Lange vs James on Emotion, Passion, and the Arts

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Abstract
According to what is now the standard account in the history of psychology, in the 1880s William James and the Danish physician Carl Georg Lange independently developed a strikingly new theory, commonly referred to as the 'James–Lange' theory of emotion. In this paper it is argued that this standard account is highly misleading. Lange's views on affect in his (1885) *Om Sindsbevægelser* were more cautious than James allowed, and not open to criticisms that have often been levelled against the theory of emotion that James claimed he shared with Lange. In fact, Lange argued for distinctions that James did not mention in his discussion of Lange's work. Even with regard to the primary emotions, the two thinkers' explanatory models diverged significantly. The contrast between James and Lange on affect is especially striking in their respective discussions of topics in aesthetics, as is established with reference to Lange's little-known (1899) *Bidrag til Nydelsernes fysiologi som grundlag for en rationel æstetik*.

According to what is now the standard account in the history of psychology, in the 1880s William James and the Danish physician Carl Georg Lange independently developed a strikingly new theory, commonly referred to as the 'James–Lange' theory of emotion.[1] As it is regularly presented, the central tenet of this theory is that emotions are felt responses to peripheral bodily events, such as an increased heart rate and muscular tension. An emotion, then, is not the mind's immediate response to events in the environment; instead, it is a response to ways in which the brain and body have already reacted to events in the environment (including such internal stimuli as ingested drugs). Here is how James rather provocatively framed the matter in his 1885 paper in *Mind*:

> Our natural way of thinking about these standard emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expressions. My theory, on the contrary, is that *the bodily changes follow directly the* PERCEPTION *of the*

[1] See, for instance, *The Encyclopedia of Psychology* (ed.) Alan E. Kazin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 175, 1893.

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> *exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur* IS *the emotion*. Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect, that the one mental state is not immediately induced by the other, that the bodily manifestations must first be interposed between, and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be' (James' emphasis).[2]

I argue in this paper that as a matter of intellectual history, the standard account of the James–Lange theory is misleading. Although there certainly were some points on which Lange and James were in agreement, these shared propositions do not amount to the innovative theory that is standardly attributed to James and Lange. To set the stage for my argument, I begin with a survey of the relevant documents and mention a few important facts that have often been overlooked in the literature. In section 2, I present a first challenge to the standard account. This challenge refers to an important distinction that was insisted on by Lange yet absent from James's presentations of his and Lange's views. In section 3, I raise and respond to an objection to the effect that James' and Lange's theories largely converged with regard to a subcategory of emotions. I respond to this objection by identifying significant differences between the theorists' explanatory models. Section 4 expands further upon differences between the two figures with reference to Lange's psychological claims in his 1899 book on aesthetics. I conclude with a discussion of Lange's silence regarding James' theorizing and his late declaration that he had advanced no theory of the emotions.

1. The pensum

According to the standard account, James and Lange had no influence on each other as they devised their respective views about the emotions in the early 1880s. This part of the standard account is probably correct. James' first relevant publication on the topic was

[2] William James, 'What is an Emotion?' *Mind* **9**:34 (April 1884), 89–90. (henceforth cited as *W*); this passage appears with very minor changes in *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. II (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), 449–450 (this volume is cited henceforth as *PP*).

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his 1884 paper in *Mind* entitled 'What is an emotion?'. One year later, Lange published a 90 page-long book in Danish, *Om Sindsbevægelser. Et psycho-fysiologisk studie*.[3] The title of this book has been misleadingly translated in English as 'The Emotions'; I propose a more accurate translation below. Lange mentions a number of historical sources, but does not refer to James. Lange was a physician who was heavily engaged in his clinical practice, teaching, and research into such matters as pathologies of the spinal cord and the use of lithium to treat chronic depression. It is unlikely that he had read James' paper in *Mind* when he wrote his short book in Danish.

How and when did Lange's work come to James' attention? James could not read Lange's Danish book, but he could read the German translation of it that was published in 1887.[4] In June 1888, the influential French psychologist Théodule-Armand Ribot sent a letter to James in which he drew his attention to Lange's book. James wrote back saying that he had already learnt about it in reading a book by Harald Høffding and that he had subsequently seen the brief notice of the German translation of Lange's book in the April 1888 issue of *Mind*.[5]

James published his *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. Chapter 25 of this sprawling work was a rewriting of the paper on emotion from *Mind*. It is here that James claimed for the first time that he and Lange had independently discovered essentially the same account

[3] Carl Georg Lange, *Om Sindsbevægelser. Et psyko-fysiologisk Studie* (Copenhagen: Jacob Lunds, 1885). Henceforth cited as *OS* with page numbers in this first edition; all translations my own.

