

## Naturalism and the Tale of Two Facets

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### Abstract

Williams and DeSteno (2010) and Gladkova (2010) question the validity, utility, and theoretical support for the bifurcation of pride into hubristic and authentic facets. Though these commentators highlight unanswered questions and important directions for future research, we argue that the broad, evolutionarily informed framework for the two facets, presented in our target article nonetheless provides the best fit and explanation for the existing pattern of evidence. We offer several empirical suggestions for future studies addressing the questions raised by the commentators, and emphasize the need for emotion researchers to hew closely to empirical data in developing theoretical accounts.

### Keywords

emotion, facial expressions, pride

By describing ours as a naturalist's view on pride, our intention was to emphasize, first, our epistemological commitment to empirical methodologies over the more intuitive approaches that have typified philosophical accounts of emotion, and second, our functionalist view of pride rooted in a Darwinian understanding of human nature. The target article is thus an attempt to best account for the current state of empirical evidence, and to provide the most useful framework for stimulating further research. Williams and DeSteno, and Gladkova, offer important questions for our model, and highlight areas where more evidence is needed, but, in our view, do not raise points that seriously discredit our theory, or offer a more comprehensive account of the available evidence.

Williams and DeSteno note that the two facets of pride—hubristic and authentic—fail to meet the criteria typically required of “natural kinds”. Despite the superficial titular similarities, however, the naturalist neither requires nor endorses a devotion to such criteria. Classificatory frameworks relying on categorical labels such as “basic emotion” or “natural kind” too often hinder scientific progress; these terms have vague or multiple meanings and, instead of generating empirical research,

tend to generate debates about whether phenomena meet (often arbitrary) classification criteria. The naturalist's account, in contrast, specifies falsifiable hypotheses, is generative, has explanatory rather than descriptive power, and uses well-defined and meaningful terminology.

At this point, despite strong evidence for pride as a universal product of human evolution, there is simply not enough evidence to know whether authentic and hubristic pride are distinct evolved adaptations. However, given strong evidence for their distinct structure, behavioral tendencies, and interpersonal outcomes in Western culture (Ashton-James & Tracy, 2009; Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2007; Tracy, Cheng, Robins, & Trzesniewski, 2009), we find our evolutionary account of the facets to be the most compelling. Authentic and hubristic pride are associated with highly divergent personality correlates, cognitive elicitors, subjective feeling experiences, and social behaviors, but *not*, as Williams and DeSteno point out, distinct nonverbal expressions. This pattern of results is difficult to explain using abstract rules about category inclusion criteria, but makes sense from an evolutionary account that provides explanations based on phylogenetic history, and traces the facets' shared nonverbal expression back to an ancient dominance display still observed in non-human primates. Williams and DeSteno offer several alternative hypotheses to account for the two-facet findings, but these accounts, though theoretically tenable, do not stand up to empirical scrutiny. The distinction between the facets is not due to positive versus negative valence (the two-facet structure holds controlling for variance in evaluative valence), state/trait distinctions (both facets are comprised of state and trait-like words, and the two-facet structure characterizes state and trait experiences), intensity (the facets do not differ in intensity; Tracy & Robins, 2007), or varying impact on long-term versus short-term status outcomes (the facets are associated with two distinct forms of status—dominance and prestige—both of which characterize stable, long-term hierarchies, and the distinct relations between each facet and form of status hold in long-acquainted social groups; Cheng et al., 2010).

Thus, though extant evidence for the evolutionary origins of the two pride facets is far from conclusive, the few studies conducted thus far are consistent with our account, and no findings have emerged to falsify it. Williams and DeSteno note an absence of “differentiated neurobiological markers,” but given that the first empirical evidence for the two-facet structure was published only in 2007, it is far too early to take the absence of evidence for neurobiological discreteness as reason to accept the null hypothesis. Furthermore, a growing literature points to distinct neurobiologies of dominance and prestige systems (see target article); these findings pinpoint specific neurobiological markers that future researchers could examine in seeking biologically distinct pride facets.

One critical question for the naturalist’s account of the two facets is cross-cultural generalizability. By noting that Russian definitions of pride evoke facets different from the two that emerged from empirical studies conducted in the US, Gladkova questions whether the authentic–hubristic distinction meets this standard. Her linguistic analysis suggests that the Russian concept most similar to authentic pride (“*gordit’sja*”) differs from the American facet in intensity, the role of social group members, and, possibly, the eliciting cognitive appraisals. Evolutionary explanations do not, however, preclude cultural variation. Cultural norms influence the appropriateness of emotion displays and experiences, as well as how emotion-eliciting events are appraised (e.g., whether individual success is appraised as goal-congruent), resulting in cultural differences in the frequency, valuation, and elicitors of various emotions (e.g., Mesquita, 2001). Specific emotions may nonetheless represent *functional universals* (serving the same function across cultures) or *existential universals* (cognitively available across cultures but serving a different purpose; Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). While extant evidence supports the functional universality of the pride expression (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008), the two facets may be existential universals; based on Gladkova’s account, *gordit’sja* may be less tied to individual achievements than authentic pride. However, it also remains possible that the two-facets are *non-universals*

(authentic pride may be a social construction of Western culture). The only way to address this issue is with systematic cross-cultural research, including conceptual studies (e.g., measuring perceptions of the similarity among pride and non-pride concepts) and experiential studies (i.e., measuring self-reported pride experiences in terms of subjective feelings, cognitive elicitors, and behavioral consequences), as has been done in the US (see Tracy & Robins, 2007).

In summary, while considerable research remains before we can conclude that the two pride facets are the result of distinct evolutionary pressures, the accumulated findings consistent with this account seem more compelling than the few arguments against it, particularly since these arguments are largely based on the fact that only a handful of studies have been conducted. We thank the commentators for noting important unanswered questions, and call for more research as the best way to address them.

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