

Visualizing Wisdom: The Mindful Brush of Confucian Moral Artistry*

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Abstract

For more than a decade, 21st-century organizations have engaged artists and artistic processes in management and leadership strategies. Despite these initiatives the gap between corporate social responsibility and societal well-being has widened exponentially. Taking up Nancy Adler's hope for business in the service of humanity, this paper takes the long view by examining self-cultivation practices through the brush arts for regenerating China's wisdom traditions during the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). It argues that lessons learned from the Yuan period can be instructive to the Western business community today on developing fully human, intuitive wise leaders

Keywords: wisdom, imagination, brush arts, landscape, moral artistry

* Dedicated to my dear friend and mentor, the late China scholar Henry Rosemont, Jr., (1934-2017) who was never in short supply of enthusiastic cheerleading from the sidelines. I have had the privilege to study early on with Chinese language scholar-mentor and longtime friend Douglas Wile, esteemed teachers and friends Annette Juliano, Marthe Chandler, Roger Ames and 2013 National Humanities Medalist Wm. Theodore de Bary, (1919- 2017), who extended the Western civilizations curriculum to include Asian civilizations at Columbia University. I have greatly benefited from the acumen of Elizabeth Brotherton and other members of Columbia's Neo-Confucian Studies Seminar. I would be remiss if I did not mention the journal's associate editor, Ralph Bathurst and reviewers, as well as Dr. Linda Holt, president, and colleagues of the Princeton Research Forum. My deep thanks to editors Peggy Roeske and Daniel Calandro, Mercer County Community College.

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Current discussions around holistic approaches to wise management, in work and personal life, have far-reaching antecedents in China. This paper takes up Nancy Adler's concept of "leadership landscape" (2012, p. 6) and reimagines it through the genre of landscape painting from China's distant past. As if unrolling an imaginary scroll painting, we will explore the pursuit of wise seeing and acting through self-cultivation practices of the brush arts (writing, painting, calligraphy), by which scholars regenerated China's wisdom traditions during the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368).

During these challenging times, there are valuable lessons to be gleaned by the Western business community from Confucian scholars' unique approach to intuitive wisdom.

In his book *Against Individualism* (2015), China scholar Henry Rosemont, Jr., writes:

If the world owes much to the Western civilization that began with the Greeks, it equally owes the Chinese for their engineers, astronomers, government officials, craftspeople, inventors; poetry, painting, music and medicine. And Chinese civilization has probably seen to the feeding and housing of more human beings than any other in human history (p. 121).

Such an exploration of Chinese civilization can provide the ground for what industrial ecologist John Ehrenfeld (2008) sees as the need for "rethinking core questions that have guided societies that endured and thrived—questions that have largely disappeared in this age" (p. xiv).

Traditionally, Confucian scholars (hereafter *literati*), steeped in the Classics, presided over court administration, education and talent management. At its core, the Confucian ideal of *junzi* (君子) "noble, exemplary person", guided the expectation that each individual would perfect and transform what he or she was born with in order to contribute to a harmonious society.

Background

The starting assumption of this paper is that China's wisdom traditions have a central role to play in business management studies (Lu 1997; Kennedy, Kim, & Strudler 2016; Kim 2014; Koehn, 1999; 2001). I take a long view in concentrating on the Mongol-led Yuan period (1279–1368), a time of self-searching similar to ours in its absence of wise and ethical leadership.

This period gave pause to the Confucian *literati*, downsized with the derogatory social status of "leftovers", who saw the lack of wisdom as a major contributing factor to China's total collapse and insertion into the Mongol Empire, the largest contiguous merger and acquisition in the history of the world.

For many centuries, *literati* attended to their self-cultivation with the brush, engaging in the Three Perfections—painting, poetry and calligraphy—often on a single sheet of paper. At least as important as the aesthetic appreciation of a poem or painting was what the work reflected about its maker's *xin* (心) "heart-mind". A related concept is "moral artistry", which the philosopher of education John Dewey, seen by some Chinese as a "Second Confucius", understood as embodying such traits as "moral perceptiveness, creativity, expressiveness and skill" (Fesmire, 2003, p. 5).

The literati painter extended these correspondences of the arts through mastery of the brush to administrative leadership, not blindly imitating successful lessons from their long past, but seeking an ideal going beyond skill to involve a fresh innovation brought to the process by the intuitive amateur (Copland, p. 9; Bush, 1971, p. 52).

The pairing of these last two words may seem incongruous, yet the intuitive and the amateur both share a unique quality: each is capable of bringing remarkably keen perception to complex situations, a capacity notably in short supply today. As Tom Friedman (2009) writes, "America has lost its ability to think long-term and instead produces 'suboptimal' responses to its biggest problems—education, debt, financial regulation, health care, energy and environment" (p. 10).

In dealing with the present COVID-19 pandemic, the USA demonstrates, yet again, a failure of the imagination and an inability to learn from the past. Warning signs of the potential for the virus to disrupt social and business activities went completely unheeded, resulting in the unnecessary deaths of tens of thousands of citizens (Abutaleb et al. 2020, p. 1; Quammen, D.). Chinese officials, too, failed in ignoring the whistle blower Dr. Li Wenliang, who first sounded an alarm in early January and was reprimanded by the police for "untruthful speech", only to later become infected with the virus and die at the hospital where he worked (Austin, 2020, p. 1).

In an interview with *On Being*, psychologist and economist Daniel Kahneman described to host Krista Tippett a disturbing global pattern of behavior that he sees as endemic: "we have too much confidence in our beliefs, and overconfidence is really more aptly associated with a failure of imagination" (Tippett, 2017, p. 1).

