

Damasio Awarded 2010 Honda Prize

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Antonio Damasio researches the role of emotion in behavior.

APS Fellow Antonio Damasio has received the 2010 Honda Prize, an international prize awarded each year to a distinguished scholar working in the fields of biology and technology. Damasio, Professor of Neuroscience and Director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California, researches the role of emotion in behavior, particularly in decision making.

He is perhaps best known for his Somatic Marker Hypothesis, which proposes that the human brain “tags” information involved in decision making with somatic markers based on emotions, resulting in different emotional associations with each piece of information. These emotional markers are used, consciously or unconsciously, to guide complex decision-making tasks which would be too taxing or time-consuming to pursue via purely cognitive methods. Damasio’s research has also led to identifying the insula as a key area of the brain involved in emotional processing.

Damasio is proud to be the 31st recipient of the Honda Prize. “I am honored to join the list of recipients of the Honda Prize, a truly outstanding group of investigators,” he said.

A statement from Honda praised Damasio’s neurological approach to emotion research, saying that “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.”

The Honda Prize was established in 1980 as the first international scientific award in Japan. The Prize has become one of the most important international awards for science and includes a monetary prize of 10 million yen (about US \$120,000).