

## New Insights About Brain, Emotions And Social Behavior To Be Discussed By Renowned Neuroscientist May 4 At UCSD

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The role of emotions in decision-making and the brain mechanisms underlying such feelings as joy and sorrow will be among the topics discussed May 4 in a University of California, San Diego Center for the Humanities lecture by Antonio Damasio, professor of Neurology and head of the Department at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, and an internationally recognized researcher, author and lecturer in the field of neuroscience.

Damasio will speak on *Emotion, Social Behavior and Spinoza: The Brain Perspective* at 7:30 p.m. in Mandeville Center Auditorium on the UCSD campus. The event is free and open to the public.

In his most recent book, *Looking For Spinoza*, Damasio documents the brain basis for feelings, shows what they are made of biologically and presents new evidence of their impact on decision-making, social behavior and creativity. The book, subtitled *The Feeling Brain*, is a window into the neurological pathways necessary for emotions. Damasio's perspective draws on a range of analogies from the world of ideas and highlights the theories of the great 17th Century Portuguese-Dutch philosopher Benidictus Spinoza, who anticipated modern views of biology and mind without the benefit of contemporary neuroscience technology.

Like Spinoza, Damasio has Portuguese roots, having received his M.D. and Ph.D degrees from the University of Lisbon. In addition to holding the M.W. Van Allen Distinguished Professorship at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, he is an adjunct professor at the Salk Institute in La Jolla. His other books are *Descartes Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (1994) and *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (1999-2000).

"We have long wanted to bring Antonio Damasio to UCSD, a campus with flourishing scholarship in issues surrounding brain and mind," said Director of the Center for Humanities, Professor of Philosophy Georgios Anagnostopoulos. "Damasio's research and writing have significantly advanced the field of neuroscience. The new understanding he brings to the biological basis of emotions and feelings bears serious implications for human ethics and moral behavior. We eagerly anticipate his presentation," said the humanities scholar.

Damasio has said that he "invokes the thinking of Spinoza who foreshadowed modern emotional studies and connected emotion to ethics." Elaborating on this Anagnostopoulos says the author, "combines the latest advances in neuroscience with Spinoza's meditation on the nature of the mind and its relations to the physical in a profound exploration of feelings and the role they play in decision-making."

In the laboratory, Damasio has conducted pioneering studies of patients with focal brain damage. He has shown that reason and emotion are tightly linked in day-to-day decision-making and that the emotions reflect changes in the inner body. People with damage that destroys the link between reason and emotion show impaired rationality and reduced capacity to internalize social norms, thereby having considerable impact on their behavior.

Damasio has won numerous awards, including the Nonino Prize from Italy, the Arnold Pfeffer Prize, the Reenpaa Prize in Neuroscience from Finland and the Prix Plasticite Neuronale, Ipsen Foundation. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the European Academy of Arts and Sciences.

For information on the May 4 Damasio lecture, please call (858) 534-0999 or visit the Center for Humanities website: [humctr.ucsd.edu](http://humctr.ucsd.edu).

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