



HONEYBEE CAPITAL

HONEYBEE PUBLICATION #14:

MICRO-ISSUE OF TOP TED TALKS

In February I was fortunate to attend my first “big” TED conference, the annual gathering in Long Beach. Since most of the talks are up online now, and since many Honeybee readers are also big fans of the TED concept and content, I’ve compiled this quick list of my own favorite talks from this think-a-palooza. Some of these themes will surely find their way into future Honeybee issues in a more in-depth way, but in the meantime here are my personal highlights:

QUOTES OF THE MONTH:

Talent is universal. Opportunities are not.

-Ishmael Beah, author, former child soldier

Maybe it’s the brain that allows us to play from the heart.

- Robert Gupta, musician

Just keep going.

- Bobby McFerrin

A green traffic jam is still a traffic jam.

- Bill Ford

We are going to win because we don’t understand politics.

- Wael Ghonim, Egyptian uprising leader

Now we are like the Borg.

- David Christian, Historian at Macquarie University, on human ability to transmit knowledge explicitly

TOP TED TALKS:

These talks (plus many many more) can be found at www.ted.com.

Deb Roy, MIT Media Lab – Birth of a Word.

- Possibly the best talk I have ever seen – far and away my #1 highlight. Roy's work combines social science and data visualization in stunning ways.
- On the surface, this is about linguistics (already very cool), but also has fascinating potential for application to media, civic issues – almost anything (even cooler). This approach has the capacity to **analyze engagement, not just exposure** or viewership (coolest of all!). It's a big deal! I am thinking about what its use in finance might look like.
- http://www.ted.com/talks/deb_roy_the_birth_of_a_word.html

Salman Khan, Khan Academy – Flipping the Classroom.

- Khan started out posting YouTube videos to tutor his cousins. Now his academy includes 2000 tutorials on all sorts of subjects, viewed over 100k times per DAY.
- Why is this so neat? 1) it allows users to “**flip the classroom**”, making the lecture homework, and class time the time for discussion and problem-solving. Allows teachers to maximize teaching time. 2) use of data and technology allows for a more humanized classroom. Teachers can see where kids got stuck, which concepts were trickiest, who is starting to fall behind and why. 3) flexible and multi-media format allows for all sorts of different learning styles. 4) the talks are fun! In a super geeky way. Not sure you can explain quadratic equations to your kid? Watch here first!
- http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education.html

Mark Bezos - Great Very Short Talk.

- So short, I cannot summarize without ruining it! Just watch:
- http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/mark_bezos_a_life_lesson_from_a_volunteer_firefighter.html

Anthony Atala, Wake Forest Surgeon – Kidney-Printing!

- This was far more amazing to me than the actual magician who presented at the same conference – no matter how much you've followed medtech, or

read about 3-D printing, to see **the little pink blob** in Dr. Atala's hands is breathtaking.

- I happened to sit next to his technical assistant on a bus ride - turns out he used to do big print runs for Wall Street conferences. When I remarked that it was a big switch, going from that to kidneys, he just kind of shrugged and said, 'same printers'. It's all done on InkJets! But the cartridge will cost ya.
- <http://blog.ted.com/2011/03/07/printing-a-human-kidney-anthony-atala-on-ted-com/>

David Brooks, NY Times – The Social Animal.

- If you don't have time (or inclination) to read Brooks' new book, this is a great summary. He argues that **emotions are at the center of reason**, not opposed to it, and that we are primarily social, not rational, creatures.
- http://www.ted.com/talks/david_brooks_the_social_animal.html

John Hunter, Educator - World Peace Game inventor.

- I had a teacher in high school who thought the best way to learn about the Soviet Union was to be subjected to his own made-up version of a Soviet classroom for a few weeks. We got points for dressing appropriately, for standing to speak, for calling him "sir".... I am sorry to report, since compliance meant an "A", I was a total sheep.
- John Hunter takes the opposite approach – he gives kids power to make their own decisions - hard ones, with consequences. He wants students to "get beyond data to truth".
- The results give great hope – they show the power (and presence) of **compassion and generosity** over spite and greed.
- http://www.ted.com/talks/john_hunter_on_the_world_peace_game.html
- <http://www.rosaliafilms.com/teacher.htm>

Edward Tenner, Historian – Unintended Consequences.