Considering a lack of breadth in education following the 2008 financial downturn, Nitin Nohria, Dean of the Harvard Business School, urged the business teaching community to focus on cultivating judgment rather than relying solely on basic analytical tools to set standards for appropriate values and ethics (Chakrabarti, 2011; Middleton, 2011; Nohria, 2011). On a comparable theme, Pope Francis cautioned that "a heart without a compass" is a public danger, a danger for oneself and for others (Zenit, 2019, p. 1). It is doubtful that dean Nohria had instituting a painting course in mind yet such an opening of the curriculum could lead to mindful self-cultivation practices through encounters with art, both perceptually and practically.

To modern Western eyes, however, the brush holds no such significance when it comes to wise leadership. Yet to the Chinese mind, wisdom does not yield so easily to logical analysis or argument. Rather, important values are hidden in classical thought, only to reveal themselves on the plane of aesthetic experience (Merton 1974, p. 302).

The approach that Yuan literati adopted for regenerating China's ancient wisdom traditions was precisely through the revival of *Literati Painting Theory* (*wenrenhua* 文人画) that emphasized landscape as its subject. Traditionally, the brush arts were seen as integral to aesthetic knowledge, for only the senses can immediately access the *qualities* of objects that lie outside the visual world in a field of "intuition", "deeper meaning", and "truth" (Langer, 1964, p. 86, emphasis in original).

As Chinese scholars saw it, relying solely on book knowledge without an aesthetic dimension diminished one's *xin* (心) "heart-mind" rendering one less than human, and reliant on animal instinct alone. Nor was it 'learning for one's own sake' but a larger reality encompassing self and others as one who manifests as 'inner sage, outer king'.

Yet the Yuan Confucian literati process of recovering the lost heart-mind was not without its paradoxes, for, although many were accomplished painters and calligraphers producing works considered masterpieces up to the present day, they sought after an 'amateur ideal' in the brush arts. Far from dabbling, this ideal provided a lens to the viewer to share in the heart-mind of the painter-calligrapher. The viewer who embraced reverence and sincerity—traits of a true individual of the Way (*dao* 道)—was able to see and appreciate the artist's innovative impulses that built upon and surpassed the culture's wisdom traditions.

This key role of the viewer is in keeping with the concept put into words by the late curator of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), Kirk Varnedoe: "axiom of cultural innovation". Varnedoe (1990) uses a sports metaphor to explain the way in which innovation is a social phenomenon whereby one individual sees an alternative to the status quo and dares to act on it. Yet, equally important is the observer who brings the eyes to recognize it as such, and clear the path to make it happen:

The axiom of cultural innovation is that it takes two: it requires someone understanding how the rules might be changed, and acting on and transforming those rules; but then it also takes someone standing on the sidelines to value this innovation rather than demeaning or suppressing it (p. 217).

Can this 'meeting of the minds' between the Chinese landscape painter and the viewer take place in contemporary Western settings such as business schools that do not offer painting courses? What model is there for students acquiring an 'amateur sensibility' in today's business schools?

My more-than-twenty-year research, based on written reports of community college students taking my introductory Asian Art History Survey course, can be looked upon as a measure of students' uncanny ability to grasp the idea of their selected Asian art object in a museum. Strikingly, beginning undergraduate students bring a reverence to the assignment and welcome the intimate attentiveness, self-awareness, and judgment that even these brief exercises demand. They begin to look with wonder beyond the obvious, for deeper meanings, and their written first reports demonstrate an amateur ability to not only give themselves over to the museum experience, but also to evaluate that experience critically (Copland, 1952, p. 8).

Although an in-depth analysis of the above research on students' first reports is beyond the scope of this paper, I invite the reader into the world of the Yuan Chinese literati painters to observe and learn from them the ancient Chinese wisdom traditions as they sought to tap the world of ideas through the resonant brush.

The Three Teachings or Religions: Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism

Daoism is as old as the Chinese soil. *Laozi* (老子), the legendary founder of *Daoism* and purported author of the *Scripture of the Way and Virtue*, (*Daodejing* 道德經), is said to have lived during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–256 BCE). Daoism is both a natural and a metaphysical philosophy encompassing alchemy, shamanism, prognostication, and various other areas of human thought. The *dao* (道) "way, path, the Way" is seen as "the principle through the existence of which men are enabled to attain the highest sphere of life" (Fung, 1947, p. 25).

Daoism's canon of physical exercises for enhancing every aspect of bodily function developed over time. To achieve the ultimate goal of physical immortality, Daoists required

continuous regeneration and the highest state of health (Watt, 2010, p. 27). The fourth-century alchemist Ge Hong (283–343 CE) identified guideposts that applied to the external world, namely: 1) a transformational process as the core of physical existence; 2) passage between two polar conditions of softness/hardness and movement/fixedness; and, most important; 3) that transformation can be worked in the external world. Over time the concept of transformation being worked in the external world would be extended to include the interior world.

As a cultural subtext of Chinese civilization, Daoism's system of beliefs based on the *Daodejing* asserted itself from time-to-time, such as during the Yuan period. According to Metropolitan Museum lead curator, James C. Y. Watt (2010), in the twelfth century leading up to the Yuan, Daoism was an organized religion in the north that would attract the attention and patronage of Chinggis (Genghis Khan, 1167–1227); (p. 27). While its tenets of ritual and immortality especially appealed to the shamanistic Mongols, Daoism would slip in favor under the reign of his grandson Khubilai Khan, who preferred Buddhism (Fong, 1984, p. 129).

