Prelude

In a diffuse kind of academic atmosphere, where philosophy and strategy are closely intermingled, meeting the philosopher Gendlin for me was like meeting a laser-beam in the mist. He cared about philosophy not just as a discipline that is worth cultivating. This of course is also a respectable endeavour. Gendlin however, in philosophizing cared about the world or the world of the living. This is what he dealt with, sometimes day and night, in the last years fiercely thinking from out of his worn-out arm chair: how to carry human thinking forward, that is in some way dangerously stuck and leading into more and more alienation from the meaningfulness of embodied life. The stuckness he was concerned with, did not concern positions: for instance process-model thinking vs. unit-model thinking - as philosophical positions. Gendlin sensed a stuckness or wrongness, which he philosophically wrestled with all his life. Today, what he sensed and voiced as a danger already in the sixties, has become even more real and threatening than then. Let me read you a long quote – its on your handout:

„It is trite to say that our thinking about man and society has not kept pace with physics and natural science, that we must make comparable advances, really radical breakthroughs à la Galileo in our modes of thinking about the human world, otherwise our natural science advances may destroy us, and our calculating machines may exceed our human wisdom and may ruin us.

We have given vast physical and mathematical powers into the keeping of a political and social system of power and education which has not advanced much in two thousand years of history.

Yet such a breakthrough in the human fields can only be of two sorts: either with or without our own personal humanness as individuals. If it will be without this, if there will eventually be a really successful and powerful science quite apart from your own
and my own persons, your own and my own growth in regard to our human personal lives—if without this, then it cannot help but be a technology, a mechanized really nonhuman system working successfully enough apart from your and my life struggle not to need us, to run us without our living say-so.

Such a science must make us less human (though perhaps more contented) and therefore it cannot be a science of humans as they really are. For to be human is to create meanings, values, problems, surprises even to ourselves. And so, it is a contradiction in terms (though realistically a possibility all the same) to hope for major scientific advance in the human fields without this involving the use of one’s own personal living humaness.

Yet this means that, even though we may have given up in our own lives we must turn back from having turned back—we must hope to grasp the personal truths in our own struggles—we must use this superior method of thinking which employs our own felt meanings, even though in feelings are also our hurts, defeats, missed opportunities, and the sense of death soon to come. And, if I had somehow escaped these and been given everything I needed and all the luck and timely insight, then I should only have missed some of the complexity of felt life significance."

**[slide]**

**Trial and Errors in approaching the Felt Sense**

With this entry, I want to turn to the beautiful notion of the felt sense. I will first narrow down my scope to investigate the meaning of the term. This investigation will hopefully open a horizon that connects to this beginning, clarifying the cultural relevance of having a concept such as the Felt Sense, implying a Practice we call Focusing.

To know how to do Focusing, implies to get to know the Felt Sense. There is this big challenge when you begin to learn Focusing: how and where do I find Felt Sense, how do I know it is the felt sense, am I able to have a felt sense, may be it is not to be found in me, maybe there is nothing there.
The notion of the felt sense has a certain aura around it. If you go to Focusing websites or look at Focusing books you find big words related to it: inner wisdom, or wisdom of the body, your body knows the truth, on the Website of the institute speaks of „deep wisdom at all times, even for the rest of your life” It speaks of „having within yourself the answers to life’s dilemmas and frustrations”.

So of course, to begin to learn Focusing goes together with a lot of respect in relation to the term, and also with a lot of anxious hope of encountering it, somewhere within oneself.

It might be disquieting for Focusing beginners if they knew that when advanced Focusers are together, the one’s that are supposed to know, a major question of ongoing debates is – what is a Felt Sense? At least this is so in the German speaking communities, I know. As far as I am concerned, the more you get to know Focusing, the more the certainty evaporates around this beautiful notion. It’s good that Focusing beginners don’t know that... And I hope there are not too many beginners in the room right now to hear that, if yes, please don’t spread the news!

