiving" Gendlin-Aristotle in relation to S. Kauffman and R.D. Ellis <https://thinkinginmovement.ca/mike-mccullough-self-organizing-of-growing-and-perceiving-2022/>

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