[4] Lange, *Über Gemüthsbewegungen. Eine psycho-physiologische Studie*, trans. Hans Kurella (Leipzig: Theodor Thomas, 1887). Referred to in what follows as *UG*. This German translation was the basis of *Les Émotions: étude psychophysiologique*, trans. Georges Dumas (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895); and 'The Emotions: A Psychophysiological Study', trans. Istar A. Haupt, in Knight Dunlap (ed.) *The Emotions*, vol. I (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1922), 33–92 (referred to in what follows as *E*).

[5] James to Ribot, July 1888, in *The Correspondence of William James, Volume 6: 1885–1889* (ed.) Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (Charlottesville and London: The University of Virginia Press, 1998), 420–421; anon, 'New Books', *Mind* **13**:50 (April 1888), 304–305. Harald Høffding, *Psychologie in Umrissen auf Grundlagen der Erfahrung* (Leipzig: Fues, 1887), 343; 'Sindsbevægelsers fysiologi', *Tilskueren* **3** (1886), 114–123, reprinted in his *Mindre Arbejder*, vol. I (Copenhagen: Nordisk, 1899), 51–60; and in German in *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* **12** (1888), 356–366.

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of emotion. James reiterated this claim in an 1894 paper, 'The Physical Basis of Emotion'.[6] Here he erroneously wrote that both he and Lange published the same theory in 1884. In fact, Lange's book came out in the following year.

In 1899 Lange published a book-length study that he explicitly presented as a continuation [en fortsættelse] of his 1885 essay. This book, which is regularly ignored in the literature on the James–Lange theory, was entitled *Bidrag til Nydelsernes Fysiologi som grundlag for en rationel aestetik*, which translates literally as 'Contribution to the physiology of the pleasures as foundation for a rational aesthetics'.[7] This work has never been translated into English. A rather 'free' German translation, with many editorial additions, omissions, and revisions by Hans Kurella, was published in 1903.[8] As many of the scholars who write about the James–Lange theory read neither German nor Danish, they have remained oblivious to the contents of Lange's 1899 book and thus have not been in a position to compare it to the tenets of the putative James–Lange account of emotion. As for Lange's 1885 book, the English translation is not completely misleading, but as I shall point out below, there are some significant errors in this text, which for many commentators has been the sole basis for claims about Lange's views on the emotions. These facts help explain how an incorrect account based primarily on James' statements has become standard in the literature. As the evidence many scholars have had to work with has been misleading and incomplete, it is not difficult to understand how they could have relied too heavily on James' testimony.

2. A Challenge to the standard account

With this background in mind, I shall now develop and defend my claim that Lange and James did not independently put forward the same theory of the emotions. Such a claim obviously depends on

[6] James, 'The Physical Basis of Emotion', *Psychological Review* **1** (1894), 516–529.

[7] Carl Georg Lange, *Bidrag til Nydelsernes fysiologi som grundlag for en rationel æstetik* (Copenhagen: Gydendalske, 1899). Referred to in what follows as *B* with page numbers to this edition; all translations are my own.

[8] Lange, *Sinnesgenüsse und Kunstgenuss. Beiträge zu einer sensualistichen Kunstlehre* (ed.) Hans Kurella (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1903). As Kurella announces in his editorial preface, he took it upon himself to revise and 'complete' Lange's manuscript. This at times involved skipping sections in Lange's text.

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ideas about the conditions under which two thinkers do or do not diverge theoretically. On this topic, my argument is consistent with all but the most coarse-grained and controversial assumptions. I take it that two or more thinkers do not converge on the same theory when they disagree about an idea or proposition that is *central* to the theory in question, where disagreement means that one theorist affirms the proposition or idea whilst the other theorist does not, either because she actively denies that proposition or is indifferent or oblivious to it. A proposition is central to a theory whenever it has a crucial role to play in relation to the theory's descriptive or explanatory aims. In my argument against the standard account of the James–Lange theory, I refer to theoretically central propositions about which James and Lange explicitly disagreed.

