

# Storytellers at the Crossroads: The challenge of narrative intelligence to identity, community and education<sup>1</sup>

*Apostolos Doxiadis*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have invited as your guest speaker a storyteller.

This shows me two things: First that your heart is in the right place. And second that you believe that stories are important – and in this you are in agreement with storytellers the world over. But not just them: a growing body of research and evidence shows that the potential of stories to instruct the human mind, great as it may have seemed to some of us until now, may still be grossly underestimated.

My title, “Storytellers at the Crossroads”, uses an old archetypal story motif, a good example of which appears in the tale of Hercules, who meets Virtue and Pleasure at the crossroads, and has to make a choice between them, and going the way of the one or the other.

Whether the dilemma is for Hercules, or Hamlet, or Tintin’s little terrier, Milou, crossroads mean choice. To do this or do that? To be or not to be?

And choice is central to story, for story – like life – is about action and action always involves choice. In fact, when Aeschylus says *tô draxanti pathein*, i.e. that “it befits the man who acts to suffer”, what is he doing, but defining story? Story is the tragedy of concreteness, the trace of choice in a multitude of possibilities, a specific, unique, in every case, human course, involving actions and reactions, actions and their consequences.

But crossroads are also particularly pertinent to education and, I believe, even more so to the International Baccalaureate program, through

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which young people are oriented towards life, making many choices of their own.

At the heart of your conference this year is community, and community also means context. A community's members do not live in a vacuum. Communities have a past and a future, and a local habitation. But although spatiotemporally located, communities are basically constituted inside a world which is primarily mental, a world of concepts and ideas. A world of possibilities.

A few days ago I had a little chat with a first year student of the Diploma Programme of an IB school in Athens.

Having today's talk to you in mind, I asked the student:

"What is the single most important thing about the IB program?"

The student replied

"Freedom."

So, after a pause, I asked again:

"But do most students know how to use it?"

To which I got the answer I perhaps expected:

"No."

I can hear some of you complain: the statistical value of one item of anything is practically nil. I ask your forgiveness. But remember, I am a storyteller, and storytellers thrive on the particular – that is one of our main differences from scientists. We are trained by our craft to see meaning in little things, to go beyond the surface, to unearth more than usually meets the eye – and in this perhaps we are a little bit *like* scientists.

My discussion with the IB student brought to my mind a proverb – and, by the way, proverbs are the tiniest meaningful stories humans use, extremely successful stories, success meant here in a Darwinian sense, since proverbs, like strong genes, survive, from generation to generation. The proverb was one I'm sure many of you have often had reason to remember in your

educational practice: “You can take a horse to the fountain but you cannot make him drink.”

How often it is, indeed, that the most crucial problem educators’ face is not the quality of the content of the education they offer, but the willingness – or unwillingness – of students to use it.

Such are the problems of freedom, a commodity of which human beings can’t have enough. And then, when they get it, more often than not, do not know how to use it.

Let me begin by saying that a storyteller understands this problem perfectly. For when, in a free society, be it a state or a school, a storyteller is free to narrate as he or she pleases, the real troubles begin. For, out of the infinite choice of stories, which ones should we tell? This question is very similar to another: out of an overabundance of possible heroes, which ones will a culture prefer? In a non-free state, choice is limited by censorship, tradition and a never-quenched thirst of the state to promote its own particular kind of storytelling.

Yet, in a free society, there are all sorts of stories, all sorts of heroes. Here are some of those currently popular in the global village in which I live.



One may argue, of course, that reading the new Paris Hilton story is much better than having to suffer for the zillionth time the story of Ceausescu’s childhood. That it is infinitely better to hear of the latest feats of Zinedine Zidane than those of Stalin or Hitler, better know by heart your Tom Cruise than your Idi Amin Dada. I agree. This is definitely progress: at least, in these, newer cases, you are not executed for not willing to listen. But there is a tendency of least effort in a free culture’s choice of heroes, which often numbs

the storyteller's enthusiasm, as it does that of the good teacher who tries to implement a vision based on values.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The IB philosophy cannot be accused of a lack of values. In fact, in your wonderful Learner's Profile, I read of an ideal personality, an almost utopian vision of what a growing human being can be. I declare, most emphatically, that I am personally all for utopia, all for believing in visions and dreams – after all, if I was completely sane, I wouldn't have become a writer! Seriously, little madness is necessary to do good things in life and believing in an ideal vision is like being, if ever so slightly, mad. But I much prefer your – or rather our madness, since I can prove I subscribe to your philosophy by the fact that I entrust my own children to your practice of it – yes, I'd rather have my children partake of our visionary aspiration than passively ingest the slime that passes for entertainment or – heaven forbid – culture, in the inane virtual reality of a media-dominated society.