1. **Felt sense is „...right there where it gets very unpromising”**

When you go and see how GEndlin speaks about the felt sense, for instance in little films available on youtube, he famously makes a face and makes strange sounds...

You know it. He advices to go down into the body, not too deep, and once it becomes murky and unclear, very unpromising, not interesting, not high-standing, not sophisticated... there you are. So it’s the region between the interesting zone of emotions, intentions, plans, stories and ideas and the wonderful clearness of a meditative space. Somewhere inbetween is the murky and messy place where you begin to do Focusing. This messyness, which Gendlin indicates with his face, is where you encounter the felt sense, may be we should say: this messyness is the felt Sense.

So, is the felt sense the mess we find inside? - far from being the treasure box, which one finds in the center of one’s body, far from wisdom, far from all the answers to life’s dilemmas?
But still – at least it seems to be something, not nothing. The word seems to indicate that it is something: a felt sense or maybe we should say a felt mess. If not a piece wisdom, at least a piece mess.

I want to know open up several perspectives and follow several traces that go far far beyond the implication that the felt sense is a something inside, whether a piece of wisdom or a piece of mess, or a mysterious feeling, or hidden information, or implicit answers etc.

2. The Felt sense-thing is many things (Das Felt-sense Ding is viele Dinge)

First of all, in Discovery of Felt Meaning, Gendlin warns reader that felt sense „may seem as if it were only one unit, the meaning of a given set of words, the sense of this question [or this situation – Donata], but when explicated in words, it turns out to be many, many things.“

This is the first respect, in which it can be misleading to speak of the felt-sense, as if it were an inner entity. Gendlin explicitly wants the the thing that he calls felt sense to not be understood like that. The felt-sense thing is many things. Like in the TAE steps, if we are invited to ask ourselves, what do you want this term to mean, we could say as a first step: we want the felt sense-thing to mean many things.

This is a paradox.

Isn’t that nice? And how could it be different? How could a main word of Gene Gendlin not contain a thick paradox?

The paradox can be the heuristic principle for us to unpack the intricate meaning of this term. Heuristic, I am never quite sure myself:

„Heuristics can be mental shortcuts that ease the cognitive load."

Let us use the paradox as a mental shortcut to lay out directly the challenge which we face when in spelling out the meaning of the felt sense.
Ok, our first paradox is: the thing which is called a felt sense means many things.

This reminds of Gene’s definition of relevance in ECM: a meaning containing many meanings.

Felt sense and relevance in this regard seem deeply related notions.

Let me for now, summarize what we have: We have a thing, a felt-sense-thing, meaning many things.

This implies this picture: PP eine Box (tab), die sich in viele Boxen ausfalten lässt...

Again, if you study Gendlin, you will find him disturb this kind of image structuring our understanding of the felt sense.

3. Felt sense is a flow of meanings

He continues on even in the same quote:

„Really we should call it a flow of felt sensing, not individual bits. Felt sense is an activity...“ (Discovery of Felt Meaning).

So we must immediately destroy the static image with the boxes... (slide)

Now it becomes more difficult to render this meaning graphically: a kind of flow unfolding in one meaning after another.

But how come this messy thing, that is not a thing, but a flow, not felt-sense-thing, but a felt-sensing, has meaning? Does the meaning come with the flow – just with feeling the felt-sense flow?

With this kind of question we can't help but enter philosophy (slide)
4. Felt sense is a direct reference (first functional relationship: interaction of experienced meaning and symbols)

What does Gendlin say to this kind of reference:

„By "reference" we mean something very modest and do not wish to involve ourselves in the philosophic discussions implied in this term.“

WE ARE LUCKY! It seems we don’t need to yet deeply get into philosophy!

„We mean only that attention is given to the feeling as such.“

So we seem to be back to square one..

But let’s ask, what does it mean to give attention to a feeling?
Does this means that we turn on some kind of inner light to discovery the felt sense inside?

