



(Rough text transcript – or at least the main points)

1. There's extraordinary evidence of human creativity.
2. We have no idea of what's going to happen in the future.

We have a huge interest in education, partly because we're relying on it to take us into a future that we cannot predict. Children starting school this year (2010), will be retiring around 2075. Nobody has a clue what the world will look like in 5 years time, let alone in 12 years, when these kids are graduating from high school, or 16 years if they go to college.

We have no idea what that future will bring, we have no clue, and yet we're supposed to be preparing them for that.

Children have extraordinary capacities for innovation.

All kids have extensive creative capacity, and we squander it, quite ruthlessly.

Creativity now is as important in education, as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.

Tells a story of a little girl in class in a drawing lesson, who rarely paid attention, but she was really into this. So the teacher went over and asked, "what are you drawing?" And the little girl said "God", and the teacher said, "But nobody knows what God looks like", and the little girl said "Well they will in a minute".

Tells the story of his son in the Nativity play. He was playing Joseph. So there they were at this play, and at the part where the three kings come in to offer their gifts, they went out of order. And completely unintentionally (talking to the child afterward), the first child came forward and said "I bring you gold". The second said "I bring you myrr". Then the third child came forward and said "Frank sent this."

The point is that kids will take a chance. If they don't know, they'll have a go. They're not frightened of being wrong.

"If you're not prepared to be wrong, you will never come up with anything original."

By the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. We run our companies like this, we stigmatize mistakes. We're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. The result is that we are educating people OUT of their creative capacities.

Picasso once said that all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up.

We don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it.

Think of Shakespeare, he was in somebody's english class at some point. How annoying would that be... "must try harder". Think of being his dad... "now go to bed... and put that pencil down.. and stop speaking like that... it's confusing everybody."

Every education system on the earth has the same hierarchy of subjects, at the top are mathematics and languages, then the humanities, and at the bottom are the arts. Everywhere on earth.

And in pretty much every instance, there's a hierarchy within the arts. Art and music, then drama and dance.

As children grow up we begin to educate them from the waste up. And then we focus on their heads, and slightly to one side.

If you looked at education as an alien, and simply looked at what the output was, who gets all the brownie points, you'd have to conclude that the whole purpose is to produce university professors (I used to be one).

There's something curious about professors, they live in their heads, they live up there, and slightly to one side. They're disembodied. They look at their bodies as a form of transport for their heads.

It's the way they get their heads to meetings.

Our education system is predicated on the idea of academic ability. The whole system was invented after the 19th century. The whole thing came into being to accommodate the needs of industrialism. The whole thing is built upon two ideas.

1. The most useful subjects for work are at the top. So you were probably steered away from things, as a kid, from things you liked, on the grounds that you would never get a job, doing that.

Don't do music, you're not going to be a musician, don't do art, you're not going to be an artist. Benign advice. Now, profoundly mistaken.

2. Academic Ability, which has really come to dominate our view of intelligence. Because the universities designed the system in their image.

If you think of it the whole system around the world is a protracted process of university entrance. And the consequence is that many highly talented, brilliant, creative people, think they're not. Because the thing they were good at at school wasn't valued, or was actually stigmatized.

I think we can't afford to go on that way.

In the next 30 years, according to UNESCO, more people worldwide, will be graduating from education than since the beginning of history. It's the combination of technology and its transformative effect on work, and demography and the huge explosion of population.

Suddenly, degrees aren't worth anything. When I was a student, if you had a degree, you had a job, and if you didn't have a job, you didn't want one. But now kids are graduating and going back home to play video games. Because now you need an MA, whereas before you needed a BA, and soon you'll need a PHD.

It's a process of academic inflation. The whole structure of education is shifting beneath our feet.

we need to radically rethink our view of intelligence.

We know three things about intelligence.

1. It's diverse – we think about the world in all the ways we experience. We think visually, we think in sound, we think kinesthetically. We think in abstract terms, we think in movement.

2. It's dynamic. If you look at the interaction of the human brain, intelligence is wonderfully interactive. Creativity, more often than not, comes about through the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things.

Corpus Collosum – nerves that connect the two halves of the brain. It's thicker in women. Perhaps why women are better at multitasking.

3. It's distinct.

Gillian Lynn – a choreographer who did Cats, and Phantom. They had lunch and he asked “how'd you get to be a dancer?” She said when I was in school, in the 30's I was really hopeless, and the school wrote to her parents and said she has a learning disorder.

Probably now they'd say she had ADHD. But this was the 30's, and it hadn't been invented, it wasn't an available condition. People weren't aware they could have that.

So she went to see this specialist, in this oak paneled room, and she sat on her hands while this woman talked to her mother about all the problems Gillian was having at school. And at the end of it, (she was 8), the doctor went and sat next to her, and said “, I've listened to all the things that your mother has told me, and I need to speak with her privately, we'll be right back.”

As he went out the room, he turned on the radio that was sitting on his desk. and when they got out of the room, he said, “just watch her”. Soon as they left, she was on her feet, moving to the music. He said to her mother “Mrs, Lynn, Gillian isn't sick, she's a dancer. take her to a dance school”.

She did. “I went to this room, and it was full of people like me. People who couldn't sit still, people who had to move, to think. They did ballet, tap, jazz, everything.”

Then she got a wonderful career at the royal ballet, graduated, founded her own company, met Andrew Lloyd Weber, and has been responsible for some of the most amazing ballets in history, given pleasure to millions, and she's a multi-millionaire.

Someone else might have put her on medication, and told her to calm down.

I think our only hope for the future is to adopt a new perception of human ecology. One in which we start to reconstitute our perception of the richness of human capacity. Our education system has mined our minds, in the way we strip mine the earth for a particular commodity. And for the future it won't service. WE have to rethink the fundamental principles on which we're educating our children.

The only way we'll do it, is by seeing our creative capacities for the richness they are, and seeing our children for the hope that they are, and our task is to educate their whole being, so they can face this future, which we may not even see. But they will, and our job is to help prepare them to make something of it.

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