So, the thing is not whether we have good values – we do – but how to implement them. And here is the catch. For what happens when the qualities described in an ideal vision clash? For to be principled and open-minded at the same time, as the learner's profile asks, is not exactly easy. Or to be balanced *and* a risk-taker, or a good inquirer *and* a good communicator for that matter – I mean, all of us must have come across, during our university years, of great scientists or thinkers who were terrible teachers.

Alas! The complexity of the world, but also of our human nature, often mocks our attempts to create such clean templates for development. Life is complicated and - more often than not - full of conflicting messages, a mystery wrapped inside an enigma. Indeed, progressing through life we often feel like a driver, coming up against this sign...



Or, worse, this one...



In the mess we have been landed in, the IB offers a visionary program that works – no mean achievement. But to serve the vision, and to strengthen it, not dilute it, you need all the help you can get. As the complexity of life is often too big to support theories, let me give you a few ideas on how this could be done, alternatively, often better with – stories.

Stories have been with us from the very beginning of human culture, as the sacred myths told by the shamans, the adventure stories of the tribe, or grandmother's fireside tales. As they are with us from the beginning of our lives, a case of ontogeny repeating phylogeny, a most crucial aspect of every child's upbringing.

Our culture is infested with stories. And the great modern storytellers are honored and revered -- and often handsomely paid for their efforts, too.

In fact, a great amount of our wealth, and an even greater amount of our most precious commodity, time, goes to stories, not just those dreamed-up by the professional storytellers, but those enmeshed in quotidian small-talk, jokes, or the myths – in both senses of the word – of the politicians. Yet, we do not always take stories so seriously. In fact, the tradition of the debasement of storytelling is ingrained in western culture, goes all the way back to a gentleman who used to live in this city... Plato.

In his *Republic*, Plato exiles storytellers from the ideal state and this for one basic reason: because they aim for laughs and tears. And to Plato, to aim for laughs and tears is to aim diametrically away from reality. To go for story and not for theory meant to him, and thus to many serious-minded folk since then, to look the other way from truth.

As a result of this tradition, those of us who practice storytelling professionally often feel that the image of the culture at large for our work is this...



Those who frown upon us, deep down, find nothing wrong with entertainment. But they never forget – and how can they – that life is not all fun and games.

Some of you may think I am exaggerating. People have respected, you may counter, the great storytellers, people like Boccaccio and Shakespeare and Goethe and Flaubert and Dostoyevsky. You are only partly right in this. Some people have. But not always. If we set aside religious storytellers and poets, the realization that narrative art can be a way of exploring reality that is

as important as theory, maybe more so, actually begins with the romantics, i.e., in the nineteenth century.

That storytelling can on occasion carry knowledge, as paper carries text or a magnetic tape an audio message, was already well-known of course. But it was considered to be a truth of very limited range – restricted to certain kinds of narratives. Simple, basic truths about the relation of humans to god, or human and social moral behavior, were optimally coded in the myths and wisdom tales of all the great religions – as for example, in Jesus' parables, for Christians, the Sufi tales, for Muslims, the Hassidic or other wisdom tales for Jews, and so on.

Simple teaching tales in the tradition of Aesop, who was probably more of a folklorist than an original creator were there, from very early in the history of the human race – as were proverbs.

And in classical times, again in Athens, the great narratives of Herodotus or Thucydides demonstrated that people can learn about themselves by looking at the events of reality in a temporal, causality-dominated order. In fact, I must mention here that *historia* – from which *history* but also *story* derive – in ancient Greek means nothing more than inquiry, investigation, research.