Maybe we can simply say, giving attention to a feeling is a way of feeling a feeling.
We can think, speak or do something and also, on the side so to say, feel something, without noticing it much. In that case, we continue thinking, speaking or doing what we do, despite of the ongoing feeling.

Direct referene is stopping all this and feeling the feeling. That is why this is so direct: what we refer to is not something else, separable from us: like noticing a thing outside, like an apple. Neither is it noticing a thing inside, or a flow things or meanings. It is direct because the act or activity of feeling is the reference. In Feeling the feeling reference and referent fall together.

Ok, I admit, we are moving a little bit into philosophy now...

Let’s here what Gendlin has to say more about direct reference.
"In direct reference, symbols (such as "this feeling") refer without conceptualizing or representing the felt meaning to which they refer. Thus the role of symbols in direct reference is distinguishable from other roles symbols can have, because in direct reference there need be no conceptualization at all." (Source)

Language has quite a humble role in direct reference – it only points. There is something, I don’t know what it is. This... is hard to say. This.... is strange. I have no words for..... this. This... is difficult. But the word this has an important function: we can come back to it by speaking of this, by making it so something, to an „it“ a „this“. By speaking about „this“, from which we don’t yet know what it is, we make „a something“ of it. Direct Reference is a first example of Gendlin’s functional relationships, of symbols and experiencing working together to create meaning – in this case the force and the weith of the meaningfullness is not yet in words, yet words can somehow function as stabilizing by making this an „it“.

Now, without noticing, or may be you have, we are in the middle of philosophy! Even ethics, a very subtle kind of ethics.

So a felt sense is a very close working together of language and experiencing: it is a way of relating to an experiencing, a feeling, and way of speaking about it without covering it up by the meaning of the concept (this happens if we determine the feeling without direct reference, without felt sense: saying what we believe it is or what it should be – one sided conceptual determination).

Let me try to say this in different ways, because this is important:

It is a way of speaking in which concepts serve in order for meaning to happen which is not yet „in“ language. (tab)
It is a way of speaking in which meaning deliberately emerges, needing concepts and experiencing working together. (tab)
It is a way of using symbols that interact with the feeling to gradually unfold meaning in language.
Now we are a step closer to notice what how intriguing this is, if we speaking of a felt sense, as a concept and also as a practice.

Because also in my sentence on words interacting with a feeling, the meaning of all the words I use in my sentence are a result of words and felt meaning working together (I am doing direct reference to speak of a felt sense).

Also, lets notice again: Saying „words interacting with the feeling“ again immediately creates images (slide) about some distinct feeling being there, and words being there and they interact... thus creating meaning.

It is amazing how quickly formulations create images, conceptions, ideas that seem to suggest how things are: feeling, words – as thinglike entitiites that kind of interact. It is amazing how quickly we subsitute what we goes on in experiencing/feeling and thinking with what we say about it. (This was critizied by Wittgenstein and today is researched in great detail by a new discipline called Micro-Phenomenology!) Therefore – lets forget about this picture! (slide)

This is where direct reference comes in... it indicates that it is a practice, a micro-practice, which makes meaning that can, again and again, exceed, transform, undermine the meanings we had – even the meanings of meaning! In other words, meaning needs to be emboidly enacted again and again and cannot be grasped by some model, some mental image of what it is.

The more Gendlin tried to grasp how we make sense and meaning, the more distinct entities such as feelings and words and acts of reference dissolved entirely – (slide) into highly complex proceesses, multi-layored interactions in which vast pasts are functioning, realizing that meaningful words/feelings and situations are the results of breathtakingly exciting processes, in the macro perspective, and in a micro-perspective on everyday Experiencing - and the Creation of Meaning :). 