I turn now to a distinction that was central to Lange's position and which he himself presented as such. In his introductory reflections on the task he takes up in his 1885 essay, Lange observes that very often the terms used to refer to various psychological phenomena are employed in ways that conflate certain concepts. He comments that a certain family resemblance [en vis Familielighed] leads us to group together things that are in fact heterogeneous. Lange writes: 'It is of some importance to have as pure a concept as possible, by which I mean a concept that only covers items that are, from a psychological point of view, reasonably homogeneous [nogenlunde ensartede]' (*OS* 4–5 / *UG* 4). Here the published English translation follows the incorrect German translation and reads: 'a conception which includes, *physiologically*, only phenomena that are *analogous*' (*E* 35; my emphasis; the German runs 'ein Begriff, der nur, *physiologisch* betrachtet, gleichartige Erscheinungen umfasst'). This is not a faithful translation because Lange was in general quite strict about distinguishing between psychology and physiology, and he refers explicitly to the former, not the latter in the relevant Danish sentence. Moreover, when he calls for a concept that is as 'pure' as possible, this would rule out grouping together items that are merely 'analogous'. Lange says the items in a group should be 'ensartede', which literally means 'one kind-ed' or homogeneous, so 'analogous' is a mistranslation.

Lange goes on in this passage to make what he presents as a very important point. Namely, he contends that two distinct groups of items should be kept apart in psychological investigations. The first group is comprised of sorrow, delight, fear, anger, and similar items [sorg, glæde, frygt, vrede]; the other group includes love, hatred, contempt, admiration, and similar items [kærlighed, had, foragt, beundring]. Lange declares that he will recruit the term

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'sindsbevaegelse' to label the concept covering the former group of items; he proposes that the latter group may be called 'Passions, feelings, or whatever one wants to call it' [Lidenskaberne, Følelserne, eller hvad man nu vil kalde den] (*OS* 5; *UG* 5; *E* 35). Lange refers to both groups as 'mental appearances or phenomena' [sjælelige Fremtoninger], but he insists that they are distinct because the items in the latter group are far more complicated than the former and are composed of diverse factors, including thoughts and reflections. Responses such as fear and anger can, but need not be, parts of the complex, more cognitively based passions falling within the second group. Lange complains that the distinction between these two concepts has never been drawn sharply, and he adds that it is hard to understand why those who investigate the mind have not always felt the need for an exact separation between them. Lange declares: 'We should not throw things such as terror, rage, and joy in with envy, love, the feeling of freedom, and so on' (*OS* 6; *UG* 5; *E* 35).

It may be helpful to note here that Lange's proposal regarding the reference of 'sindsbevægelse' covers some but not all of the term's extension in ordinary Danish. Similarly, if we translate 'sindsbevægelse' as 'emotion', Lange's concept covers some but not all of the things we ordinarily call 'emotions' in English. Love, envy, hatred, and admiration are Lange's own examples of affective states that are not 'sindsbevægelser' *in Lange's proposed sense*. Lange's German translator, Hans Kurella, sometimes translates 'sindsbevægelse' as 'Affecten' and other times as 'Gemüthsbewegung'. These variations have no basis in the original Danish text. Istar A. Haupt carried this error over into his English translation of the German text, shifting back and forth between 'emotion' and 'affect' in the place of 'sindsbevægelse'. The result is that in some sentences Lange appears to be referring to affect in general, whereas in other sentences he appears to be theorizing about all of the emotions. Neither translation clearly matches his stated intention, which was, I repeat, to refer to a very narrow range of psychological events not regularly singled out by any single term in ordinary language.

So what would an accurate translation of the title of Lange's book be? With hindsight we can see that the category of phenomena that Lange wanted to focus on in his 1885 book matches very closely what Antonio Damasio calls the 'primary' or 'early' emotions, paradigmatic examples of which are unreflective or spontaneous responses of fear, disgust, and anger. Accordingly, in what follows I will translate Lange's 'sindsbevægelse' as 'primary emotion'. The title of Lange's 1885 book should then be rendered as 'On primary

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emotions' (and not 'On *the* primary emotions', since Lange did not use the enclitic definite article, which would have given 'sindsbevægel*serne*').

With these remarks in mind, we can now identify a first reason why it is inaccurate to attribute a single theory to James and Lange. As we have just seen, Lange distinguishes between primary emotions and passions. He insists that this distinction is of crucial importance to scientific research in psychology. As for James, he not only fails to mention Lange's distinction, he contradicts it when he draws up a list of what he calls standard or 'coarser' emotions, including items from both of the two groups that Lange thought should be kept separate (*PP* 449). Love, in particular, is listed by James as one of the emotions, whereas Lange assigns it to the category of 'passions'. More generally, James belittles those thinkers who develop taxonomies of the affects or emotions. They are only sorting out the eggs, he says, whereas his broad theory goes straight for the golden goose that laid them (*PP* 449). This is quite remote from anything Lange says. Moreover, in a passage where he has just quoted Lange on the variety of external manifestations of feelings, James draws the conclusion that 'any classification of the emotions is 'as true and as "natural" as any other if it only serves some purpose' (*PP* 454). This broad pragmatical proclamation is again remote from anything Lange says or would have been likely to agree with.

