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 Roger Smith, London, Routledge, 2023**

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Kinaesthesia in the psychology, philosophy, and culture of human experience

By Roger Smith, London: Routledge. 2023. pp. 156. \$51.96 (cloth); 19.96 (ebook). ISBN: 9781032435909 (cloth); 9781003368021 (ebook)

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When I received the invitation to review Roger Smith's book *Kinaesthesia in the psychology, philosophy, and culture of human experience* (*Kinaesthesia* for short), I accepted based on the title. It sounded very promising. Although I had heard of Smith's eminent historical research, I was unaware that he had also written about movement. And when I asked my theoretically inclined colleagues in human movement sciences about Smith's work, it turned out I was not the only one. In fact, his earlier book *The sense of movement: An intellectual history* (Smith, 2019) is not even present in any Dutch university library. This is very unfortunate as the work by Roger Smith on our moving bodies is of great value for many disciplines, ranging from the "hard" empirical sciences of life and movement to the humanities and performance arts.

His book *Kinaesthesia* builds on his earlier monograph *The sense of movement*, but is of a different character. Where *The sense of movement* was regarded as an important, scholarly contribution to the literature, reviewers also found it "dense" (Sabee, 2021, p. 224) and "difficult" (Lawrence, 2021, p. 531). *Kinaesthesia*, on the other hand, is pleasantly accessible. It is part of the Routledge Focus series and is therefore relatively short. Yet, Smith still manages to cover much ground. It is, as the back cover indicates, definitely a "wide-ranging book." What makes this book special is that Smith is able to draw from his capacious knowledge of many areas. Not only does he reflect upon the movement scientist Bernstein but he also discusses, among other things, Martha Graham's choreography, Levinas' insights into gestures, Kleinian psychoanalysis, Sherrington's masterpiece *The integrative action of the nervous system*, and Nan Shepherd's phenomenological study of walking in the Cairngorm mountains. This makes the book, although small in size, a very rich book. Admittedly, some of the ideas are not well developed, and sometimes Smith only touches upon an issue, but for a book like this that matters less. As explained at the outset, this book is intended not as a scientific treatise but as an inspiring exploration of the importance of the sense of movement, a theme that "runs' deep and 'flows' wide" (Smith, 2023, p. 16). And that is exactly the reason why I hope that this book will find a wide readership, including my colleagues in the human movement sciences—it may open their eyes to the enormous richness of movement. As Smith pointed out the limitations of the detached mode of the natural sciences:

At times, hard-nosed natural scientists [...] said that a science of an organism's movement, as a condition of being a *science*, eliminates reference to subjective feels of action or volition. Such scientists have pressed for exclusive adoption of the sensorimotor model. Yet, countering this position, are beliefs in the power of individual people to act voluntarily and even to exercise free will.

These arguments greatly complicate any approach we may take to the sense of movement. To take them into account is, however, the right course, because agency and freedom to move clearly matter so much, so much of the time, to so many people. People *want* and *choose* to run, dance and move freely. (Smith, 2023, p. 20, emphasis in original)

Obviously, human movement scientists study proprioception and its role in keeping balance and maintaining posture. Yet, the subjective feel, what Smith called kinaesthesia, is almost neglected. And as Smith (2023) convincingly argued in this book, it is “the sensory accompaniment of the position and change of the position of the body and tension in muscles and joints” (p. 4) that is fundamental for our sense of reality, our sense of agency, our identities, and our being in the world. As an example, and as phenomenologists have stressed for decades, emotions are not mental states that can be expressed by a (mechanical) body. Rather, they are sensed movements directed at an environment. There is no mind hidden behind our moving bodies.

Smith does some excellent work in reanimating the body, showing how our sense of movement permeates the many dimensions of our lives. In my view, he is at his best when discussing dance, a topic he clearly loves. Indeed, it is in this domain that the feel of movement is easily linked to the feel of life and to culture. “The ‘animate form’ of dance creates a shared bodily life for the subjective world. It recreates biological life as a vividly shared culture; it recreates culture in the body” (Smith, 2023, p. 78). Moreover, dance can reveal how we can “know from the inside” (Ingold, 2013). As Smith concludes in one of the final pages of the book,

The book’s outlook on the place of movement in life, on the values and meaning of embodied performance, support belief in the validity of forms of understanding which are not those of the natural sciences. They are, in effect, arguments through practice, through performance. (Smith, 2023, pp. 126–127).

He illustrates these “arguments through practice” also with the work of Nan Shepherd, the Scottish author who had explored the Cairngorm mountains on foot for whole her life, in all possible weather conditions. During her many hikes in these barren, beautiful, and sometimes harsh mountains, she noticed,

It is [...] when the body is keyed to its highest potential and controlled to a profound harmony deepening into something that resembles trance, that I discover most nearly what it is to *be*. I have walked out of the body and into the mountain. I am a manifestation of its total life [...] (Shepherd, 1977/2011, p. 106; emphasis in original)

In many respects, there is not much new to the central message of Smith’s book. Indeed, recent decades have seen the publication of many books and articles on embodied cognition that centralize movement in a similar fashion. Most notably are perhaps the works of Sheets-Johnstone, Tim Ingold, and Shaun Gallagher, authors Smith frequently refers to. Yet, what makes Smith’s *Kinaesthesia* a significant contribution to this literature is that it is, unlike some classics in phenomenology, widely accessible. In addition, it is a book with an extraordinary intellectual range. The ethologist Konrad Lorenz once famously complained that science is increasingly specialized with “scientists knowing everything about nothing.” Luckily even in the current era, there still are some scholars (e.g., Michel Serres, Tim Ingold) who break with this trend and outline worldviews that are fueled by the arts, the humanities, and the natural sciences. Roger Smith is one of them.

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