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Logo LinX

Did Nietzsche Know Logo?
by Judi Harris

"A man has no ears for that to which experience has given him no access."

"Education has very little to do with explanation. It has to do with engagement, with falling in love with the material."

One of these statements was written in 1888. The other was recorded in 1983. The ideas that they express are remarkably similar, despite nearly a century of elapsed time between their public expression. Both were crafted by philosophers, although the tools they used were strikingly different.

One was written by Papert; the other by Nietzsche. Were it not for the difference in language, it might be difficult to identify the first statement as the older one.

"Time ripens all things"
—Cervantes

Papert is fond of saying, "What's good for thinking is good for thinking." This is true across learner cultures, among pedagogical methods, and over time. Have you experienced an eerie sense of deja vu while perusing the pages of *Mindstorms*?

1a. "Errors benefit us because they lead us to study what happened, to understand what went wrong, and, through understanding, to fix it."
—*Mindstorms*, p. 114

1b. "Mistakes are their own instructors."
—Horace

2a. "The kind of mathematics foisted on children in schools is not meaningful, fun, or even very useful."
—*Mindstorms*, p. 50

2b. "Arithmetic is where the answer is right and everything is nice and you can look out the window and see the blue sky—or the answer is wrong and you have to start all over and try again to see how it comes out this time."
—Carl Sandburg

3a. "By working with small parts...bugs can be confined and more easily trapped, figured out."
—*Mindstorms*, p. 102

3b. "Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs."
—Henry Ford

4a. "The gulf must be bridged between the technical-scientific and humanistic cultures. And I think that the key to constructing this bridge will be learning to recast powerful ideas in computational form, ideas that are as important to the poet as to the engineer."
—*Mindstorms*, p. 183

4b. "A mathematician, like a painter or poet, is a maker of patterns."
—G.H. Hardy

5a. "The Logo teacher will answer questions, provide help if asked, and sometimes sit down next to a student and say: "Let me show you something." What is shown is not dictated by a set syllabus."
—*Mindstorms*, p. 179

5b. "[People] must be taught as if you taught them not, And things unknown proposed as things forgot."
—Alexander Pope

It seems that many of the most powerful ideas expressed by educational philosophers are written with indelible ink in the pages of time. Perhaps that is one testament to the truth of their messages.

Eloquent Reminders

During a visit to a central Virginia kindergarten, I noticed this quote, posted high on a wall, just above the students' pictograph of favorite animals:

"When you are dealing with a child, keep all your wits about you, and sit on the floor."
—Austin O'Malley

My initial reaction was one of confusion. Certainly, this master teacher realized that her students were not able to decode, much less decipher, the delightful idea posted near the ceiling! And then, the poster's position revealed the flaw in my thinking. These words were a reminder to the *adults* in this classroom culture.

Are you a "quote collector"? As you can tell from the above quotes, I am; and I'd like to share a few more of my favorites with you. They are selected for their relevance to what we generally call "Logo philosophy." But as their author listings will indicate, they originate in the common base of

human experience from which Logo itself sprang, along with many other calls for reform in education throughout history.

On Learning

"I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand."
—Chinese proverb

"Let early education be a sort of amusement; you will then be better able to find out the natural bent."
—Plato

"What is learned...depends far less on what is taught than on what one actually experiences in the place."
—Edgar Friedenberg

"You come to know a thing by being inside it."
—Edmund Carpenter

"Wonder rather than doubt is the root of knowledge."
—Abraham Heschel

"To learn is a natural pleasure, not confined to philosophers, but common to all [people]."
—Aristotle

"The creative mind plays with the objects it loves."
—Carl Jung

On Problem-Solving

"There is always more chance of hitting upon something valuable when you aren't too sure what you want to hit upon."
—Alfred North Whitehead

"The great difficulty in education is to get experience out of idea."
—George Santayana

"Failure is, in a sense, the highway to success, inasmuch as every discovery of what is false leads us to seek earnestly after what is true."
—John Keats

"The best ideas are common property."
—Seneca

"(A mistake is) evidence that somebody has tried to accomplish something."
—John Babcock

"Give me a good fruitful error any time, full of seeds, bursting with its own corrections. You can keep your sterile truth for yourself."
—Vilfredo Pareto

"Every solution of a problem is a new problem."
—Goethe

"Problems are only opportunities in work clothes."
—Henry J. Kaiser

On Education

"There is a grave defect in the school where the playground suggests *happy* and the classroom *disagreeable* thoughts."
—John Spalding

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."
—Thoreau

"Most students treat knowledge as a liquid to be swallowed rather than as a solid to be chewed, and then wonder why it provides so little nourishment."
—Sydney Harris

"What is more wonderful than the delight which the mind feels when it KNOWS? This delight is not for anything beyond the knowing, but is in the act of knowing. It is the satisfaction of a primary instinct."
—Mark Rutherford

"School is not preparation for life...school is life."
—John Dewey

"Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves."
—Ernest Dimnet

"An education which does not cultivate the will is an education that depraves the mind."
—Anatole France

"I have learned much from my teachers, and from my colleagues more than from my teachers, and from my students more than from all."
—Haggadah

On Teachers and Teaching

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."
—Albert Einstein

"Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development. It follows as a corollary from this premise, that the teachers should also be alive with living thoughts."
—Alfred North Whitehead

"The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher."
—Elbert Hubbard

"To teach is to learn twice."
—Joseph Joubert

"No man can reveal to you aught that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge."
—Kahlil Gibran

A Final Quote

Mark Twain once observed, "What a good thing Adam had—when he said a good thing he knew nobody had said it before."

Education is too often a process of reinventing wheels. Viewed only as an application of computer technology, Logo is newborn and time-bound. Viewed in historical and philosophical perspective, Logo is a natural outgrowth of progressive educational thought, set in a particular time window of technological advance. Let us recognize the foundations of many of our most powerful pedagogies, and build upon them.

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