Buddhism entered China via the Silk Route approximately 100 CE, during the Later Han dynasty but would have to wait another century until that dynasty's fall in a time of great chaos, for Buddhism to gain many believers. Amidst the disruption, Buddhism acted as a unifying force that tribal invaders used in captured territories to placate the defeated Han Chinese majority. Many sects of Buddhism from India took hold, including Esoteric schools with their canons of complex rituals based on Indian models. The uniquely Chinese school that arose in the seventh century, eschewing esoteric doctrines and complex rituals, took root in the meditation school. Bodhidharma, an Indian Buddhist monk who lived during the 5th or 6th century, is credited with the transmission of the meditation school to China, known as Chan (Zen, in Japan). Yet, it is Huineng (638–713), an illiterate manual laborer who penned the Platform Sutra with its extraordinary intuitive insight that would secure his standing as the sixth Chinese Chan Patriarch. In Chan Buddhism, students now sought after masters who would confer enlightenment onto a worthy adherent through mind-to-mind transmission. Enlightenment lay beyond the rational mind, and the use of nonsensical questions and other unorthodox techniques, even physical abuse, were used to break the hold of one's 'wrong view' or 'ignorance'.

Confucianism is discussed in more detail in the following section because, in Khubilai's court, it would fall to the Confucian scholars to advise the khan and his diverse court on Chinese wisdom traditions. Many of them also participated in the revival of *Literati Painting Theory* (hereafter *wenrenhua*) as a tool of self-cultivation for accessing Chinese wisdom traditions. Serving as a rallying point for the disenfranchised literati away from court as a means of communication with like-minded peers, *wenrenhua* was also available to those in court who were enacting measures to ensure the safety and well-being of the people.

Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism

"Confucius" is a Latinized rendering of 孔夫子, "Kongfuzi", which translates as "Master Kong". The word "Confucianism" is unknown to most Chinese, who generally refer to it as the "School of *Ru*" (儒家), in which *ru* refers not to the man, but to the practices and the way of life we can define as simply "classicist" (Rosemont, 2013, p. 6). Thus the Chinese rendering of "Confucianism" means something like "The Learning of the Scholar" or "Sage" (p. 6). This humanistic worldview is attributed to Confucius (551–479 BCE), who saw a need to correct the debased behavior of his day and recover traditional rituals and ethics.

Descended from a noble family of limited means, Confucius lost his father at age three. A self-made man with no one particular teacher, Confucius would become a learned man, devoting his life to teaching. While young he served in minor posts in his native state of Lu, becoming a magistrate and later minister of justice. His efforts and strategies for political and social reform in a time of unrelenting violence of the period aptly called the "Warring States Period" were rebuffed by his home state of Lu first and subsequently by the other states. Disillusioned, he returned home at age 68 to edit the Classics. His efforts to establish universal education grounded in building moral character instead of vocational training, attracted both students and gentlemen-scholars, marking the beginning of a literati group that was to greatly impact Chinese history and society. Confucius is said to have had 3,000 students, including an additional seventy-two who mastered the "Six Arts" (Chan, 1963, p. 17).

The lifelong path to becoming a fully realized human was begun by developing the body through the Six Arts. While archery, chariot racing and mathematics furthered one's self-mastery through developing strength, perseverance and discipline, the arts of calligraphy, music and ritual set one's being in harmony with the rhythms of life.

Taking a long view, Confucius looked to China's legendary sage rulers Yao and Shun and the Duke of Zhou, who were seen as heroic models of wise leadership. Confucius especially esteemed the Duke for his big idea, the Mandate of Heaven: "The ruler governs by virtuous example, which spreads virtue throughout the land, and in turn demonstrates his harmony with the divine" (Gracie, 2012, p. 1). To the present day, some contemporary historians credit the Duke of Zhou for establishing China's cultural foundation (p. 1).

From earliest times, the Chinese understood that aesthetics and ethics-morality were intertwined elements of successful leadership. The Chinese see their universe as a model of cosmic harmony consisting of a trinity made up of heaven, humanity, and earth. What sustained this universal model was the free flow between heaven and earth of a vital force *qi* (氣) "breath, life force" perceived in the unfolding and workings of the seasons. Individuals who excelled in learning and moral character were seen as transmitters of heaven's rejuvenating powers, capable of restoring wholeness through cultivating their personal *qi*. Thus this inner center of the human being is a cosmic center, not an individual, personal one (Schneider, 1989, p. 51).

Therefore, it was crucial for the emperor's inner circle of literati to advise him to act in accordance with his role in this cosmic pattern, carrying out such duties as regulating the calendar and offering sacrifices to the ancestors. As Heaven's Mandate, there was a particular emphasis on performing his duties with the utmost moral character; otherwise he could bring on such disasters as natural catastrophes, invasions or even defeat at the hands of the enemy.

To better understand Confucian self-cultivation, we must consider briefly the character *zhi* (知), which is the most frequently occurring of the philosophical and religious commendable human qualities found in the *Analects* (Confucius' recorded sayings; one of the Four Books). In his translation of the text, philosopher, Henry Rosemont, Jr. (2013), clarifies that *zhi* is almost always translated as "knowledge" or "wisdom" but is perhaps better rendered as "to realize" or "realization" much of the time. Rosemont also writes that "in its more philosophically and spiritually important occurrences, *zhi* is perhaps best defined as a sense of what it is most fitting to do in our interactions with our fellow human beings, understanding why, performing those actions, and achieving a sense of well-being from so doing" (p. 32; emphasis in the original).