But the realization that narrative is a form of thinking, in the general case, begins with the romantics, and their upgrading of the emotions from the lower to the higher rank of the aspects of our humanity. A great cultural revolution occurred at this time. Until then, philosophers thought that there is one, objective truth about the world – and their goal is to discover it. With the romantics, however, this changed. Realizing that each culture can have its own truth and, what's more, each person in a culture can have a private, but totally valid subjective version of it, the romantics created the necessary conceptual infrastructure for the change.

It is no accident that the Brothers Grimm, two of the people who for the first time deemed fairytales, the stories of the ordinary people and not the great, famous writers and poets, to be worthy objects of study, belong to the romantic school.

But it takes another hundred years, for the truth to become fully apparent.

So, first came the priests. Then the historians, then some philosophers, like Giambattista Vico, Johan Herder and Georg Hegel, who assigned a high value to the narrative truths of history. Then the folklorists, in the spirit of the Grimm Brothers. Then the linguists, applying formal, even mathematical methods to stories and tales, revealing their basically logical structure. Then the anthropologists. And finally, in the past two decades, with the rise of the cognitive sciences there is a strong influx of new insights. Experimenters in psychology, field researchers in paleoanthropology, joined more recently by neuropsychologists, neurophysiologists, and even computer scientists and practitioners in artificial intelligence, are uniting their efforts with a new generation of literary scholars, well-versed in the new sciences of the mind, all converging on the same basic truth: Narrative is a form of thinking, as powerful and important as the theoretical, analytic and synthetic, logical form that, in Plato's wake, was the only one deemed worthy of the epithet "thinking" for the greatest part of Western history.

As I'm addressing leaders in education, let me mention only two names, both bright stars in this new, huge interdisciplinary area, who are also distinguished educational psychologists.

The first is Jerome Bruner, a great psychologist and theorist of education in the tradition of Vygotsky and the constructivists, and in the past two decades a pioneering scholar in the field of narrative intelligence.

In his seminal article "Two modes of thought"<sup>2</sup>, Bruner was the first to put his finger on the central issue with such clarity and precision. I read the first paragraph to you, a paragraph which to me signals, in an emblematic way, a new period in our understanding of the human mind:

"Let me begin," he writes, "by setting out my argument as baldly as possible. It is this. There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of

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<sup>2</sup> In *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Harvard, 1986.

thought, each providing distinctive ways or ordering experience, of constructing reality. Efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to ignore one at the expense of the other inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought.” And then Bruner goes on to name the two modes, as the *paradigmatic*, as he calls the mode of logic, induction and deduction, i.e. of theory, and the *narrative*, of stories.

And then there is Howard Gardner, the most famous advocate of the theory of multiple intelligences and a pioneering student of the psychology of education. In one great book, called *Leading Minds* – incidentally, this is one of the handful of books that I think constitute essential reading for leaders, like yourselves – Gardner examines a theory of leadership that is totally centered on narrative. In a series of case studies of great leaders in science, in education, in economics, politics and religion, Gardner puts forth the thesis that a leader is a person with a strong new *story*, a story that antagonizes existing, older ones and finally wins over them, a story that inspires and guides people in the leader’s nation, field or group.

It is interesting to note that apart from being the inventor and chief proponent of the story he or she promotes, the leader is cast in this role, according to Gardner, also by virtue of being an incarnation of the story, of providing with one’s life a strong example of the particular story’s success.

Allow me to apply, by way of example, this essentially very traditional piece of wisdom to an aspect of the wonderful ‘story’ developing in the IB Programme. If you want to convince your students to emulate the IB learner profile, and become inquirers, knowledgeable thinkers, open-minded and principled risk-takers, and so on, you better be inquirers, knowledgeable thinkers, open-minded and principled risk-takers and so on yourselves – or they are not going to believe you!

Now, it is a characteristic of all revolutions, that at some point they redefine old terms.

So, what does this new realization, that narrative is a form of thinking, tell us about the definition of story? What is a story? And since Bruner sets it

in opposition to the theoretical-scientific viewpoint, what are the characteristics that differentiate a story from a theory?

