

What is the somatic theory of the emotions? Stanley Schachter's and Jerome Singer's "Cognitive, Social and Physiological Determinants of Emotional States" as well as Jean Paul Sartre's *The Emotions — A Sketch of a Theory* pose challenges for the somatic theory from different perspectives. Describe these challenges and describe how Jesse Prinz defends the somatic theory against these challenges in "Embodied Emotions." Do you find Prinz's defense convincing?

The debate between the somatic theory and cognitivist theory has been fought with arguments from psychological studies to historical examples. In this paper, I will defend the somatic theory of emotions through evidence that supports Prinz's thesis.

The somatic theory, advocated by William James and Jenefer Robinson, of emotions holds that emotions are feelings of bodily states. In "What is an Emotion?", he describes, "the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and ... our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion," (189–190). When the body experiences a physiological change such as a sudden change in blood pressure or dilation of the pupils, the body mentally identifies an emotion in response to this physiological change. According to James, these changes in bodily states are necessary for emotion, but it is possible to have a change in bodily state without the emotion. For example, one may have a physiological fear response without actually experiencing the emotion of fear if the mind does not recognize the fear-inducing stimuli as an actual threat. And, on the other hand, one may feel an emotion such as sadness without a specific external cause. The bodily state may be sufficient on its own to stimulate the emotional response. This theory has been bolstered by later studies by Damasio that have shown that physiological damage to the brain may interfere with the registration of bodily states and, therefore, the experience of the emotion. This supports the view that the emotion is caused by the change in bodily state, rather than the other way around. While somatic theory helps us understand how emotions arise from changes in our body, other social scientists and philosophers have raised objections to it from the cognitive role of emotions. Jenefer Robinson has responded to these arguments by taking the somatic theory one step further by explaining that emotions never involve a cognitive element. This way, the emotion is directly linked to the bodily response rather than any judgment or mental activity. Robinson raises the claim that, since it is possible to have an emotional state without the judgment, the follows from an "inbuilt affective appraisal mechanisms" (41) which immediately respond to external stimuli and cause an emotional response. This appraisal occurs automatically and without any cognitive evaluation, but it causes a similarly automatic mental response to modify our physiological responses. However, this appraisal mechanism lays the foundation for the slow, careful thinking of the cognitive element. When one's pupil's dilate at the immediate sight of a scary bear, it is without control or mental evaluation. But, in response, one may evaluate his or her response and realize that he or she is in fear. This shows the affective appraisal mechanism of emotion that causes the cognitive judgement and shows a harmony between somatic theory and cognitive elements. Despite this, there still remain objections from the cognitivist theorists.

Schachter and Singer's studies have shown that the connection between emotions and somatic responses isn't so clear. Because it is not sufficient to suggest that an external stimuli causes a change in bodily state which, in turn, causes an emotion, Schachter and Singer developed a theory that a cognitive element plays a role in the determination of how that bodily state translates into an emotion. There is a feedback loop between the bodily state and the cognition in which the mind must interpret the external stimuli in order to determine an emotion. If one's pupils dilate at the sight of a scary shark, then the cognitive element interprets the emotion as fear. However, if one's pupil's dilate when viewing a piece of artwork that is beautiful, then the interpretation may be wonder. Despite the similar

physiological responses, the emotion is quite different because the cognition interprets arousals according to the information that is readily available in order to ascribe a label to that emotion. In addition, Sartre's theory that the emotional consciousness isn't about the emotion itself, but, rather, the object that causes the emotion further challenged the somatic theory. According to Sartre, our emotions are the means by which we make sense of a world that is otherwise completely irrational. If a thief robs Jon of his money, Jon makes the judgement that the situation is unfair and unjust. To Jon, having a man take someone else's money doesn't make sense because the money rightfully belongs to Jon. As a result, Jon's anger is a result of his point of view on the situation changing for the purpose of making sense of it. This point of view follows from the cognitive theory that the mind seeks external stimuli as explanation for emotions but interprets the emotion as a phenomenological element. From these objections, it appears as though the somatic theory is incomplete or inaccurate in understanding the nature of emotions and their causes.

1. What is somatic theory
 1. James
 1. issue of Schachter and Singer
 2. Robinson's response
2. Prinz response
 1. Sartre's and Schachter-Singer's issues
 2. Defense of Prinz response