Throughout the *Analects*, “the Master’s urgings to ‘make real’ his teachings are, in the end, to be construed not simply as ethical, psychological, social and political advice—although they are importantly all of these, too—but more basically as religious or *spiritual* instructions for how to live a meaningful life” (Rosemont, 2013, p. 35; emphasis in original).

Despite never holding a leadership position during his lifetime, Confucius was both a transmitter of important philosophical ideas and standard of behavior not as rote imitation but also as someone who sought to break new ground. As China’s most famous teacher-philosopher and political theorist, Confucius is honored to this day for his contribution of ideas that have influenced all of East Asia.

Neo-Confucianism

“Neo-Confucianism” that began in the late Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) is a Western term for an outgrowth of ancient Confucianism that was modified by Daoism and Buddhism. It has been applied in general to new trends in thought emerging from the Confucian revival of wisdom or ancient ideas contained in the classics.

Perhaps Neo-Confucianism is most aptly seen as the waxing and waning of an ancient philosophy that at times is revived from obscurity, reinterpreted, and restored to prominence by gifted thinkers. For example, new trends in Neo-Confucian thought during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE) sought to revive ancient ideas to both reimagine and inform the ongoing debate between self-cultivation and political reformism, which was of great concern for literati of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127 CE). As Rosemont (2013) notes, there was a concerted effort to realize a vision of the state that attracted people possessing *ren* (humanity), or “consummate conduct” (p. 19).

In ceding control of the north to the Jurchen invaders (who formed the Jin dynasty, 1115–1234 CE), and relocating the Chinese capital to the south, the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279 CE) tended toward an introspection that was embodied by the Neo-Confucian synthesizer Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi, 1130–1200) and other Neo-Confucians, in a movement from political reformism toward “inward...problems of human nature, personal cultivation and man’s place in the universe” (Hymes & Schirokauer, 1993, p. 21).

This inward turn, however, was not removed from social commitment and involvement, for Neo-Confucianism, known in China as Daoxue 道學, or “The Learning of the (Confucian) Way”, emphasized the practice of “investigating things, perfecting the self, and bringing peace to the world”; all as parts of a single process (Hymes and Schirokauer, 1993, p. 21).

American Sinologist and East Asian literary scholar, William Theodore de Bary (1993) notes that Zhu Xi in his preface to *Zhongyong* 中庸, or *Doctrine of the Mean*, reiterated the essential role of the emperor under whom

all matters under Heaven, with their myriad transformations and innumerable manifestations, depend without exception on the mind of the ruler. This is a natural principle. Thus if the ruler’s mind is correct, all matters without exception will follow from this correctness; and if this mind is incorrect, not one of these matters can attain correctness (in Hymes and Schirokauer, 1993, p. 350).

Self-cultivation thus required concerted effort, for although human beings are superior to other species, they have no privileged access to the *Dao*, or Way. Fung Yu-lun (1895–1990), the philosopher and historian who was instrumental in reintroducing the study of Chinese

philosophy to the modern era, distinguishes the *Dao* of the Daoists as abiding, unchanging, the nameless, the Uncarved Block transcending forms and supporting "inaction" (*wu-wei* 無為), or reclusion in nature (1947, pp. 60–61). For the Confucians, the *Dao* is both the nameless and the named, transcending shapes and features yet cherishing a concern for the common task (pp. 82–83).

Self-cultivation practices thus meant that the literati would administer their duties according to the "tradition of the Way" (*daotong* 道通) that Zhu Xi "identified as the essential message transmitted by the sages 'from mind to mind', and associated with the teachings of *The Great Learning*" (de Bary, quoted in Hymes and Schirokauer, 1993, pp. 350–351).

Neo-Confucianism and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart

The Neo-Confucian synthesizers of previous schools of philosophy sought a balance between the "investigation of things" and moral discipline through the "rectification of *xin* 心, 'heart'". In some translations, *xin* refers to "mind", which appeals to Western readers with its emphasis on rational cognition. However, in the context of this paper, *xin* is more aptly translated as the "mind-and-heart".

The literati advisors placed an emphasis on moral discipline for illuminating human nature through self-cultivation to rectify the *xin* 心 "mind-and-heart", and for making the will sincere. Professor de Bary (1993) writes that the chapters in *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), "dwell on the primary virtue of 'reverent seriousness' primary in the sense of being, not a first step in learning but a fundamental orientation of mind, a respect for life, which should underlie and inspire all learning and conduct" (de Bary, quoted in Hymes and Schirokauer, 1993, p. 359).

Confucius placed particular emphasis on the value of the body because it is a gift from the ancestors, and that taking care of one's person was the beginning of "family reverence" (Ames, personal communication).

Mencius, "The Second Sage" (Mengzi, 372–289 BCE), however, considered it the "small body" when compared to the "great body of the heart" (Tu, 1985, p. 100). By this Mencius did not mean the anatomical heart, but rather the "spiritual heart" (p. 100). Whereas the body is confined in space, the heart has the unique ability to wander swiftly and expand infinitely (p. 105). For Mencius, human beings were born with the mind-and-heart but lost it through the process of socialization, and a key task of one's lifetime was learning that consisted of the quest for recovery of the lost "heart".

Confucian Classics professor Tu Weiming gives further details about on the workings of the mind working in concert with the heart:

As Mencius avowed, if we can realize the full measure of our heart, we will know our nature; if we know our nature, we will know Heaven...it is unlikely that we will ever know our nature in itself and, by inference, it is unlikely we will ever know Heaven in its entirety. However, in theory and, to a certain extent, in practice...[it] is realizable through our persistent self-cultivation. This involves not only the cognitive recognition of the mind but also the experiential embodiment of the heart (1985, p. 148).

