

Those of you who read this blog regularly and attend the CMI annual conference each summer know my obsession with discovering kindred spirits of the Mason philosophy in contemporary writers, thinkers, and educators. It thrills me to no end to come upon 21st century corroboration of what Charlotte knew to be true of human learning whether it is in the reflective musings of a poet or artist or the clear articulation of a researcher's latest findings.

It's no surprise that these are not difficult to come by these days as we grow more and more disillusioned with high-stakes testing and what it does to classrooms and curriculum. Parents and teachers and students themselves are growing increasingly hungry for humane learning environments and practices and for an education that yields more than entrance into a prestigious university or a high-paying job upon graduating.

Just last week while on a very long walk up a very steep hill, I had my ear buds in listening to a podcast from Krista Tippett's radio program "Fresh Air," a rebroadcast of her 2009 interview with UCLA professor and researcher Mike Rose, author of several books on the sociology of education including *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker* (2004) and the most recent *Back to School: Why Everyone Deserves a Second Chance at Education* (2012).

As he recounted his own college experience in the interview, he observed that it was the close attention of professors and instructors along the way that eventually got him to invest in his studies in a more than pragmatic or superficial way. He said,

So all of that kind of personal attention, that embodiment of knowledge in a relationship, and it seems to me that that finally is what good teaching is all about. And that's all the way from good teaching in kindergarten through graduate school, through medical school, through apprenticeships, through the carpenter's workshop, you name it, that somehow or another skill and knowledge is integrated into some kind of a human connection, in that it was a humane humanities education. It was, certainly was rich cognitively, but it was that interplay of the cognitive and the social, the personal and the cognitive.(emphasis mine)

Whoa. Those two phrases stopped me in my tracks. I nearly tumbled backward down the slope!

“The embodiment of knowledge in relationship” made me think of Nicolle Hutchinson and Gillingham Charter School’s references to Charlotte Mason’s philosophy as “relational education.”

“Knowledge integrated into a human connection” made me recall Charlotte Mason’s observation that “an idea comes of the contact of two minds, the idea of another is no more than a notion to us until it has undergone a process of generation within us . . .” (1907).

I recalled Mason’s principle of insisting on “living” books, literary treatments, narrative accounts, primary sources, and biographies because they are not entirely objective but possess that “tinge of emotion” and convey a definite personal perspective, and in these ways bear the fingerprints as it were of those who had authored them.