We know it took him decades of working out A Process Model in solitude and conentration, while doing all the other things he did, to think through the implications, we should say the implying, of the amazing phenomenon of meaning. Finally, on about
he unravelled a process of responsive intricacy that turns around a western dualistic program of thinking. Not only as another model – but as a changed way to use and understand language and concepts, allowing and opening new ways to engage ourselves, our experiential here and now, in order to think, understand, communicate and create meaning. – All this is implicit in what Gendlin means with a felt sense.

So let me contextualize this a bit:

A bit of philosophical context

It was William James who noticed this very tacit feeling from which we speak ... As far as I know he was the first to notice this: that there is a slight feeling for what we want to say before we say something. He also noticed that it seems wrong to call an emotion or an intention:

He writes:

...has the reader never asked himself what kind of a mental fact is his intention of saying a thing before he has said it? It is an entirely definite intention, distinct from all other intentions, an absolutely distinct state of consciousness, therefore: and yet how much of it consists of definite sensorial images, either of words or of things? Hardly anything! Linger, and the words and things come into the mind: the anticipatory intention, [...] is there no more. [...] It has therefore a nature of its own of the most positive sort, and yet what can we say about it without using words that belong to the later mental facts that replace it? ¹

This emphasis on words coming if you linger with this anticipatory feeling is familiar to us. It is this same coming that Gendlin ponders on and on in many articles – the fact that words come in this way, as a felt sense comes. Words come in situations mostly without us having to think about what to say. Still, it seems not so special, after all, when and where else should they come, than in situations? Difficult to imagine that noticing this all to obvious phenomenon, radically shifts powerful background assumptions of what it

¹ James, Principles, 253.
means to mean something. Philosophers early on, and cognitive scientists today still envision concepts and intentions as something inside the human mind, that perceives an outside world, which causes representations inside, ordered by concepts. This is crude depiction of a Kantian image. Yet this basic structure of inside and outside still imprints everyday and scientific understandings of ourselves.

It was extremely revolutionary of the classical pragmatists and the later Wittgenstein to notice that being in a situation is of utmost importance for making sense, and that this shifts many basic assumption. Listen to what John Dewey remarks in the first decades of the last century, while inquiring into scientific inquiry (slide):

> it is more or less a commonplace that it is possible to carry on observations that amass facts tirelessly and yet the observed “facts” lead nowhere. On the other hand, it is possible to have the work of observation so controlled by conceptual framework fixed in advance that the very things which are genuinely decisive in the problem in hand and its solution, are completely overlooked. Everything is forced into the predetermined conceptual and theoretical scheme. The way, and the only way, to escape these two evils, is sensitivity to the quality of a situation as whole. In ordinary language, a problem must be felt before it can be stated. (Dewey 1938, p. 70)

Dilthey (slide), who’s philosophy was the topic of Gendlin’s master thesis, pointed out another phenomena, which is all to evident, so tacit that it was a blind spot easy to be ignored for thousands of years. He realized that we know our life and its identity not by putting it together according to criteria and categories of sameness and differentness, but by experiencing it, living it. Discovering what he called a life-connectivity (erlebter Zusammenhand), which does not obey logical rules, is the fundament of logic, not the other way around! It is not by logic we live and we know how the past belongs to the present, but by living and by the connections made livingly. From here we gain what he calls categories of experiencing, which deepen our experiencing (!) and which gain more meaning by doing so, and which are by no means substitutable by logical categories.

Taking these kinds of cues seriously, which of course were greatly enhanced through his collaboration with Rogers, thinking from these tacit, subtle phenomena of ordinary experience became an extremely fruitful starting point in Eugene Gendlin’s
philosophical work: on a level of theory and practice. How come, that words come in situations? How come, that situational feeling are relevant and even regulate what we think? How is it that experience brings along patterns and structures that are more intricate and innovative than the conceptual orders we know?