Rectifying the heart was also seen as bringing an aesthetic dimension to an individual's moral and spiritual cultivation and his or her achievement of moral artistry (Fesmire, 2003,

p. 87). For geographer Yi-fu Tuan, "humans are born into art having a 'self aesthetic' that is not fixed, but flexible, capable of being nurtured...art can renew through the power of the new"(personal communication).

Often in times of deep crisis, it is the talented, charismatic individual who is looked to as a leader, and the Mongol-ruled Yuan Dynasty was no exception.

Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322)

Zhao Mengfu was an outstanding young man about to enter public life after earning the highest scores in the civil service examinations for the *jinshi* degree, the highest level in the examination system, above the *zhuren*—the rough equivalent of an MBA—virtually guaranteeing a prestigious court appointment and financial security. The curricula included courses covering practical training in military strategy, civil law, revenue and taxation, agriculture, and geography. Yet at its core was immersion in the humanities based on the foundational texts of the Confucian Classics. The classics built into every aspect of the education process an expectation that students strive to perfect and transform what they had at birth through self-cultivation, in order to contribute to a harmonious society.

As fate would have it, however, Zhao Mengfu was also a scion of the Song ruling family, and would not take his rightful position at court because of China's collapse at the hands of the Mongols. Instead he and his literati peers were downgraded, barred from professional life leaving them little choice but to retire to their hometowns to immerse themselves in the classics and self-cultivation practices.

Reacting to the Song dynasty's collapse, they looked beyond the tradition in which they were schooled, seeking after "a new religiosity and social idealism by looking back at China's own pre-Buddhist tradition for a spirituality fully compatible with humanistic concerns" (de Bary, 1981, p. 129).

When Chinggis Khan's grandson and heir Khubilai Khan (reign 1260–1294) both founded and became the first ruler of the Yuan Dynasty in 1279, the world's largest society of 100 million people became a part of the even larger Mongol empire. With China now reunified and travel restrictions lifted, southerners such as Zhao Mengfu could come together intellectually and philosophically with northerners (former subjects of the Jin, conquered earlier by the Mongols). Combining Neo-Confucian elements from each—the North's concern for government service with the South's concern for the perfecting of self—resulted in a sharpened focus on the moral discipline of rectifying the *xin* (心), through the "learning of the mind-and-heart".

China historian John Langlois, Jr., in his book introduction on the Mongols in China, writes that after more than a decade of disastrous outcomes for the Chinese people, educated Chinese came to be seen by the nomadic rulers as key to dealing with the chaotic aftermath of war and fiscal missteps (1981, p. 13). Once it became apparent that a world won by military might would not necessarily bow to leadership by military might, Khubilai Khan sought a global model based on China's ancient wisdom traditions that would not only win over the Han Chinese but also capitalize on their talents combined with those of the Mongol loyalists and Muslim middlemen (Langlois, 1981, p. 13).

Khubilai also came to see that heavily taxing the general population as a strategy for quick short-term gains compromised long-term sustainability. Recognizing that Chinese universalism and political ideology could be used to his advantage, he tapped a well-known talent pool of southern literati that included Zhao Mengfu for guidance in interpreting

Chinese classic wisdom texts (Twitchett, 1994, p. 179). As for the dozen or so literati who chose to accept official appointments by the Yuan court, they were taking part in an irrevocable commitment to advance the Way (de Bary, 1981 p. 9).

In the chaos of the Yuan dynasty, Chinese officials sought to repossess and reassert the Way as a starting point in a society no longer ruled by a largely homogeneous majority, that of the Han Chinese, but rather by a racially and ethnically diverse court made up mostly of Mongols, as well as Arabs and Uighurs. They also would shift the emphasis from advising an emperor on governing through self-discipline, to cultivating a foreign leader on the Chinese Classics and wise leadership.

In the process of renewing ancient wisdom roots, Chinese Confucian scholars adapted their cultural tradition to a global governance model that included experiments in universal education, expanding a diverse social network committed to "the prime value of the cultivated human person as the keystone of human flourishing" (de Bary, 2011, p. 122). Now it was not enough to repossess and reassert the *Dao* (道) solely for oneself; the Dao must reside in others across linguistic and cultural barriers (p. 65). As a starting point toward a new world order, the scholar-officials saw their role at court as clarifying the luminous virtue lying in the "mind and heart" of the ruler (de Bary 1981, pp. 115–116).

As the historian Herbert Franke notes, long historical experience had conditioned Chinese thinking to a sort of "culturalism", as opposed to racism or nationalism, whereby even barbarian rule could be legitimate when holding to traditional values (1978, p. 77).

Although seen by some of his peers and subsequent historians as opportunistic, Zhao Mengfu sidestepped preferential treatment from the khan, who came to value him as a key advisor. Not only did Zhao avoid privileges such as coming and going as he wished at the palace, he also requested assignments to outlying provinces so as not to invite jealousy from others at the court (Hay, 1990, p. 111).

Zhao Mengfu, too, was a proponent of *wenrenhua*, first articulated in the previous dynasty, seeing to the reinvigoration of landscape painting as a visual wisdom document. In his inspection trips to various parts of the country, he amassed a collection of Northern Song landscape paintings, along with masterpieces from earlier dynasties, as an act of cultural preservation for peers and future generations. Just as the sages of the past conveyed their wisdom to the living through commentaries written on the classics, so too did they convey their mind-and-hearts through their paintings and calligraphy.

