

## On the body and the sensory

Hmm. I'm in one right now. My back is against a chair, I can feel the pressure strongly as I rock back and forth. There's some level of unease and discomfort that I inherently have with this shell though. I seem to chafe against the limits of my body. And it seems a lot of technological development can be viewed through the frustration with our own capabilities. It shows in transport.

But it also shows in how we try to soften the rawness of existing in a body. There are many little interventions we create to buffer ourselves from the sharp edges of experience. Headphones, sunglasses, weighted blankets, routines, rituals. There's a kind of unspoken engineering to surviving sensory reality, especially when your default state is already turned up too high.

For me, sound is rarely just sound. It's movement, it's pressure, it's temperature. Drums vibrate across my skin like something alive and external trying to get in. A certain chord in a song can ripple through my chest as if it's pushing the air out of my lungs. It's not symbolic. It's not poetic metaphor. It's physical. Auditory-tactile synesthesia doesn't ask for permission. It just arrives. A laugh behind me might feel like being tapped on the shoulder. A sudden shout is a jolt through my jaw. I don't always know what's real in the usual sense. I only know what registers in the body, and sometimes that's everything all at once.

It makes me think about how little control we actually have over what reaches us. Most people, I think, unconsciously filter the world. They get to ignore background noise, block out peripheral chaos, stay focused on what's socially relevant. For me, every element in a room is foreground. The clink of a glass, a flickering lightbulb, the subtle friction of fabric on skin. Nothing dims. And in that flood of sensation, it's hard to find the thread of meaning I'm supposed to be following. Language, conversation, expression they're all submerged in this larger tide of input. It's not that I don't care about what's being said; it's that everything is saying something, all the time.

And yet, I crave overstimulation. I seek it out. Loud music at parties. Flashing lights. The sense of being surrounded by more than I can handle. There's something euphoric in being consumed by experience. It's a kind of dissolution, a letting go of trying to sort, control, make sense. In those moments, I stop trying to hold myself together. The boundaries blur and I just... am. Flooded, yes, but also free. Of course it comes at a cost. Afterward, I crash. My body gets heavy and slow. Thoughts tangle. The world is too loud again, but in a brittle way, not a beautiful one. The comedown is hard.

I often wonder what it means to be *inside* a body. Because sometimes I don't feel inside it at all. Sometimes I feel like I'm wearing it. A clumsy, over-sensitive suit that I didn't choose. Other times I feel like I *am* the body, like there's no space between self and sensation. Pain, pleasure, texture, rhythm, it all just is, a manic mixture of emotions bonded to sensation. No interpretation needed.

Taekwondo was one of the places where this tension became especially clear. I wanted to be good at it, or at least, I wanted the *idea* of being good at it. But my body didn't naturally cooperate. My kicks didn't rise high enough. My limbs refused to explode with the kind of snap others seemed to pull off easily. And pain — even accidental blows, light taps during sparring — landed heavy on me. I don't know if people around me understood how sharp it felt, how every impact sent a kind of echo through my nervous system. While others were learning to harden, to

absorb hits like training wheels on the way to resilience, I was learning how to flinch, how to hide the way my body recoiled.

There's something deeply vulnerable about not wanting to put effort in, especially when you know people are watching. But it wasn't laziness, not exactly. It was more like my body resisted being *forced*. I didn't want to push through pain or stretch past comfort just because I was supposed to. Effort felt like a betrayal of something — of the honesty of how things felt. There's a strange kind of shame in that, especially in a context like martial arts where power is earned through repetition, where strength is something you prove by overriding the body's natural refusal. But I couldn't override anything. I felt every protest in full.

And yet, even in that, there were moments of strange clarity. When a form clicked, when motion followed rhythm, when the body briefly did what I asked without resistance -those were rare, but vivid. There was a kind of poetry in it, like the body and I were speaking the same language for once. Not fighting each other. Just moving. Just being.

Autism complicates this further. It isn't just a matter of sensory difference, but of relational difference. I process things internally, in patterns, not in narratives. I feel things deeply but struggle to name them in ways that others recognize. There are moments when I'm trying to connect and everything misfires - the timing is wrong, the tone is off, the cues invisible. And the frustration isn't just social, it's existential. It's the ache of knowing that I'm in here, alive and feeling and thinking, but not always reachable.

So much of the world is designed for bodies that *fit*. Bodies that don't resist, don't question, don't overwhelm themselves. I live in a body that feels like it's always either too much or not enough. Too open, too reactive, too detail-oriented. Not socially fluid enough, not quiet enough, not impervious. But it's also a body that feels everything. It's a body that vibrates with music, that finds comfort in repetitive motion, that maps emotion in color and shape and texture. It's a body that experiences life in surround sound.

There's a strange kind of intimacy in that. A closeness with sensation that most people seem to have grown numb to. I wouldn't trade it, even on the days when I feel trapped in it. Because in those rare, aligning moments , when the music hits right, when the world and I are momentarily in rhythm, I feel like I'm not just in a body. I feel like I *am* something electric and whole.

Maybe the body isn't just a shell. Maybe it's a language. The body keeps the score. A raw, chaotic, deeply personal grammar that doesn't always translate neatly but is always, relentlessly, trying to speak.