My contention that James' and Lange's theories were different in this regard can be underscored by referring to what some commentators have found fault with in James' account. We can then ask whether Lange's published views are subject to the same criticisms. As early as 1884, Edmund Gurney raised the objection that James' account might well explain a limited class of emotions, such as the fear or revulsion occasioned by the startling sight of a snake. Gurney argues, however, that 'as soon as we advance to cases where the close and assignable relation to the environment ceases, the difficulties of the theory begin'.[9] Damasio, who is broadly sympathetic to James, develops a similar objection. Damasio tells us that 'the mapping of the body is unlikely to be as direct as William James once imagined', and by this he means the ways in which our feelings register or map those non-cerebral bodily events that correlate with emotions.[10] For Damasio, that is one reason why James' proposal is

[9] Edmund Gurney, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind* **9**:35 (1884), 421–426.

[10] Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (London: William Heinemann, 2003), 88.

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'neither flawless nor complete'.[11] Damasio adds in the same context that James points us broadly in the right direction because 'feelings are largely a reflection of body-state changes', but Damasio also insists that this is not always the case because some feelings do not arise in response to any actual corporeal changes. James, Damasio writes, 'gave little or no weight to the process of evaluating mentally the situation that causes the emotion'.[12] He adds immediately that there is in James' theory 'no provision for an alternative or supplementary mechanism to generate the feeling that corresponds to a body excited by emotion'. As I mentioned before, in this regard Damasio argues for the importance of a distinction between early or primary emotive responses and adult, secondary ones where the source of the feeling is not the brain's interpretation of a bodily event, but a cognitive or imaginative 'as if' generation of a body image that registers as emotional excitation. It is the primary emotions that are conditioned reflex or 'gut' reactions, but these sorts of responses hardly exhaust the range of our affective behaviour. In other cases, there is room for variation because of the role played by a thoughtful, 'evaluative filtering process'. Damasio elaborates on the shortcomings of the James account as follows:

> His account works well for the first emotions one experiences in life, but it does not do justice to what Othello goes through in his mind before he develops jealousy and anger, or to what Hamlet broods about before exciting his body into what he will perceive as disgust, or to the twisted reasons why Lady Macbeth should experience ecstasy as she leads her husband into a murderous rampage.[13]

Damasio calls such cases, where emotions arise on the basis of complex cognitive attitudes, our 'secondary affective responses'. As I pointed out above, Lange diverges from James in that he draws a similar distinction at the outset of his 1885 essay. Lest we be tempted to start referring to the Lange-Damasio theory, there are many differences between their accounts, starting with the fact that Lange missed out on the last 130 years of neuroscience.

[11] Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 367.

[12] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994), 130.

[13] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 130.

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3. Response to an objection

It may be objected at this point that I have yet to demonstrate that the standard account of the James–Lange theory is totally wrong or misleading. Here is how that objection might run. James and Lange came up with essentially the same explanatory model for the primary emotions, even if it true that James overgeneralized about that model's extension. In spite of the various differences between the two thinkers' other views, the standard account of the James–Lange theory is sound in that it identifies their fundamental agreement regarding both the nature and explanation of the primary emotions.

I have two lines of response to this objection. The first returns to Lange's distinction between the primary emotions and other kinds of affective states. Even if Lange and James had exactly the same theory of the primary emotions, their psychological doctrines nonetheless diverge significantly in that Lange denies that there is a single theory that covers the passions as well as the primary emotions. In a moment I will provide additional evidence of the importance that this point had for Lange. The second line of response directly attacks the assumption that James and Lange had essentially the same explanatory model of the primary emotions. In support of this claim, I shall refer to some relevant central theoretical tenets about which James and Lange explicitly disagreed.[14]

[14] One place to look is the manner in which a token emotion is identified. Above I cited a passage in which James explicitly identifies an emotion with the feeling or sensation of peripheral bodily events; our feeling 'IS the emotion', he asserts. Some commentators doubt that this is the most charitable way to read James; see, for example, Phoebe Ellsworth, 'William James and Emotion: Is a Century of Fame Worth a Century of Misunderstanding?', *Psychological Review* **101** (1994), 222–229, and Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29. For the argument that James actually did regularly identify the emotion with the feeling, see Rainer Reisenzein, Wulf-Uwe Meyer, and Achim Schützwohl, 'James and the Physical Basis of Emotion: A Comment on Ellsworth', *Psychological Review* **102**:4 (1995), 757–761. Lange sometimes similarly appears to reduce the emotional episode to the bodily feeling, but not always, since Lange also states that the emotion is not just a feeling, but a causal episode including both stimulus and response. It could be argued, then, that Lange and James differed in this regard. I shall not pursue this argument here because Lange's texts are inconsistent on this topic. Lange writes, for example: 'the certain and tangible factors in every emotion are, first of all, the cause – a sensory impression that as a