Are'nt human beings made up of bodies and minds, and reason is a specifically human characteristic, in the mind, which is where the concepts are, which is were language and meaning resides, traditionally conceived as separate from the body. Aren't feelings something inside and subjective? And are'nt we separate bodies from our environment, of course we can perceive objects... but how would we be able to feel situations? So why do words come in this strange, almost unconscious way? All these tacit phenomena, the lived connectivity, the felt situations, the bodily coming of words disturbed foundational believes of powerful cuts between body and mind, the role of a situation disturbed the powerful cut between subject and object.

Gendlin will emphazise again and again: \(\text{(slide)}\)

It is important to realize that for us today, also, words form in a bodily way. The right words must come to us. (If they don't, there is little we can do about it, except wait, and in a bodily way, sense what our situation is, and what we sensed that we were about to try to say.) It is our bodily being in the situation we are in, that lets the right words come. [...]How do they come? We do not sift through many wrong words, as if going through a file. We don't 'select' words from among many other words. The right words, or close to the right words, 'just come'. What precedes this coming? Sometimes a bodily sense of the situation. But often there is no separately attended to sense of this kind. Being in the situation lets the words come. (1997a, 188).

This Gendlian emphasis carried on the astonishing remarks of the Classical Pragmatists and Hermeneutics, and of course Phenomenologists and Existentialist (which I will not mention here – time reasons), which did not fit into a powerful and long philosophical traditional. Gendlin once told me, sitting in his chair in Spring Valley, these Classical Pragmatists where the air he was breathing as a young philosopher. Being
philosophically raised in a very conventional European style, Gendlin became the air I was breathing, helping me not to suffocate in a system of disembodied conceptual structure, dialectics and theories which was and still is considered to be philosophy. Gendlin opened my eyes and brought new life to my thinking, after my PhD, when I wanted to quit with philosophy. By his stubbornly pointing to phenomena we hardly think about, but we think-from, my passion for philosophy was re-sparked. I remember how the following quote struck me again and again when I first came across it – how often did I quote it: (slide)

The coming of words is so clever! They come specifically and newly phrased to make just your point! The words come with their past uses taken into account. Much that you have read and know is taken account of, as well as the present situation, what you just heard these people say, what you know of them from other times, even the peculiar way in which this group uses certain words. Why are words and situations inherently together in the bodily focaling that implies the right words? (Gendlin, 1991, p. 104f.)

This is one of the basic challenges Gendlin’s thinking pursues in his lifework. One could say: from challenges like these he elaborates A Process Model. How is it that being in a situation makes words come in a fine-tuned way we could hardly “produce” by deliberately choosing them. With this in the background, lets return to our exploration of the the felt sense. (slide)

5. Felt Sense is situational intricacy

With the perspectives opened up by Gendlin’s Process Model one comes to understand each moment as a crossing, from past and present living.

In a situation, in the understanding of a situation (and we experience them not as perceptions we put together with the mind, but as forms of understanding by living), so diffuse it might be and how unspectacular, (slide) vast past experiencing is implicit: our education, professional experience, relations, what just happened a moment ago, or in the morning, or yesterday, things which happened long ago, what we might just have read in the newspaper, a thought, a dream that is still with us, the feeling of just having had breakfast (ein slide, in vieles zusammenkommt?), - all that (Gendlin makes
wonderful lists), as Gendlin stresses, not as separated, as a pre-separated multiplicity, as subtle complex understading of „now“. Each of you has it now. Heidegger used to speak of Befindlichkeit – pointing to this phenomenon. Damasio today calls this the „feeling for what happens“. The philosopher Ratcliff speaks of „existential feelings“.

Gendlin’s philosophical work goes further by making us aware, that a present moment, or a present situation, is a grown environment, (slide) grown out of earlier events and experiences, an environment in which we move like a spider on our web. One could say: each of your nows is your web, intricately woven by your life experience. This situational web of the presence is continuously growing and changing, it is constitutive of who we are, how we live, how we understand ourselves and others.