Let me focus on one difference, that I personally find totally essential, one on which I have recently done some work.

I like to say that *theories are maps*. While *stories are paths*. Or, equivalently, theories are pictures. Stories are movies. But let's stick to the first analogy, of maps and paths.



This is an area of space, as we might see it if we went on a hike, and stood on a mighty mountaintop. Possessing this image, gives you a great amount of information on the structure of a landscape, and it is a happy traveler who can thus orient oneself. But it does not tell you everything. Imagine, for example having to perform a task in here, getting from point X to point Y. Simple, you may say – assuming you can keep this picture in your mind, or better own a print-out of it. But what if this beautiful landscape is full of treacherous traps, what if some of the plants in it are poisonous, some of the undergrowth so thick you cannot traverse it? What if this landscape is inhabited by savage beasts, with a weakness for human flesh? What if an escaped convict, a homicidal maniac, is set loose in it? No picture, no matter how detailed, can give you this information. Imagine now being equipped with a video camera, and moving in this landscape, shooting a picture of your progress. That is a story. And if you manage to survive your route from X to Y, despite all the

dangers awaiting to get you, you will have a nice movie that will contain vital information for future travelers.

But this pretty picture is not a good map. I said that a theory is a map, a mental map – which is much more than a picture of a landscape. A theory is an internal representation of a space we know quite well, whether actual or conceptual space. It is more like this.



This is the “map” in this sense, of Wonderland. If you start moving in this space, and describe your path with nice words and interesting sentences, the account of your path – especially if your name is Alice -- may be very much like Lewis Carroll’s wonderful book. But, in fact, this is exactly the kind of rich map that has been created from interesting paths.

A mental map, a theory, is a complex thing, not just of space, real or conceptual, but space packed with addresses, with events, with potentialities and relations, with secrets and codes, with advice for travelers, advice that can be concrete, i.e. “take the path by the lake, turn left at the giant oak”, or generic – algorithmic we might say today: “if it rains, avoid the western bank of the river”.

The basic point though, is that a map cannot be created without many travelers having gone through the area, i.e. without many stories, many paths. With such a map, we can make our way in space; we can follow our own path, based on the knowledge of other travelers, on the paths that we shall take and on those that we shall not.

A theory is a map. A story is a path. But you cannot have the map without the paths. And if the area in which you are traveling is particularly tricky, as life often is, no map is as useful as an abundance of knowledge of good paths.

I have been trying to show some of my own pathways, opening ways into a landscape, the landscape of story that is at once very familiar to all of us, but also – as the research of recent decades makes apparent – surprisingly unknown. And I do have a hope that at the end of this exploring, to use the poet's words, we may arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time.

Stories are the most basic of mental tools, tools we are so familiar with that we take for granted. But we should not.

One of the good things about stories, is that they are expressed in the language of everyday life, a language that is simple and complex at the same time, often obvious in its meanings, but extremely sophisticated in its irreducibility to simpler things: what a good story tells, cannot be told in any other way -- certainly not as theory, abstract maxims, rules – without debasing or sometimes even savagely distorting, its meaning.

Stories can incarnate conflict, contradiction, and even paradox, in a way that baffles logicians – yet this is precisely the reason they are so useful in portraying the complexities of life, which is, of course, as a rule full of conflict, contradiction and paradox.

Ladies and Gentlemen, members of the educational leadership of IB schools,

As you know only too well, education is an eminently practical activity. Exalted as its aims may be, it is addressed to very real human beings, called students, and what's sometimes more important practically, it has to meet the approval of another group of human beings, no less real, called parents.

I will be satisfied, that I have not wasted your time, if I've told you something in my talk that will make you go exploring stories on your own. But let me complete my talk by becoming for a few minutes, very practical by

giving you some concrete ideas, about how stories as thinking tools can be useful to you, and your colleagues in your schools.

I will refer to the three programs separately, as every one addresses a different stage of human development with its own characteristics and demands.

### **For the Primary Years Program:**

I was talking recently to a great lady, Mrs. Niki Goulandri, founder and president of a wonderful natural history museum in Athens. Talking to me of environmental education, a field in which she is a pioneer and an international leader, she said, illustrating her point very graphically: “To us, children over 10 are dead.”

