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PRESS RELEASE

September 21, 2010

USC's Neuroscience Pioneer Antonio Damasio to Receive Honda Prize 2010 for His Contributions to the Neurobiology of the Mind

The Honda Foundation, co-founded by Soichiro Honda and his younger brother Benjiro Honda and currently headed by Hiromori Kawashima, is pleased to announce that the Honda Prize[*1] for the year 2010 will be awarded to Dr. Antonio Damasio, David Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience and Director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California, U.S.A., for his pioneering efforts and remarkable contributions in the world of neuroscience. Dr. Damasio will be the 31st laureate of the Honda Prize.

It can be said that the human brain is an ultimate example of ecotechnology[*2]. It can instantly make decisions with a very small amount of energy, which would otherwise require several interlinked, high-powered supercomputers. Brain research has advanced through a multitude of hypotheses and tests but even with the edge of modern neuroscience, it is not yet possible to fully elucidate the relationships between mind, brain, and body. There are still many missing or untested pieces in the puzzle.

Since the early years of his career Dr. Damasio has been contributing to those missing pieces. He focused his interest on the roles of emotions and feelings in human behavior, including consciousness and decision-making. In his most influential Somatic Marker Hypothesis, he proposed that emotions and feelings play a central role in decision-making via a mechanism he termed "somatic markers". Somatic markers tag the images involved in the reasoning process with emotions related to past experiences, thus conferring differential values upon those images. In other words, in its ultrafast and partly unconscious computations, our brain uses somatic/emotional signals to make "intelligent" decisions that conform to previously acquired knowledge.

Dr. Damasio first obtained the basis for this theory from his case studies of neurological patients with damage in brain regions related to emotion, such as the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. He found that the patients had defects of judgment and inappropriate social behavior which were caused by their inability to respond emotionally to the content of their thoughts. These early findings were later investigated with the tools of cognitive neuroscience, including experimental functional brain imaging.

Dr. Damasio's other work on the neural basis of the emotions led him to propose that the brain's insula was the cortical platform for the processing of emotional feelings, a hypothesis that has been widely confirmed. In turn, his work on feelings has been applied to the problem of how the self and the conscious mind are constructed.

As the main route of inquiry into the human mind shifts from philosophy to science, Dr. Damasio's research stands at the forefront. It has inspired one neuroscientist after another, and created a new trend of cross-disciplinary projects with scholars from philosophy, neuropsychology, cognitive science, psychiatry, biology, economics, education and the arts. These collaborative efforts are expected to have an impact in the management of brain diseases such as depression and psychopathy, and in the elucidation of social behaviors.

Dr. Damasio is married to his longtime collaborator, Dr. Hanna Damasio, who is a renowned specialist in brain imaging.

Thanks to Dr. Damasio's intellectual bravery and truly original thinking, we can now think of emotions along the same lines with which we understand vision or audition, and thus reach a much deeper understanding of the brain basis for mind and consciousness. Without a doubt such understanding is one of the vital steps toward a knowledge society. We believe Dr. Damasio's achievements measure up to the ideals of ecotechnology, and deserve the Honda Prize.

The 31st award ceremony for the Honda Prize will be held at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo on November 17th 2010. In addition to the prize diploma and medal, 10 million yen will be awarded to the laureate.

***1 Honda Prize**: The Honda Prize was established in 1980 as the first international scientific award in Japan. Since then, the Prize has been counted as one of the most important international awards by the International Congress of Distinguished Awards. The Prize has been awarded to some of the most distinguished scholars at work in the fields of biology and technology.

***2 Ecotechnology**: The concept of Ecotechnology has been the Honda Foundation's guiding principle since 1979. The word was coined from the terms ecology and technology, where ecology connotes an entire global system which includes human civilization. The concept of ecotechnology calls for the harmonious development and use of technology with human beings and their environment.

For more details: Please visit http://www.hondafoundation.jp or call:

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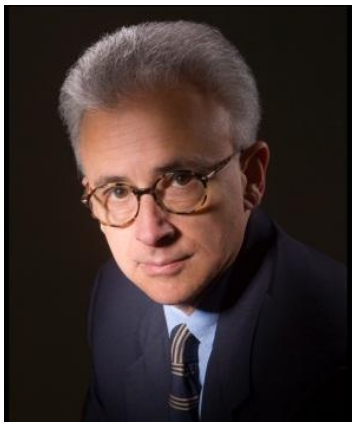
Curriculum Vitae for Dr. Antonio Damasio

David Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience
Director, Brain and Creativity Institute
University of Southern California



BORN in Lisbon, Portugal ; U.S. citizen

DEGREES

1969, MD, University of Lisbon Medical School, Portugal
1974, PhD, University of Lisbon, Portugal

APPOINTMENTS

2006 – Present	University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, U.S. ; David Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience, and Director, Brain and Creativity Institute
1975 – 2005	University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, U.S. ; Van Allen Distinguished Professor
1989 – Present	Adjunct Professor, The Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, CA, U.S.

PUBLICATIONS

Damasio is the author of over 350 scientific publications and of seven books, among them *Descartes' Error*, *The Feeling of What Happens*, and *Looking for Spinoza*.
His most recent book is *Self Comes to Mind*, which will be published this fall.

SELECTED HONORS

Academies 2009, Elected Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science; 2006, Elected to the Academy of Sciences, Lisbon; 2002, Elected to Bavarian Academy of Sciences; 1998, Elected to the Association of American Physicians ; 1998, Elected to Permanent Membership, Belgium's Royal Society of Medicine ; 1997, Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences ; 1995, Elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences ; 1993, Elected to the European Academy of Arts and Sciences

Honorary Degrees 2010, Doctor Honoris Causa (D. Phil. H.C.), University of Leiden; 2009, Doctor Honoris Causa (D. Merc. H.C.), University of Copenhagen (Copenhagen Business School); 2003, Doctor Honoris Causa (D. Phil. H.C.), University of Aveiro; 2002, Doctor Honoris Causa (D. Phil. H.C.), University of Aachen

Awards
2009, Richard Wollheim Prize, London; 2005,Prince of Asturias Award for Scientific and Technical Research; 2004, Signoret Prize in Cognitive Neuroscience (shared with Hanna Damasio); 2003, Nonino Prize; 2002, Named "Highly Cited Researcher" in Neuroscience by the Institute for Scientific Information; 2000, The Reenpää Prize, Finland; 1997, Prix Plasticité Neuronale, Ipsen Foundation; 1995, Golden Brain Award (Berkeley); 1995, Order of Santiago da Espada (Grand Oficial), Portugal; 1992, Pessoa Prize (shared with Hanna Damasio)