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To that end, we must first recall some key aspects of James' explanatory model. James asserts that the neural processes that generate emotions are what he called 'the ordinary sensorial brain-processes' and the 'ordinary reflex circuits' (*W* 188, 203; *PP* 473–474). We do not find such denials of modularity in Lange. According to James, an episodic emotion begins in one of two ways: in the first, a sensory organ is activated by some object and is then 'apperceived' by some cortical centre; in the second, there is no impression from a sensory organ, but somehow a cortical centre gives rise to 'an idea' of a sensorial activation by an object. The next step is that 'the reflex currents' pass from the brain down into the body where they cause changes in the viscus, muscles, and skin. These changes are then 'apperceived' by the cortical centres; this latter apperception 'combines' with the initial apperception of the object or image of an object. The result of these combined apperceptions is that the sensed object is experienced as the object of a feeling or emotion.

Turning now to Lange's explanatory model, we find no mention of any 'apperceptions'. He says that in the simplest cases, an impression received by a sense organ stimulates a corresponding cortical centre, which passes the stimulation along to the vasomotor centre, which he describes as the group of nerve cells that regulates the innervation of the blood vessels. When this vasomotor centre effects vascular changes, it is these changes that are experienced as an emotion.

James was definitely not in agreement with Lange regarding the crucial function of the vasomotor centre. Here is what James says about the topic in his letter to Ribot: 'I confess he seems to me to exaggerate the "primary" character of the vaso-motor manifestations. I see no reason why we should not assume coordinate effects on the vaso-motor and the voluntary-muscular systems'.[15] Here James assails what is a central theoretical proposition for Lange, who declares on the contrary that 'We owe all of the emotional side of our mental life, our joys and sorrows, our happy and unhappy hours, to our vasomotor system' (*OS* 86; *UG 76*; *E 80*). In light of such a strong statement, it would seem that the intersection of James' and

rule works through an association of ideas or a memory; next there is the effect, namely, the aforementioned vaso-motor and other attendant changes in bodily and mental function. The question then is what lies in between these two factors, if anything at all does lie between them' (*OS* 59; *UG* 50; *E* 64).

[15] James to Ribot, July 1888, in *The Correspondence of William James, Volume 6,* 420–421.

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Lange's views does not include one of Lange's central propositions about the physiological basis of the primary emotions. Both thinkers' physiological hypotheses are wrong according to contemporary science, but they were wrong in different ways: James for denying the existence of specialized, emotion activation centres; Lange for his belief in a vasomotor centre as a single brain structure and for believing it to be causally active in all emotive events.[16]

Lange's explanation of primary emotion also diverges from James' in another significant way. Lange refers to the example of a child who finds a particular medicine distasteful. After repeated, unpleasant experiences of being required to swallow this nasty medicine, the child becomes afraid at the mere sight of the spoon in his mother's hand. Lange explains this response by saying that as a result of the association of the bad taste with the spoon, a neural link has been formed between previously unrelated cortical centres, making possible an indirect stimulation of the vasomotor centre causing the innervation experienced as a negative emotion. Here it would seem that Lange has independently anticipated some of Pavlov's key ideas about conditioned responses.[17] Arguably it is one of his most innovative theoretical ideas in this area of enquiry, and it is missing in James' theory.

In sum, once one looks at the details, it turns out that Lange and James disagreed on several points with regard to the explanation of the primary emotions. As I acknowledged at the outset of this paper, there were also points of agreement between them, and it is important to identify them. James writes: 'A purely disembodied human emotion is a nonentity' (*PP* 452). Lange in turn proclaims that 'the emotions are not forces that stand outside the body and dominate it' (*OS* 84; *UG* 74; *E* 79). This is the most striking point of convergence between the two theorists' declarations. It amounts to a very broad and negative thesis to the effect that no emotion is a disembodied mental event or state. Take the bodily feelings away and there is

[16] Preben Bender Petersen regrets that Lange's readers, and this would include James, have not paid sufficient attention to a footnote in which Lange attenuates his usual emphasis on the vascular system. Lange here acknowledged that he has 'simplied the matter' by separating the vasomotor function from the rest of the nervous system, whereas it is in fact 'only part of the involuntary nerve muscle apparatus' (*OS* 51, n. 1; *UG 87–88*, n. 20; *E* 87, n. 20); see Petersen's 'La description de réflexes conditionnels par C. Lange comme base de sa théorie d'émotion vaso-motrice', *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavia* **41** (June 1966), 188–192, at 189 (Petersen cites *Les émotions*, 156).