Both contemporary and historic paintings provided for the literati are what Osborne (1953) terms as "tangible evidence of the creative imagination that is a basic tool in the acquisition of knowledge that is made more salient when imaginatively synthesized and dynamically extended" (Osborne, p. 15).

The influence of Zhao's circle cannot be overstated. As Franke (1978) points out in the *Yijing* (one of the Five Classics) the idea of a "new beginning", or "primal", is contained in the era-name of the *Yuan* (p. 27). Whereas past dynastic names were chosen from territorial or geographic locations, the concept of *yuan* "origin" expands China beyond the "center of the world" to its more mythological origin as the point of "communication between Heaven and Earth" (pp. 27–28). This meeting point, however, can also be seen as ushering in a new era of the "active role of the creative mind that was more responsive to human needs" more in line with the Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy of the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart (de Bary, 1981, p. xiii). Also, as Tu Weming (1976) writes, "it was in keeping

with the *Zhongyong's* positive assertion that the *common* human experience is the *center* upon which the moral order depends" (p. 103, emphasis in the original).

Over time, Zhao Mengfu and his peers came to be admired by Khubilai Khan and other members of his diverse court for such traits as "rugged character, directness of speech and deep sense of commitment to the Way" (de Bary, 1981, p. 135). Yet 篤恭 (dugong) "sincere and respectful", were particularly the "virtues that the Mongols prized in their Chinese officials" (Hearn, 2010, p. 212).

Eventually, official edicts issued from the court, contained language that reflected such Confucian values as a deep concern for the common people. In 1313, the influence of Zhao Mengfu and his circle would see the reinstatement of civil service examinations supported by the Mongol government based on the Confucian Classics.

Wenrenhua Method and Measure

Under the influence of Zhao Mengfu, *wenrenhua* gained a renewed prominence, largely in reaction against what some considered a degenerate literary style of the previous Southern Song dynasty. Zhao Mengfu recorded this observation:

During the last years of the Song, literary style was very bad. Scholars of the classics did not consider it wrong to depart from the principles of the classics and instead devoted their efforts to establishing their own strange and sensational theories. Composers of prose poems did not consider it incorrect to employ minutiae or trivia and considered weaving together the novel and clever as their achievement (Li, 1981, p. 345).

Zhao saw the late Song's literary style, with its misplaced emphasis on spin over substance, as going against the Great Tradition's reaffirmation of an order larger than that of humans. Similar complaints were lodged at this time against late Song painting.

Zhao's insight can perhaps be aligned with the contemporary sociologist Margaret Archer's theory that a given society comprises a balance between the sociocultural "structure" of the small interest group in power, and the "system of culture", identified as "ideas" marking the traditionalist society. At times of extreme chaos, the push for transformation can come either at the level of "culture" or at the level of "structure"; and how these interact with each other can make all the difference in determining whether the society is stable or in ferment (Archer cited in Gallagher, pp. 32–33).

In Neo-Confucianism parlance, reality can be discerned only by an enlightened mind that favors harmony over information. "Therefore," writes Neo-Confucian theorist Zhu Xi, "one who is fully developed in mind-and-heart can know one's nature and know Heaven because as reality becomes unclouded one is equipped to search into principle in its natural (divine) state" (de Bary, 1960, p. 554).

Although the practice of the Three Perfections—poetry, painting and calligraphy—was a solitary practice, it was not a privatized one. A poem or painting executed at the stroke of the brush was shared as a sign of the communion between the painter-calligrapher and the viewer, a meeting between kindred spirits that extends to the present day. That is why a critic writing about a painting 600 years after its execution could exclaim that "the scroll had lost none of the primal vigor and adherence to the principles of nature that so moved its maker" (Fu 1981, pp. 410–11). Such a masterpiece presents its power to subsequent

generations because the modern critic has reassessed and validated the “life-giving and spiritually renewing qualities to the painting and calligraphy in a description that conveys a genuine sense of spiritual communion” (p. 411).

In the absence of both a painting academy and a civil service examination system in the early Yuan dynasty, an extraordinary indicator of the painter’s mind-and-heart or intent (*yi* 意) would fill the void—landscape painting could stand in as both the ‘method’ and the ‘measure’.

“Method” is defined by de Bary (1989) as a specific way to convey a work’s “message” in order to express the “idea” of the instruction transmitted from the “mind-and-heart” of early sage kings (p. xii). Besides connoting a step, or action, to be taken, “measure” can represent “method” as a “model” (or norm) that is an observable register of the *junzi*’s character that can advance setting the standard of the moral value or judgment intrinsic to the mind-and-heart (de Bary, 1989, p. xvi).

Now it was landscape paintings that stood in for literati’s ‘first reports’ in communicating to one another their ‘heart’s intent’. What was sought now by way of the brush were the “signatures”, or “heart seals”, that gave visual impressions of the mind-and-heart deep within the individual (Bush, 1971, p. 19). The beauty of these “heart seals” lies in their potential for mind-to-mind transference from artist to viewer in a symbiotic relationship, so that “each shines more brilliantly in the other’s company” (Ames, personal communication).

Landscape

The revival of *wenrenhua* emphasized painting more than literature, specifically landscape or *shanshui* (山水), literally “mountain-water”. The visual forms of mountains and water have deep philosophical roots in China. In early legends and myths, ‘mountains’ are the abode of sages and immortals claimed by the Daoists. Similarly, the Buddhists held particular mountains as sacred, although earlier historical accounts document that Emperors made pilgrimages every five years to the Four Sacred Peaks as it was the meeting point of humans and God.

