

'Sensation' (pub. 11.09.14-12:15). Quote in M. Bergman & S. Paavola (Eds.), *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce's Terms in His Own Words. New Edition*. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-forms-consciousness-r>.

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**Term:** Sensation

**Quote:** If you look at a flame, you observe that it is orange, and that orange color as it was seen on that particular occasion and was attributed to a reality then and there before you, and not called up in memory, was a sensation. So if you hear a cry, whether it is real or a hallucination, if you take it for a reality then and there present, every vowel and consonant of it is a separate sensation. But if it is only called up by your own act of imagination it is not a sensation. A sensation is not a feeling; but an element of feeling is one part of it. Here is a little bottle with some green spicular crystals in it. When I look at it, I experience a sensation of greenness. Were that greenness to fill my whole field of vision, while I became momentarily deaf, lost my skin-sensations, and my memory, it would be a total feeling. For it would be my life for the moment, and would not be attributed to anything in particular without me or within me. As it is, it is an element of my feeling while I am looking at the bottle. But to make up the sensation, along with this feeling there is a consciousness of being irresistibly compelled to see it when I look at it. I cast my eyes upon it, without any intention of imagining such a thing, and there it is more vivid than any imagination could be. The sight forces itself upon me. The sensation has two parts: first, the feeling, and second, the sense of its assertiveness, of my being compelled to have it. The consequence is that remembering a sensation is not at all the same thing as having it. For though there is some vestige of compulsiveness, even in the memory, it is not at all comparable to the compulsiveness of the actual sensation. But if I remember, or imagine a feeling, whatever I remember or imagine is a feeling, and I cannot remember or imagine or anywise represent to myself a feeling without having that very feeling then and there. All the existence a feeling can have is had the moment it is thought. But a sensation is not had until I am really acted upon by something out of my control. I have, thus, made clear, I hope, what I mean by a sensation. It is an event which has to happen at a particular moment. [—] An element of Feeling is neither a part of self-consciousness nor is set up over against self-consciousness. But the consciousness of compulsion in sensation as well as the consciousness of willing necessarily involves self-consciousness and also the consciousness of some exterior force. The self and the not-self are separated in this sort of consciousness. The sense of reaction or struggle between self and another is just what this consciousness consists in. Hence, to give it a name, I propose to call it *altersense*. To avoid circumlocution, I will

speak of the *altersense* element of sensation, as *Sensation* simply. Thus, *Altersense* has two varieties, Sensation and Will. The difference between them is that Sensation is an event in which a feeling is forced upon the mind; while Volition or Willing, is an event in which a desire is satisfied, that is, an intense state of feeling is reduced. In Sensation, a feeling is forced upon us; in Willing, feeling forces its way out from us.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1896 [c.]). *Forms of Consciousness [R]*. MS [R] 1107.

**References:** CP 7.543

**Date of** 1896 [c.]

**Quote:**

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