[17] This aspect of Lange's theory is usefully stressed in Petersen's 'La description de réflexes conditionnels'.

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nothing left to an emotion. Rephrased positively, it follows that Lange and James both thought the activation of the brain was necessary to the subjective feelings we associate with emotions. But I think it worth noting at this point that neither James nor Lange has anything to say about why it is that some bodily and cerebral events are consciously experienced or felt whereas others are not. Their convergence on a thesis concerning the embodiment of emotions does not suffice to establish that there was a novel James–Lange theory of the emotions, since James and Lange cannot be correctly credited with having been innovative in affirming this rather broad proposition. In a 1914 paper, E. D. Titchener pointed out that whereas Lange identifies various figures who anticipated his thesis (including Spinoza, Malebranche, Bocalosi, Sibbern, Lenhossék), James appears to have considered his hypothesis to have been 'completely novel'. Titchener considers this 'something of a curiosity in the history of psychology' and wonders how James could have 'ignored Lange's references to the past'.[18] Note that if it is true that the central proposition on which Lange and James converged was unoriginal, as Tichener argues, there is no good reason to call their points of convergence 'the James–Lange theory'.

4. Lange's aesthetics

I return now to my second line of response to the objection that the standard account of the James–Lange theory is essentially correct in spite of significant differences between Lange's and James' views. Here I refer to Lange's 1899 book, which, as was mentioned before, he characterized as an extension or continuation of his 1895 pamphlet. A lack of acquaintance with this 1899 work is, I believe, one of the main reasons why the idea of a significant James–Lange convergence is so persistent in the literature.

The title of Lange's book, *Nydelsernes fysiologi*, translates roughly as 'physiology of the pleasures (or enjoyments or gratifications)'. Lange rejects the idea that there is one single feeling that can be appealed to in a definition of 'pleasure', and suggests that the only reliable symptom is whether the subject strives to attain or maintain a given condition. Whatever satisfies this 'provisional criterion' falls within the scope of his study. Lange argues at some length that even feelings of fear and anger can be sources of pleasure or

[18] E.B. Titchener, 'An Historical Note on the James–Lange Theory of Emotion', *The American Journal of Psychology* **25**:3 (1914), 427–447, at 446.

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enjoyment for some subjects. As for 'fysiologi', Lange acknowledges that there is no properly physiological criterion of pleasure because it has diverse sources and bodily manifestations. It was his view that given the largely incomplete knowledge of the brain's physiology, it is not a good idea to try to give an explanation of what takes place in the brain when we are thinking (*OS* 75; *UG* 65; *E* 73). Given the limitations of the available neuroscience, he is obliged to operate largely at a psychological (and broadly functional) level of description, but will nonetheless risk some physiological interpretations (*B* 2–3).

In his 1899 book, Lange refers directly to his 1885 essay and to the distinction he drew there between affective responses that are and are not mediated by memories, thought, and reflection, i.e. the difference between passions and the primary emotions narrowly defined, where some stimulus directly affects the vasomotor system without the mediation of higher mental/brain processes. Lange remarks in the later work that the distinction between immediate and mediated affective states is 'very important in aesthetics' (*B* 118–119). This is the case because almost all of the aesthetically relevant responses belong to the category of secondary affects or passions.

Lange surveys what he takes to be the fundamental ways in which the arts can serve as a source of gratification. He elaborates on three main sources, which in Danish he calls 'Afveksling', 'Sympathie', and 'Beundring'. The first of these three translates as 'change, variation, variety'; the second as sympathy – with a strong emphasis on affective mimicry, and the third as 'admiration, respect, wonderment'. Lange says that it is an open empirical question as to whether this list of three sources is exhaustive.

Lange informs his reader that he uses the word 'afveksling' in two different, but 'wholly congruent' senses (*B* 82, 156). The first refers to the changes or movements in a work of art which are necessary for the experience of the work to be pleasant at all, examples being changes of tempo, dynamics, and pitch in a musical performance. A uniform, unchanging stimulus can rarely give anyone pleasure, and if it does so, the pleasure is feeble and brief. Lange writes that if 'forms, colours, or sounds are to give us pleasure, there must be variety in the impression […] the need for changing impressions is absolute, imperative, and always in place' (*B* 83–84). Yet Lange does not believe it possible to formulate any reliable recipes specifying the nature of this requisite variety. The many relevant variables include differences of intensity between discrete impressions or stimuli, the extent to which a pattern is difficult or easy to grasp for

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the perceiving subject, the rate of dissipation of impressions, and so on.