Strong words. But they do tell us something important. I do not need to tell you how crucial the first years of schooling are – let me just stress that they are the most crucial for the development of narrative intelligence and this for the reason that at this age range, the story habit is still exceedingly strong, fantasy and imagination reign, making narrative the prime language of the child’s soul.

Young children are by nature, culture and biology ideal citizens of story worlds. In fact, they live in story land most of the time. So, without of course leading them into solipsism, we must do our best to see that they *preserve* the natural human gift of a strong narrative imagination, both in the production and reception of narratives. If there is one distinguishing feature of their humanity worth caring about, it is this.

We must help them to become better story users. Guide them more towards the listening of tales, away from television, closer to the expressive beauty of the human voice, the richness of imagination. We must further cultivate the gift of telling tales, actively, creatively, and, as they master reading, aim their appetite at good tales.

In older times, the times of a strong humanist prototype for education, this message came across naturally, through the emphasis on the classics. Of

course, the classics are not everything, and our modern, enlightened age is increasingly creating its own narratives. But I am afraid we have come dangerously close to the other extreme.

There are good stories and bad, exciting and boring stories, profound and shallow ones. And a big part of primary education is becoming increasingly trivialized, by way of the stories it uses. Community feelings, respect for other people's beliefs, awareness of social problems, minority rights, the fight against racism and sexism, the care and respect for people with special needs, even political correctness, in its less lunatic forms, enrich our culture, make us more tolerant of others and thus more deeply human. Granted. But that does not mean that we must discard the beautiful tales of old, the often wonderful stories that we, our parents and grandparents grew up with, which survived like strong genes, precisely because they were wonderful. We must not exile them, like Plato, by the criteria of a basically extremist new Puritanism. We must not – in the name of I don't know which new gods - chuck old stories out the window to make way for brand new ones which are often trivial, or just plain boring.

Young children live in a magical world, and the transition to what we call reality, is essentially a traumatic process. Older cultures were less squeamish than we are about accepting this fact. And they had created a rich, wealth of stories to accompany their young people in this process, from magic to reality, a non-stop transition ritual in the form of a continuous nexus of narrative, to make these changes as smooth possible.

We cannot dismantle a narrative tradition, some of aspects of which go back whole millennia, other parts centuries, others decades, to put in its place the impromptu creations of a few, doubtless well-intentioned, enthusiasts. What would you say to a person who proposed that we should destroy and rebuild our cities every two decades? What would you think of a mad dictator, who wanted to raze down all the villages and settle their inhabitants in high-rise nightmares, just because he had a bright idea about how the world must look? Is it not equally shocking when a whole narrative tradition goes down the drain of the latest intellectual – cultural fashion?

If I am so passionate, and so emphatic on this point, it is because the youngest age group, for which stories are most important, suffers more than the others in being deprived of good older stories by the constant, extreme focus on the newer.

In learning to live in a school as a community, young children need good stories of community values, and human culture abounds with these. Let us learn them. Value them. Use them. Let us be open-minded, of course, let us welcome the new. But not by discarding the old. As for the school as part of the community: For you, leaders in an enlightened educational program with an international vision, community is not one but many. Concentric rings of communities, beginning locally, and going out, to embrace, in the wider circle, global human values. Again, for each of these, there are good stories.

We do not need to make your young students story animals: they are that already, when they come to you. Just help them preserve the gift. And nurture it.

Story-literate kids will grow into story-literate adults who will be as good as the stories that construct their souls and minds. So give them the best.

### **The MYP (Middle Years Programme)**

Here the plot thickens. Now, school begins to feel less than a second home, a super-extended family environment, and more like real work.

Story literacy is harder to cultivate per se now, there is less time, a more demanding syllabus, new subjects with stronger demands. Of course, the good news is that storytelling now becomes assimilated into certain courses, mostly of language and literature. And a lot of what they offer in this direction is certainly valuable.

I want to make four points here.

