



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
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A Message from the Director of the
Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence
Gregory L. Eastwood, MD

The purpose of the Inamori Center is to foster ethical leadership around the world.

February 11, 2008

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(1) **Sometimes I Just Can't Help Doing the Right Thing - I Guess It's in My Genes**

“In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.”

- Anne Frank: *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1944

Charles Darwin was born Feb 12, 1809 (the same date that Abraham Lincoln was born) and his monumental book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, which has become a pillar of science, but whose applications within and beyond biology are still controversial, was published in 1859. Thus, 2009 is both the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of *Origin of Species*.

Neil Greenspan, Professor of Pathology in the School of Medicine, has been leading a Darwin Planning Committee, of which I am a member. About 15 lectures and other events are planned for the 2008-09 academic year, beginning August 2008 with the Convocation speaker David Quammen, author of *The Reluctant Mr. Darwin*, the common reading book for incoming undergraduate students.

The Inamori Center will participate in the Darwin Year Celebration. Robert Richards, Fishbein Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Chicago, whose interests include the evolutionary basis of ethical behavior, has accepted my invitation to visit here September 18-19, 2008.

Which brings us to the matter of whether morality, ethics, altruism, sympathy, fairness, cooperation, and the like have evolved in Darwinian fashion. Increasing evidence, beginning with speculations by Charles Darwin himself, and accumulating since, indicate that, yes, these high-minded qualities of human thought and behavior indeed have evolved to the benefit of individuals and the community of humanity. Recent research has been aided by such sophisticated machinery as positron-emission tomographic scanning (PET scan) and functional magnetic resonance

imaging (fMRI), which can localize and characterize brain activity in correlation with mood, emotion, problem solving, writing, other mental activities, and even perhaps religious experience.

Is “doing good” simply a matter of conscious, unconscious, or even genetic selfishness? Do we do good things to make us feel good or to be repaid in kind later? Are we engaged in some sort of Darwinian contest that pits our genes against those of others? The answer certainly has to be a qualified yes, but “selfish goodness” is not the whole story. To feel good about doing something good and attending to one’s reputation, perhaps even with an eye that others will do good to us, are easily recognizable and usually acceptable human behaviors. Is not this really a corollary of the Golden Rule? From an evolutionary perspective, evidence supports the notion that those who act within a set of moral principles, cooperate with others, and sometimes sacrifice for others are favored. It takes little imagination to understand why protecting our children, family, and others like us and sacrificing ourselves for them, propagate our genes. But selfish goodness does not fully explain why people behave ethically or altruistically. How do we account for behaviors of kindness, fairness, and personal risk, sometimes death, for complete strangers, people whom we will never see again? Is this something that is hard-wired in there?

This subject is vast and rich. I recommend one or more of the following to get you started on a fuller inquiry.

Steven Pinker. *The Moral Instinct*. New York Times Magazine, January 13, 2008; p 32.

Solomon H. Snyder. *Seeking God in the Brain - Efforts to Localize Higher Brain Function*. New England Journal of Medicine 2008;358:6-7 (January 3, 2008).

Michael S. Gazzaniga. *The Ethical Brain. The Science of Our Moral Dilemmas*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2006.

Antonio Damasio. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. Harcourt, Inc. Orlando, Florida, 2003.

Elliott Sober and David Sloan Wilson. *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

(2) Status of the Inamori Ethics Prize Selection Process

The Inamori Ethics Prize Selection Committee is reviewing a large number of candidates for the prize and will focus on a smaller cluster for serious consideration. The \$25,000 prize will be awarded to an individual who has demonstrated exemplary ethical leadership and accomplishment and whose ethical positions, influence, and actions have greatly improved the condition of humankind. Such individuals may come from business, technology, science, health care, government, philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, education, or other fields. We intend to announce the Inamori Ethics Prize recipient by June 2008.

The main prize events will occur September 4, 2008 and will include a lecture by the recipient, a symposium following the lecture featuring area experts, and a black tie Prize Ceremony in Severance Hall, home of the Cleveland Orchestra, on the campus of Case Western Reserve University.

An Events Planning Committee, comprised of Jocelyne Linsalata, Nancy Callahan, Lara Kalafatis, Eric Dicken, Margaret Carney, and Greg Eastwood, has met and will meet regularly to

plan and coordinate the events associated with the Inamori Ethics Prize. Already we have benefited from their thoughts and advice, for which I am grateful.

(3) Status of the Search for the Director of the Inamori Center

Nominations and applications for the Director of the Inamori Center and Inamori Ethics Professor have been received not only from around the United States, but also from outside the country, which is consistent with the global purview of the center. Two candidates will visit campus during early February and it is likely that others will be interviewed later in the month.

(4) Upcoming Events

Feb 7, 4:30 PM, Thwing Ballroom: Public Lectures by Preston King (“The Political Philosophy of *Gone with the Wind*”) and Alice Randall (“*The Wind Done Gone*: Conception, Publication, Reception”) Dr. Eastwood, welcome and comment on the Inamori Center.

Feb 14, 11:30 AM, Thwing Ballroom: John Bryfonski, Integrity Week speaker
Dr. Eastwood, welcome and comment on the Inamori Center.

Feb 15, 12:30 PM, Nord 310: Academic Integrity Week Panel
Faculty panelists: Laura Tartakoff, Christopher Butler, Leon Blazey
Student panelists: Priya Sonty, Brian Brown, Perry Evangelista
Moderator: Gregory L. Eastwood, MD

Feb 25, 12 noon, Law School: Zaremski Law-Medicine Forum, “Lawyers as Ethical Leaders”
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