In the second sense in which 'Afveksling' is used by Lange, the term refers to the need for 'afløsning' or relief when a repeated stimulus threatens to lose its positive effect and become either indifferent or unpleasant. Lange refers here to a 'craving for novelty' [nyhedstrangen] as opposed to a 'need for variety of sense impressions' [behov for vekslende Sanseindtryk], yet both are said to be species of a disposition to find pleasure in *Afveksling*. Lange observes that in both cases the hedonic value of variation and relief depends upon the immediate stimulus' relation to prior stimuli. Some works or performances are especially pleasurable to experience because they break radically with a style or tendency that has become overly familiar, tiresome, or repetitive for a given public. Lange asserts that in itself novelty has no intrinsic artistic merit; it is only in conjunction with other conditions, which he is in no position to specify, that novelty relative to some prior pattern is an additional source of enjoyment. This was of course not an insight original to Lange, who unfortunately does not mention any of his sources in the literature of aesthetics. He might have mentioned l'Abbé Dubos, who, in his 1713 reflections on the arts, notoriously emphasized the value of a precious relief from boredom.[19]

The second basic source of artistic gratification that Lange discusses is sympathy, by which he means a kind of emotional contagion. Lange writes: 'Emotions, and therefore often feelings of enjoyment or pleasure, are carried from one person to the next merely through the perception of their visible or audible manifestations – where these manifestations could be natural, artistically represented, or only described with words. This fact plays a huge role in the domain of the arts and aesthetics and provides a basis for major artistic tendencies' (*B* 103–104). Lange has a very broad understanding of sympathy and would appear to include cases where the audience enjoys an emotive relief from boredom by observing other persons, or representations of other persons, who are in great distress. The recognition of *Schadenfreude* as an important albeit morally regrettable component of artistic response is again reminiscent of Dubos.

I turn now to Lange's third main source of pleasure. One of the reasons why the arts provide us with a badly needed source of gratification is that successful artistic performances occasion in us enjoyable feelings of admiration. Lange explains that the proper object of

[19] For background, see my 'Dubos' Paradox', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* **53**: 4 (2013), 393–406.

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admiration is the recognition that the artist has overcome difficulties in his or her performance; to know something about this, one must know what was involved in the making of the work, and this requires insight and 'Kundskab' [knowledge, proficiency]. Lange writes: 'There is a great deal of affectation in this domain, but I cannot nourish a true and frank feeling of admiration for productions other than those the execution of which I genuinely understand' (*B* 123). To underscore this general point, Lange has recourse to contrast cases based on perceptual indiscernibility. Here is what he says about a first kind of example:

> For example, I can admire a work made of glass or metal as long as I take it to be the result of some difficult and artful handicraft, such as forging, cutting, polishing, and other similar activities. Yet my enjoyment, and with it my delight, vanish instantly if I learn that the object was produced effortlessly, for example, through a simple casting – even though its condition [Beskaffenhed] and perceptual appearance are the same in both cases (*B* 35).

Lange's second indiscernibility example involves a painting and a perfect copy of it. We are to imagine that the two pictures resemble each other like 'two drops of water'. Even experts are in great doubt as to which of these two pictures is the original. One might think that in such a case that the artistic pleasure occasioned by the two pictures would be the same. This would indeed be the case, Lange observes, until the moment when doubt is removed. The lesson he draws from this case runs as follows: 'There is then something in a work, independent of its properties and condition, that can make pleasure possible […] as soon as we are aware of differences in their origins, the works have divergent capacities to give rise to a pleasurable response' (*B* 126).

Lange also mentions a third category of cases where admiration is integral to artistic appreciation. He has in mind our recognition of the difficulties surmounted by artists working in earlier historical periods where the level of artistic technique and achievement was much lower than what he take our contemporary level to be. This assumption regarding the discrepancy of levels does not prevent us from admiring the achievements of artists whose style is, by our current standards, archaic. The object of this kind of admiration and enjoyment is not a purely sensual input, i.e. the perception of the visual and other features of the artefact.

I think I have said enough now about Lange's foray into aesthetics to have established that he did not deem it possible to explain the

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complex dynamics of art appreciation as being a matter of primary emotive response. Although he clearly allows that primary emotions can be components of aesthetic experience, he does not advance a theory according to which all art-occasioned affect amounts to the kinds of processes involved in the primary emotions.