#### **First point:**

One of the famous dictums of our new media-dominated age is that “the medium is the message”. This is a half-truth which like any half-truth becomes a lie, if elevated into dogma. But if we moderate it, to “the medium is

often an important part of the message”, it becomes crucial. Of course, stories are stories in any medium. But the medium is important. And most of our culture’s best stories still live, in optimal form, in books. Perhaps two- or five-hundred years hence this will have changed. But it’s still true. At this age, where students can become more easily tempted by television and the digital media, the defense of reading, of books as sources of good stories, is crucial. And, of course, there is nothing like a good library to aid this, as long as you remember the proverb, about the fountain and the horse. Remember, the reading of fiction does not belong solely to homework for English, or other language courses. It is a part of an educated person’s cultural repertory. And what I said earlier about good old stories, also applies here. Of course, the new writers of adolescent fiction must also make a living. But let us not forget the old.

Second point:

This is only apparently in contradiction with the first: it is especially important, for this age range, to try and preserve, as much as possible, the oral dimension of storytelling – and it is especially important at this age range because it is at this age range precisely that it tends to wither away. Remember, that as a basic human skill, narrative begins with language, and language takes many thousands of years to be fixed, in stone or paper. I am not of course devaluing literacy, or questioning the importance of the written word – in fact, one of the greatest problems of our brave new world, with the ascendancy of television, video games and new electronic media, is the debasing of the written. And to resist this, the teaching of literature is of central importance.

But the biological roots of storytelling are in our speech centers, and the magic of storytelling is first ingrained in us by the human voice – which can never, really, lose its appeal as a tool. If you’ve listened to a really gifted storyteller, you will know what I mean. But even if you haven’t, do try not to oust the oral practice of narrative, both listening and telling, from your student’s lives.

After all, teaching is still primarily an oral art. Your teachers spend a lot, if not most, of their time, talking.

Third point:

Do not restrict narrative to the language courses. History, of course, is the other obvious case. I would have a lot to say here, especially about how history is often debased in modern education – and this, by the way, is not a very recent phenomenon – by becoming too analytic, putting more emphasis on causes, statistics, and theories on what happened, than what actually happened. But history is too obviously related to narrative, to spend time on it, here.

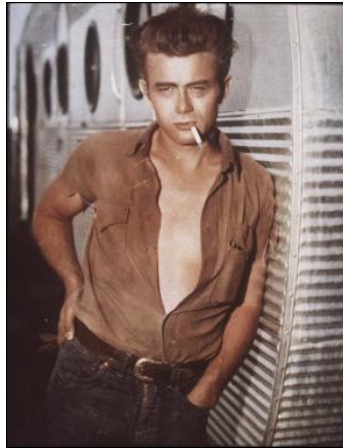
On the contrary, the sciences seem to be at opposite ends from it. And though, as a rule, the scientific worldview is irreducible to the narrative, and visa versa – in fact, this irreducibility is exactly Bruner's point of the "two modes of thought" - science as a human activity developed historically, science has its history, and biographies. So, do find some time, in your science teaching, for the history of science, the stories of the ideas, and the stories of their inventors.

Let me say here, that with the not-for-profit international group Thales and Friends, we are promoting the investigation of the complex relationships of narrative and mathematics. And in Greece, more especially, Thales and Friends has started a pioneering program of reading groups in schools, making use of the wonderful abundance of what we call paramathematical books, the dozens of novels, biographies, narrative expositions of mathematical research, and so on, that have appeared in the past decade. We encourage teachers and students in these groups to discuss ideas, lives, feelings, not just mathematics, emphasizing the narrative, i.e. human aspects of mathematics. And the first results we are getting are amazing, especially in the sudden increase of interest in the field of students who were until then doing very poorly: if we help them understand that mathematics is a part of the human adventure and not just a necessary step towards a technical career – and there is nothing like stories to do this –, they suddenly become enthralled – if not always hooked.

To learn more about the aims of Thales and Friends just Google the two words Thales Friends, and that will lead you to our website, which is still growing. We are very new.

Fourth point:

The most crucial event in the lives of students in the Middle Years Programme is the advent of adolescence.



This blasé, defiant looking fellow, greets me every morning as I get out my room, as he is plastered on the exterior side of the door of the room of an IB student whose bedroom just happens to be opposite mine. This unfortunate man, perennially fixed in youth like a fly in amber, has become emblematic for adolescents mostly because of the title of his most famous film, “Rebel without a cause”, making him the archetype of all nay-sayers.