Likewise, as China scholar and translator, Wing-tsit Chan writes, Chinese philosophers such as Laozi looked to “water” to learn moral lessons through associating the best of man with water as being good by benefiting all things rather than competing with them, and by seeking lowly places disdained by most and yet close to the Dao (Chan, 1963, p. 143). The Neo-Confucian, Shao Yong (1011–1077) compares water with a mirror to show the importance of viewing something “not just with one’s physical eyes but with one’s mind” (Chan, 1963, p. 487). For Shao Yong,

A mirror reflects because it does not obscure the physical form of things. But water (with its purity) does even better because it reveals the universal character of the physical form of things as they really are. And the sage does still better because he reflects the universal character of the feelings of all things (p. 488).

In the *Analects* (6:21), Confucius counsels on the correspondence between humans and nature: “Individuals of *zhi* ‘wisdom’ delight in water, individuals of *ren* ‘altruism’ or ‘humanity’ delight in mountains. The one of wisdom is active; the one of humanity is tranquil” (Ames & Rosemont, trans. 1998).

The correspondence between human beings and nature continued to evolve, as mountains and rivers came to be seen as representing outward configurations of the earth's inner energy forces. From the Han dynasty (206 BCE–225 CE) onward, mountains and rivers became the greatest icon of power in the earthly world, just as the emperor embodied the power of the social and political world (Hay, 1987, p. 28). The rise and fall of many dynasties over China's long history has conditioned Chinese to see the dynamic symbolic order as lying in the forms of mountains and water, rather than in provisional human structures.

Because the Chinese saw things as occurring "in a state of resonance with other things in the same category", knowledge of these categories was important (Hay, 1985, p. 54). Such categories were fastidiously recorded in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) dictionary *The Explanation of Names*. In the example of mountains, there were at least 30 names for various parts and aspects of "mountain", such as displaying sharp or softly rounded peaks (p. 54). However, *wenrenhua* painters sought to go beyond the representation of mountain, by *presenting* to the viewer its forms in all their pristine simplicity (p. 54). This required "seeing" beyond the physical form of mountains to their very essence as containers for the storing of *qi*, the essential energy that flows through the earth as well as the human body (p. 54).

The second wave of Neo-Confucianism in eleventh-century China saw the advent of *wenrenhua* (with its emphasis on landscape) as the quintessential subject for painting. *Wenrenhua* theorists saw landscape painting as a way to allow for an inner concentration that consisted of spiritual inspiration (*tianqi*), attuning one's "inner hills and valleys" with the outer forms of mountains and water, forms long associated with nobility and virtue, wisdom, and humanity. "Landscape," writes Qing dynasty (1644–1912) dramatist Li Yu "is the intellectual and emotional expression of the universe, while intellectual and emotional expression is the landscape of the human mind" (Chen, 2006, p. 2).

In his instructions for landscape painters, the Northern Song theorist Guo Xi (flourished 1020–1090), who served as a court painter under Emperor Shenzong (reign 1068–1085), wrote on the important distinction between objectively looking at the subject to be painted and becoming one with the subject to be painted. Guo writes that the artist must become one with the forms of mountains and water by cultivating his *qi*, melding inner and outer, by placing himself "in communion with his inner hills and his inner streams" (Binyon, 1972, p. 63). For Zhao Mengfu, too, landscape painting became the vehicle for exploring his inner landscape; for expressing new possibilities of a rich imagination infused with an 'amateur sensibility' and 'intuitive wisdom'. As an example, Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines Level Distance* (1310) (see Figure 1) marks a revolutionary redirection through Zhao's playful labourer "calligraphicization" of landscape forms traditionally brushed with painterly strokes.



Figure 1 – *Twin Pines, Level Distance*, Zhao Mengfu, ca. 1310, Handscroll; ink on paper, The Metropolitan Museum of New York

Moreover, painting assigned to its viewer a participatory role, with the understanding that he or she see the excellence of the painting *not* through formal elements of shape, composition, and coloring, but through the fusion of subject and object through an intuitive understanding. No longer was the painting something from which one can see 'the scenery of River Xiao by the painter Wu', but rather a measure of 'what kind of person Wu is'.

Literati painters maintained their amateur role, when deflecting praise about their painting, by saying they were merely "the play of my brush".

The Literati Painters as Amateurs

"The play of the brush" was a familiar refrain of literati painters, reflecting their preference not to sell their works like professional painters. Instead, they gave their paintings away as gifts to mark a particularly poignant occasion, such as the departure of a friend for a newly assigned distant post.

For the literati, the "play of the brush" was also a means to go beyond skill and technical expertise to realize spontaneity and improvisation, not unlike jazz. With the brush as the tool for writing, a symbiotic relationship developed between the flow of calligraphy and the playing of the musical instrument, the *qin* that enhanced the *virtuoso-amateur* sensibility. Staying with the music metaphor, the American composer and conductor, Aaron Copland (1952) saw in the mixing of professional and amateur sensibilities the release of the "freely imaginative mind at the core of all vital music making and music listening" (p. 7). Copland gives a master's insight into such a nuanced sensibility likely sought by the literati as well:

It is the amateur listener that excites me: the sensitive amateur, because (s)he lacks the prejudices and preconceptions of the professional musician, is sometimes a surer guide to the true quality of a piece of music. The ideal listener, then, would combine the preparation of that trained professional with the innocence of the intuitive amateur (p. 9).