This awe-inspirning perspective makes us understand that each single moment of lived experience has not only grown from our personal pasts, our own stories, but of course of much more, of structural and situational environments created by the life of our parents and their parents, of generations of living, our culutral history, the history of our species, our evolutionary history – continuing in our own life-thread, in the intricate patterns of daily situations. Because the living process creates structures in which it goes on in – ist homegrown environemnt, environemnt 3.

Into this grown fabric of our daily situations, the present moment occurs into. This kind of expressive grammar we learn through Gendlin’s process model: every occuring occurs into an implying which does not come from nowhere, but from our former interactional living. This is quite a meeting – from moment to moment. Everything which happens, everything we do and say occurs into how we lived up to now.

This makes human situation open, multifacetted and rich, multi-interpretaion and sensitive – with each new crossing of presence and past, or with each new event, who we are and what we can do, how we understand ourselves, others and the world can be newly at stake. Because each occuring can affect the situational embodied implying.

Gendlin: (slide)
„These many past experiences are now functioning within one new experience. This is not the past as it was then, but as it is here now, relevant now, involved and being lived,
participating in the experiencing that your body implies and enacts -- now. The past comprises many events, but the present is only this one. Many experiences participate in one. We will want a concept for this way in which an as yet unseparated multiplicity functions in one fresh formation.

[...]

What each is, has already been affected by the others which were already affected by it.

[...]

When the past functions to "interpret" the present, the past is changed by so functioning. This needs to be put even more strongly: The past functions not as itself, but as already changed by what it functions in. (APM IV d 2)

By living in situation, we carry an enormous complexity along, but not like furniture in a room – inside of human subjects. This grown situational intricacy cannot be observed like static entities (inside or outside), yet always already in/as interaction first. It is the living responsive body we are. Considering our bodies in this way, helps us understand, why words come in the way they do - as finely tuned, as clever and responsive.

This is another favourite quote of mine – and we can use it here:

[Slide]

In paraphrase: what a word (or any occurring) means is already affected by the situation, but not by a situation as it usually is, but by the lived situation already affected by the word or occurrence.

Our bodies do not live in situations, they are, as I would like to say, a grown embodied context, a living continuation of complex situational entanglements carrying forward vast pasts. This understanding vastly changes a situation of intellectual stuckness between subjective insides and objective outsides, between disembodied reason, (today digitalized intelligence) and bodily, non-rational feeling, between nature and culture etc.

Gendlin in his Process Model makes clear that body-environment interaction, feeling, behaviour, situations, language, situations and meanings have evolved together, cannot be understood and grasped separated: all these factors imply each other!

The living process that Gendlin begins to think in great detail is as intricate as it is because most of it is implicit, is intricate implying.
To respond to what a situation needs, understand, what it is about, what is needed, is thus, as we know, very often not an easy affair: it needs relating to a complexity that is not a clear state of affairs, observable entities, outside or inside, it does not suffice to go with some emotion. It needs to be felt, indicating that we are not separable from environments we call situations. Our situational bodies go beyond the skin-envelope, as Gendlin likes to say.

Giving this situational feeling attention means felt-sensing = processing intricacy. It is a "many making one" that creates its relevance. This intricacy is an implying of something very specific, in order to be carried forward an not just interrupted, or in some small or big sense stopped. Only if something occurs which carries this intricacy forward, we "know" what was implied – as Gendlin famously puts it.

I remember that this was one of the crux moments in Gene’s living room, he sitting in his old chair, when I worked myself into understanding this philosophy and realized it is a different way of thinking:
I constantly repeated the question: that if occured what was implied, one then knows what was implicit before. [Slide] Gendlin patiently said: no. Only after carrying forward what was implied, do you know what was implied. I said ok, but then you also know what was implied before it was carried forward. Again, a patient (and a little worried) "no: you only know what was implied after it was carried forward". I thought I was sitting in front of a Zen Master who is giving me a Koan. Again I tried: Well, after it has been carried forward, one knows what was implied all along. Again, calm and serious, "no" – not all along, only after it was carried forward.