There’s hardly an adolescent that does not go through some form of a “James Dean phase”. It is in the nature of adolescence, and recent research confirms this to be true all the way down to biochemistry, to be rebellious, to be resistant, to be in opposition of the status quo, be it familial, or social, or political, a necessary rite of passage. So, parents the world over discover every day to their horror that among their adolescent offspring’s heroes are uncouth, hare-brained athletes, drugged-out singers, lunatic risk-seekers, vapid socialites or moronic fashion-victims – but I’ll say this for adolescents: they’ve never to date worshipped a chartered accountant.

Adolescents are, and should be rebels. But it is a sorry state for the adults in a society – not the adolescents – when this natural rebelliousness is “without a cause”.

To be a rebel without a cause means that you are starved for good stories. We must try and expose our adolescent students’ spirits to good stories, with the same care that we seek good nourishment for their bodies. And good stories here, in this context, basically means, apart from good fiction, good biographies, i.e. the narratives of the lives of interesting, creative people, of thinkers and inquirers, of caring and open-minded people who have made the world better, of knowledgeable and principled leaders, of people whose superior qualities –those perfectly encapsulated in the learner profile - have enriched their lives, and the lives of the concentric rings of communities around them.

We all know of course, that teaching by example is the best way – some have even argued that it is the only way. Yet it is an unusually blessed educational leader whose staff consists exclusively of teachers so gifted and charismatic, that their mere presence in the classroom is example enough for their students. If you have some of these special people, use them to the best advantage. If you can hire more of them, do so! But until then, also look for example in stories, by promoting reading, by making available to your students, and teachers, by any means, in every possible context, the stories of the people, that can inspire in them a love of learning, of community, of true and great humanity.

Last but not least comes the **Diploma Programme**, the programme that started the IB movement.

Here, the attention of students is focused on their lives beyond, and after the school, in getting a good university education. They have no time for stories – other than the time already allocated to them inside the syllabus.

Yet, here too, narrative intelligence can play a crucial part. In fact, it is the point where it can be directly useful to the students, and where many

years of development of their story sophistication can pay off in a grand way, in their own interest.

I am referring here to the role of a basically narrative mode of thinking, in imagining and planning for their future lives. We know well that many young people make the wrong choice of career at this stage – leading them either to unfulfilled, frustrated lives, or many wasted years until they discover their true vocation. Yet, there is nothing like narrative, to help them explore, diagnostically, their true wishes, and to imagine, as in a thought experiment, future scenarios.

The way in which many students decide what they want to do with their lives – a decision the first step of which is often the choice of courses as they enter the diploma program – is often pathetically unsophisticated, unthinkingly and often unknowingly influenced by peer or familial pressure, fashion or inertia and, more especially, uninformed by their own inner preferences. Of course, the problem is that they do not know these preferences – and here, again, increased narrative sophistication will help them immensely.

The awareness of many narratives, of the stories of the most successful practitioners of a host of modern professions, is a crucial factor in informing their choice of career.

Ask them to work on this exercise, to work out scenarios for their future lives, to imagine what their lives will be like in ten or twenty or thirty years from now, if they follow this or that plan. This can be a life-saving exercise. And the better they can deal with stories, the better they will be able to perform it.

I am not a magician of course, and narrative is not a magic wand.

But I believe that in many ways, it is a royal road, to life and, more especially, to young people's minds and souls. I have tried to give you some ideas about its use, in your programs.

But, basically, I have tried to stress this one, simple message of stories as paths, of the necessity for your students to learn about paths, to learn how to use them, how to discover them, how to recognize the good, how to avoid the bad.

To be good members of the concentric rings of communities to which they belong, to be enriched by them, and enrich them, in their turn, they must be real human beings. And real human beings means real story animals, good story animals, good story people, people of good stories, good storytellers and good listeners, connoisseurs and lovers of what is best in the huge narrative wisdom of humankind.

To enrich that aspect of their minds, is to enrich what is most profound in their humanity.

I leave you with this thought.