**November 8, 2017**

1. Damasio raises the question, "How could emotion and feeling play a role in decision-making?" (p 145). Summarize his answer to this question and provide an example of a more-or-less mundane decision in your own experience that might illustrate Damasio's idea.

2. Damasio is perhaps best known for his somatic marker hypothesis. Explain what the basic idea of this hypothesis is and describe some of the evidence that Damasio offers in support of it.

3. How might the somatic marking process help us survive as a species? Where does the somatic marking take place in the body? Are we, or can we sometimes, be aware of somatic marking taking place?

4. Choose one of the following quotations from Damasio's Chapter 4 and explain in your own words what you take it to mean and what concepts or evidence he uses to support his idea:

* ... the integrity of emotion and feeling is necessary for normal human social behavior. 155
* The history of our civilization is ... the history of a persuasive effort to extend the best of 'moral sentiments' to wider and wider circles of humanity. 163
* To be sure, the beneficial role of the culture depends, in large measure, on the accuracy of the scientific picture of human beings the culture uses to forge its future path. 164
* ... the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and the much-maligned United Nations. All of these institutions can be seen as part and parcel of the tendency to promote homeostasis on a large scale. 169
* Happiness is not a reward for virtue: it is virtue itself. 175
* It is a matter of discovering the circumstances in which feelings can indeed be an arbiter [of good and evil], and using the reasoned coupling of circumstances and feelings as a guide to human behavior. 179

5. Damasio concludes his section on Homeostasis and the Governance of Social Life with the comment that "A formal proposal on the neurobiology of ethical behaviors is outside the scope of this book" (p 169). Yet, he has speculated quite a lot about how biology might be a major factor in the determination of ethical systems. Summarize the basic position he is taking about the biology/ethics relationship.

6. Damasio has used the term conatus many times. How would you summarize its meaning based on what you have read now? How does this term apply at the different levels that Damasio has discussed -- neurons, organs, brain, person, social groups?

7. Summarize Damasio's position with regard to whether people have free will.

8. Earlier in the course we discussed the concept of Social Darwinism and the idea that the implication of evolution is that humans are by nature competitive, even that competition with clear winners and losers for resources is good for humans. Damasio speaks of cooperation as the most important result of human evolution. Explain how cooperation could arise in evolution? Is this idea compatible with Social Darwinism or contradictory to it? Is there biological evidence to support either or both?

9. How would you summarize Damasio's answer to the question he poses, "What are feelings for?"