- Thesis in a nutshell: "the challenge of **geometric innovation vs. arithmetic prediction.**" This is not a new issue, as Tenner shows – it has produced challenges for centuries.
- I have not read his books yet, but they look good too – reviews to come!
- *This talk is not online just yet, but should be soon.*

Felisa Wolfe-Simon, Geobiochemist - Bugs That Eat Poison!

- A lot of research is based on resistance to toxic environments – but she found cells that EAT arsenic, they don't just survive in it...
- ...which begs the question, **what if our definition of life** (and its carbon-centricity) **is just way too narrow?**
- *This talk is not online just yet, but should be soon.*

Kathryn Schultz, Wrongologist - Something Else Happened Instead.

- This is a good talk for anyone interested in behavioral finance – or maybe just behavior. I first saw Schultz at PopTech last year – her book is good too! But this talk is quicker, and polished, and hits many of the important points.
- Being wrong feels just like being right! it's only when you realize you're wrong that it feels different.
- When others disagree with us, we tend to think 1) ignorant, 2) idiots, 3) evil.
- But **what being wrong is not so awful?** What if it's just, "I thought this one thing would happen... and something else happened instead."
- http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/kathryn_schulz_on_being_wrong.html

AMAZING ARTISTS:

These talks are not all online yet, so I've included other links where possible.

- Camille Seaman, photographer – have you ever seen an iceberg roll!?!?
 - www.camilleseaman.com
- Handspring Puppets
 - http://www.ted.com/talks/handpring_puppet_co_the_genius_puppetry_behind_war_horse.html
- Paul Nicklen – Polar Photographer.
 - <http://www.paulnicklen.com/>
- Thomas Heatherwick – the UK's Seed Cathedral – beautiful in many ways.
 - <http://www.heatherwick.com/uk-pavilion/>
- Sarah Kay – an astounding young poet!
 - http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html
- Eric Whitacre – global choir. The choir is virtual, but the connection is real.
 - http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_whitacre_a_virtual_choir_2_000_voices_strong.html
- Beatrice Coron - papercutting artist.
 - <http://www.beatricecoron.com/>
- Janet Echelman – enormous woven sculptures.
 - <http://www.echelman.com/>
- Shea Hembrey - made his own biennial with 100 different “participants”.
 - <http://www.sheahembrey.com/>
- Kate Hartman, communication through crazy hats (or not).
 - <http://www.katehartman.com/>

INSPIRING ENDEAVORS:

- Ardian Hong, Pegasus Project – www.pegasuspress.com. This is a clearing-house for documentation of HR abuses, allowing for safe (untraceable) uploads of raw material. All of the good parts of Wikileaks' transparency premise without the creepy uber-editor at the helm.
- Marcin Jakubowski is working on "open hardware" – blueprints to build your own tractor from scratch. He was inspired to "transcend artificial scarcity" by the prohibitive start-up costs he found in farming.
http://www.ted.com/talks/marcin_jakubowski.html
- Wings of Life – forthcoming Disney nature film featuring the work of Louie Schwartzberg – beautiful! If you are cynical about what a big corporation can bring to society, you have to see this. I was agog (of course it is a giant advertisement for honeybees, so I'm a bit biased). You can't see film clips online yet but more about the project is here:
<http://www.pollinator.org/disney.htm>
- Google Art Project – see note above about big companies/big institutions. This is a great example of the power of information access – you can tour museums online, view and research the artworks, and create your own virtual museum. The detailed examination that is possible is stunning - far more detail than even an in-person visit can provide.
www.googleartproject.com

BROADER THEMES:

The stated theme of the conference was "Rediscovery of Wonder" – and indeed, it was wonder-ful. Here are a couple of mega-themes that arose – some of these will surely be picked up in more detail in future Honeybee publications.

- **TOOLS.** Sometimes in pursuit of one goal, a tool is created that is more valuable than the central project. Ed Boyden at MIT put DNA into neurons so they can be activated with light. The sensors for Dennis Hong's Blind Car can also "read" writing or pictures. In a related thread is the theme of OPEN HARDWARE (not just software), as seen above.
- **REALITY/VIRTUALITY.** This is not as clear a line as we assume. Take Eric Whitacre's choir – though the participants have never sung in the same location, wow! They sure are connected. Related to this, there is so much evidence about the role of technology in human relations, with a temptation to say it is helping or hurting (one or the other)... But reports here showed both, convincingly.