The general topic of the relations between aesthetics and psychology leads to another contrast between the perspectives of Lange and James. Both James and Lange had serious reservations about the merits of philosophical aesthetics. James mocks what he calls the 'high-priori' road travelled in 'Kantian, Hegelian, Schopenhauerian, Herbartian, and other Teutonic efforts to reduce the life of aesthetic feeling to some single essential conception […] Everything that is subtle in our preferences escapes from the accounts that are given'.[20] James would appear to espouse an extreme version of particularism with regard to aesthetic and artistic value. He evokes the 'vast and shifting play of Man's aesthetic life', which thwarts the generalizations of philosophical aesthetics with its 'profoundly unsatisfying' speculations and abstractions.[21] Although Lange would have agreed with James' reservations about *a priori* reasoning as a privileged method in aesthetics, and although Lange frankly stated his preference for science over what he castigated as metaphysics and verbalism, he clearly did not agree with James' particularist assumptions regarding the preferences and affect involved in aesthetics. As Lange freely admitted, the hoped-for scientific reduction of aesthetics to psychology, and of psychology to physiology, remained massively incomplete. Lange nonetheless tried to contribute to this project and to that end risked various psychological generalizations about art appreciation and aesthetic responses more generally, beginning with the hypothesis that the arts find their very origin and function in the attempt to meet a constant craving for pleasure (*B* 110, 112, 116).

5. Lange's parting words

I turn now to a brief discussion of a question that is very likely to come to mind when one reads through the corpus of texts I have been discussing in this paper. As I indicated above, James was

[20] James, review of *Pain, Pleasure, and Aesthetics*, by Henry R. Marshall, in his *Essays, Comments, and Reviews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 489.

[21] James, review of *The Sense of Beauty*, by George Santayana, in his *Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, 177.

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generous in his references to Lange and unilaterally gave him credit for independently developing the theory that James himself was trying to elaborate. In sharp contrast, Lange never in print mentioned James' work or James' remarks about Lange's views.[22] This is especially puzzling given that we have good reason to believe that Lange was aware of James' references to his work. Why, one wonders, did Lange never cite James in print? (James' name is absent from the citations in Lange's 1899 book. At the time of his death, Lange was working on a book on psychology. In the fragment he left behind, there is also no mention of James.) Why not? Late in his life Lange did make a somewhat surprising statement that is relevant to this question. In an 1899 review of work by Alfred Lehmann, Lange wrote:

> In reality I have not, as is generally said (and as has also been said by Dr Lehmann), advanced a *theory* of emotions. I have only given the concept a scientific definition in the place of metaphysical ones that merely play with words. The emotions' bodily phenomena have of course been very well known since olden times; my service in the matter consists of showing that the genesis [istandkomst] of these phenomena can be understood without the assumption of a spiritual force or mental entity [en sjælelig Kraft, en aandelig Entitet] as their immediate cause, and that what we call 'emotions' [sindsbevægelser] are only the sensation [fornemmelse] of changes in our bodily condition.[23]

Reading between the lines, I would say that Lange knew perfectly well that both he and James had asserted that emotions are not disembodied causes of bodily events. Yet unlike James, he did not have any illusions about this having been an original point or anything worthy of the name 'theory'. That is why, unlike James, Lange cited authors who had previously published the main idea. It is also highly likely that Lange disagreed with other parts of James' theorizing, but was not inclined to take the matter up in print. He struggled with illness in the final years of his life, and devoted his remaining energies

[22] Lange, 'Udkast til en psykologi', in Knud Farber, *Erindringer om C. Lange* (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaards, 1927), 67–113.

[23] Lange, cited in Faber, *Erindringer*, 30, my trans. The context was Lange's 1899 review in *Hospitalstidende* of Alfred Georg Ludvig Lehmann's *De sjælelige tilstandes legemlige ytringer pletsymografiske undersøgelser*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Frimodt, 1888). Lehmann had criticized both James and Lange in his *Die Hauptgesetze des menschlichen Gefühlslebens*, trans. F. Bendixen (Leipzig: Reisland, 1892), 65–75.

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to trying to complete his ambitious outline of a physiological aesthetics as well as a more general treatise in psychology.[24]

If some readers are not especially interested in this particular episode of intellectual history, they may be wondering whether I have any more general morals to draw, and not just the historian's truism that translations and brief standard accounts can be misleading when it comes to what people actually wrote and asserted. One more general issue that emerges from the discussion pertains to the importance of drawing distinctions within the broad category of affective events and states. A second more general conclusion might be that Lange was at least broadly on the right track with some of his claims about affective responses to the arts, even if those remarks were not as original and as comprehensive as he may have hoped. A reductive, perceptual and gut-reaction approach to affect is, as Lange clearly discovered, not adequate to the range of relevant responses. One may remark here that this is what contextualists in aesthetics have been saying for some time, but one moral of my story is that this general approach in aesthetics is much older than is often recognized.

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