You can imagine how difficult for me ... until I began to understand and the understanding kept unfolding tacit assumptions I had about a reality that was unaffected by what we say of it, a past that was unaffected by a presence, a cause that was unaffected by its effect.

I began to understand: much more implicitly participates in every moment than we can ever explicate, and whatever we explicate, if it carries forward, it changes the implying – the interaffective network creating a now.
In a grand way we call this a paradigm shift. But really we can experience it everyday – in this responsive relation of situational living and occurring, of experiential process and events. Good action, good thinking, a good formulation and events change things not in the sense of any kind change, but by a precision we notice as a *carrying forward*. This major, very beautiful and useful Gendlian term emphazises a kind of change which is not noticable and describable from the outside, but only through participation, interaction and engagement.

The precision of carrying forward is an amazing experience. Gendlin realizsed that it is cultivatable, thus allowing us to attend to situations in a new way, opening intricacy at any moment we want. This is called Focusing. Making life a fantastically differentiated affair, which we can work with on a micro-level that can have macro-effects.

Now coming back with all this working for us in the background to the question: what is a felt sense. I would like to now go on and say: (slide)

**6. Felt Sensing is a practice creating its space and objects**

May be today we could assume, that a felt sense is like a Somatic Marker. Damasio has shown, how these marker are complex gut feelings, much more complex that emotions, holding a lot of information, a lot of situational experiences, that help us decide very quickly, before we even think.

I want to decline this interpretation:

A felt sense, if you like, is a way of relating to a somatic marker. A felt sense is neither an emotion, nor a complex kind of feeling like a somatic marker, *but a certain way and manner of feeling something*. One could say, a felt sense is a *way* of relating to a Somatic Marker which thus opens up and changes into many strands, situational facets.

When we feel a somatic marker in a felt sensing way – it changes, it does not decide for us!

When we feel a felt sense we don’t just feel something: we practice.

I think this is the most important message I would like to give.
It is a life-time achievement to not only have thought through so carefully a felt meaning deriving from embodied intricacy, as Gendlin has, but to have gone into so much detail and research to describe a certain way of relating to it, as strange as it is, thus having made teachable something that is so tacit, so beyond conventional words and conventional methods and most of all: beyond what conventionally is supposed to be a method. His careful explanations in APM make clear, how generative, creative in a literal sense felt sensing is, as a micro-practice. In A Process Model Gendlin elaborates, how felt sensing as a practice:

- co-generates its objects
- co-generates its space
- co-generates something more whole

Gendlin describes this as such: [slide]

„If you tell an ordinary person to stand "next to" some feeling or emotion, the phrase will not make sense in that use. "Where do you mean ‘stand next to’?" the person will say. The new .... space is not familiar, has not been constituted by this person. ... people feel things in their chest and stomach, that is one "where", and also in their situations, that is another "where."”

In felt sensing a new space opens, where you can do these things. It needs the practice for this space to grow and allow new intra and extra-situational moves as well as new „objects“ so to say.

Whereas usually we respond from some aspect of a situation, some feeling, some implications of events, of things said, felt sensing is a practice to „hold“ more and more of a situation. This is blurry, as we know, not because of some surpressed aspects – but because this is so thick. [slide]

Gendlin:

„Since cultural situations are very complex, and each situation implicitly involves others too, which are also complex, a very great deal more is bodily lived and felt [...], than is ever sequenced as such in those [...] sequences we consider our feelings."

Felt sensing is thus a certain kind of sequence, which Gendlin exemplifies with the dancer Isodora Duncan, standing still sometimes for hours, in order to find new moves. As passive as this standing might seem, it is highly acitve. [Slide - Duncan]
Isadorah is pursuing something which needs her full attention, which is not yet available, but becomes available by this pursuing: (You might know this lovely beginning in Chapter VIII):

Isadora Duncan stands still, sometimes for a long period. She senses dance steps she could move into, but they don’t feel right. What would feel right is not sure yet. She is "seeking," she says, looking for, waiting for the right feel to come, willing to let it come.

