



The International Journal of Ethical Leadership

Volume 5

Article 10

2018

Martha C. Nussbaum, 2015 Inamori Prize Recipient

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Recommended Citation

Hii, J. Lucas (2018) "Martha C. Nussbaum, 2015 Inamori Prize Recipient," *The International Journal of Ethical Leadership*: Vol. 5 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/ijel/vol5/iss1/10>

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Martha C. Nussbaum, 2015 Inamori Ethics Prize Recipient J. Lucas Hii

Martha C. Nussbaum, the Inamori Prize winner in 2015, remains at the University of Chicago as the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics. Also appointed in the Law School and Philosophy Department, she is an associate in the Classics Department, the Divinity School, and the Political Science Department. Nussbaum is also a member of the Committee on Southern Asian Studies, and a board member of the Human Rights Program. A recipient of fifty-six honorary degrees from universities and colleges both within the U.S. and internationally, Nussbaum is also a fellow of the British Academy, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, as well as the American Philosophical Society.¹ Nussbaum most recently received both the American Philosophical Association's Philip Quinn Prize (2015) "in recognition of service to philosophy and philosophers," and the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy (2016) for lifetime achievement in arts and philosophy.² The Kyoto Prize is awarded annually to honor those who have "contributed significantly to the scientific, cultural, and spiritual betterment of mankind" in each of three categories: Scientific Advancement, Basic Sciences, and Arts and Philosophy. Nussbaum has contributed tremendously to the philosophical tradition and as described by the Inamori Foundation has "introduced the notion of incorporating human capabilities (what each person is able to do or be) into the criteria for social justice, beyond the conventional theory of equality based on a social contract among rational individuals. She established a new theory of justice that ensures the inclusion of the weak and marginalized, who are deprived of opportunities to develop their capabilities in society, and has proposed ways to apply this theory in the real world."³

Since receiving the award in 2015, Nussbaum has released *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, and Judgement*, in which the messy emotions of anger and forgiveness are explored in a neo-stoic view to push beyond our current conception, ultimately to flourish more fully. Her argument focuses mainly on the irrational nature of common anger, in which people seek conventional retribution via "payback." The other response to anger, Nussbaum argues, circulates in the realm of status, relying on narcissistic power and domination. Responses to anger may be well served to be replaced by forward looking compassion.⁴ In the difficult arena of

conceptualizing very human emotions, Nussbaum's work serves well to decipher the messy areas of human moral life.

More recently, Nussbaum co-authored a book with Saul Levmore as a collection of paired essays titled *Aging Thoughtfully: Conversations about Retirement, Romance, Wrinkles and Regret*. A response to the questions, concerns, and considerations that many face while aging, this conversation can provide valuable insight into how we may conceive aging differently. The book confronts many topics rooted in ageism including retirement, family, plastic surgery, and stigma surrounding the process. Focused on a specific time of life, the ideas, message and structure of these paired essays or responses serves well for any reader to consider the more troublesome aspects of life.⁵

Nussbaum's work has contributed significantly to the progress of modern philosophical tradition and continues to be crucial for an everyday conception of a good life. Best expressed in Nussbaum's own words:

To be a good human being is to have a kind of openness to the world, an ability to trust uncertain things beyond your own control, that can lead you to be shattered in very extreme circumstances for which you were not to blame. That says something very important about the condition of the ethical life: that it is based on a trust in the uncertain and on a willingness to be exposed; it's based on being more like a plant than like a jewel, something rather fragile, but whose very particular beauty is inseparable from that fragility.⁶

Notes

1. "Martha Nussbaum," The University of Chicago, 2018, <https://www.law.uchicago.edu/faculty/Nussbaum>.
2. "Philip L. Quinn Prize," American Philosophical Association, 2018, <http://www.apaonline.org/page/quinn>.
3. "Announcement of the 2016 Kyoto Prize Laureates," Inamori Foundation Press Release, 2016, http://www.inamori-f.or.jp/img/media/pdf_kyoto/Press_Release_e2016.pdf.
4. M.C. Nussbaum, *Anger and forgiveness: Resentment, generosity, justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
5. M.C. Nussbaum and S. Levmore, *Aging Thoughtfully: Conversations About Retirement, Romance, Wrinkles, and Regret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
6. M.C. Nussbaum and B. Moyer, "A World of Ideas—Martha Nussbaum," PBS, 1988.