This seeking, waiting for, looking, and letting is a kind of action. It is a way of relating to, interacting with .. What? Where? It is interaction with a right feel, a new kind of feel which will come in a new place. (slide)

Gendlin emphazises: This new kind of "feel" isn't just there, waiting, it forms in this new sequence. And if you ask, where does this happen? Gendlin says: In a new space generated by this new kind of sequence."

What seems very noteworthy for us, after the journey we have gone, is to begin to understand that felt sense is not a concept for an inner entity, object [a datum, a referent], but for practice that creates a new object and new space. These are generated not by just acting on what we feel, not by following day-to-day routines, not by following established situational patterns of doing, saying and feeling things, but by attending to the more that is implied in all this.

The felt sense is a result of a subtle interactional sequence, which affirms Gendlin’s principle interaction first:

„This feel, and this new space, are both made in this very interaction. (This is an instance of our principle "interaction first": Only from the interaction do the participants come. A new kind of interaction makes new participants. See IV-A.)

Therefore it is important to read chapter VIII from the PM, which thinks this interactional generating carefully and in great detail. This explains the difficulty to speak of the felt sense to people who do not relate to their experience in certain ways! If we talk about it as if it were an object independent of a practice, we create misunderstandings.

In this way, Focusing is radically creative. It creates new spaces and objects and action possibilities, thus re-creating nothing less than the human body, and with body we mean body-environment interactions that on the human level are highly intricate embodied contexts, involving language.
This creating is not arbitrary. Felt sensing is a practice to attend and respond to the 
*more* that matters in situations, thus re-generating what situational matters come to 
matter in a situation.

I therefore want to add to our list now one last definition of the felt sense, with which I 
would like to end

*(Slide mit allen Etappen)*

7. Felt Sensing is dancing with situations

Felt sensing is a way to relate to situations, that opens up a great dynamic.

(SCRIBE)

„While the changes in our new sequence may seem slight, they are actually each an 
enormous change. [...] After each bit of such change, *everything* is different.“

By attending to the „more“ implicit in our experiencing, which is rather limitless – a 
space is generated that is vast.

Gendlin explains its vastness by saying: *(slide)*

It isn’t the kind of space that situations are. We are in them. Here is a space in which THE 
WHOLE SITUATION MOVES.

If we learn to relate literally „whole-some“ enough, our practice generates a space in 
which the living of our entire planet can come to be included.... Thus felt-sensing is an 
exercise which has a great potential: being human in a way that becomes more and 
more integrative and inclusive, and at the same always being very specific – by Focusing 
on just what is experientially available, here and now, *just this* as Gendlin emphazised 
again and again.

In this way felt sensing is a practice that complements every kind of reductionism, and 
simplification – as necessary as they may seem. Yet only in being able to complement 
reductionism and simplifications can we countersteer a scientific and digital 
development imprinting our cultural lives in ways that seem to imply that we can drop 
out the human in order to enhance it and become artificially more intelligent as we are.
With practices such as Focusing and Felt-sensing (and the like) we can actually hope for major scientific advance without this involving the loss of one’s own personal living humanness.

With this I want to come back to the very first quote, last paragraph on your handout:

„Yet this means that, even though we may have given up in our own lives we must turn back from having turned back—we must hope to grasp the personal truths in our own struggles—we must use this superior method of thinking which employs our own felt meanings, even though in feelings are also our hurts, defeats, missed opportunities, and the sense of death soon to come. And, if I had somehow escaped these and been given everything I needed and all the luck and timely insight, then I should only have missed some of the complexity of felt life significance."

Thank you for your attention!