Moreover, according to ethnomusicologist Marius Schneider (1989) for ancient cultures such as that of China, the aural "represented the most refined form of higher cognition" (in Godwin, p. 56). The reason is that our human ears are not only receptacles for receiving sound, but also conduits for the mind's inquiry about the world (Chion, 1994, p. 33). Unlike the demarcated boundaries of seeing, the sensory system of hearing (not unlike the Mencian sense of 'heart') is not confined to a physical space because its contours follow a dynamic, undulating line (p. 33).

Over time, variations on this theme of listening were represented in landscape paintings, at times showing a reposing scholar enjoying the sounds produced by nature, an ability gained from his familiarity with the perpetually resonant *qin*. Representations of leisurely listening to nature came to "theatricalize the larger act of cognition—listening flagged the production of cultivated thought, turning a recumbent, motionless figure into a protagonist of heroic action" (Adam Herring, personal communication).

The flow of the brush's rhythmic calligraphic qualities corresponded with the *qin*'s flowing, melodic lines, in a vibratory interplay between yin and yang, sound and space. A similar dynamic operating in the resonant interplay between poetry and painting also existed in the intense relationship between speaker and listener, in which the attentive listener becomes what the speaker is through shared meaning (Schneider, 1989, p. 56).

The following account from the *Analects* (11:26) is telling: Confucius asks four students a “why” question about their plans to make a contribution to society. After listening respectfully to somewhat grandiose declarations by the first three, the fourth without speaking holds a long note on his stringed instrument. Encouraged by the Master, the young man Zengxi explains, saying:

At the end of spring, with the spring clothes having already been finished, I would like, in the company of five or six young men and six or seven children, to cleanse ourselves in the Yi River, to revel in the cool breezes at the Altar for Rain, and then return home singing.

Heaving a deep sigh of resonance as one does in the presence of a kindred spirit, the Master exclaimed “I’m with Zengxi” (Bathurst and Chen, 2018 pp. 3–4).

The followers of Confucius and Mencius recognized “resonances as supreme forms of aesthetic communication, giving direct access suggestive of an extralinguistic referent that belies the insensitive eye or unattuned ear” (Tu, 1985, pp. 108–109).

The Brush as Regenerative Tool

A well-executed brushstroke, expressing beauty and joy through movement, involves not only the muscle actions of the artist’s finger, wrist, and arm, but also mental, emotional, and psychic states. Like signatures and autographs, calligraphy is said to reveal one’s innermost being (Fong, 1984, p. 3). The scholar-amateur phenomenon in the arts sought for not just personal expression, but also moral integrity that would be reflected in calligraphy and painting (Fu, 1981, p. 375). Thus, art historian Wen Fong writes, the Chinese refer to both calligraphy and painting as the artist’s *xin yin* “imprint of the mind-and-heart” (1984, p. 3). As such, the painting also reflected the artist, along with his or her character, ideas, thoughts, and self-cultivation (Fong, 1984, p. 3).

Moreover, the exceptionally creative mind could playfully build into a painting a puzzle for the viewer by testing his or her acumen of famous poems. As Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Joseph Scheier-Dolberg writes:

Even painters who were not poets engaged with poetry. Many adopted famous poems as their subjects; sometimes they would identify the poem in an inscription, but sometimes they left the viewer to guess, building an interactive dimension of play into their artworks that would draw the viewer in. In this way, painters tried to imbue some of the suggestiveness of poetry into their images, taking the poet’s posture as their own (2019, p. 4).

Play could also elevate the work to a wholly other dimension; that of the highest category of the “divine”. In 1322, the year of Zhao Mengfu’s death, his official biographer wrote the following:

Other people when painting landscapes, bamboo, rocks, figures, horses and birds, if they excel in one field are likely to be weak in another, but he was able to (re)create all their subtleties and render to the full their Heaven-sent qualities (Li, 1965, p. 81).

Zhao Mengfu’s reinstitution of *wenrenhua*, as art critic Holland Cotter (2000) writes, resulted in “a personal fusing of calligraphy, painting and poetry that Zhao dubbed ‘idea-writing’ or ‘mind-writing’ and considered ideal” (p. 2).

Writing in the tenth century, Su Shih (1037–1011), founder of *wenrenhua* theory, had this insight on an invisible energy made visible by the 'mindful' brush:

when the force of my brush, has to wind and turn in pursuit of where my intention, or idea, has already reached...this is the most wonderful experience I have had (Hay, 1987, p. 33).

Professor Fong provides a lens into both the creative process of a contemporary master-calligrapher putting brush to paper, and his personal viewing experience:

Confronting the blank page can be daunting for it represents the 'state of chaos' that becomes altered forever with the first stroke of the brush. Immediately, the brush stroke sets up a correspondence between positive and negative space—the stroke as a positive black mark set against the white background of the negative space. Thus, the saying 'one character creates a universe'. In the new creation, the artist *presents* not just an object but also the SELF—a self neither bound by language, nor space nor time (Wen Fong, personal correspondence).

In the role of the perceptive viewer of a painting, Fong models the way to a deeper looking and seeing, so that we too can understand the way in which the real picture resides not in color, surface or environment, but in the unseen transmitted from the mind-and-heart of the painter to the viewer through sympathetic identification that results in what could be called an *intuitive understanding*.

A Leadership Landscape For Today's Business Schools

The Yuan experiment not only represented the quintessence of Neo-Confucian thought, but also transcended its cultural limits by achieving a universality in its philosophy of human nature. As de Bary (1981) writes, its teaching maintained a belief in the inherent moral nature of all human beings regardless of cultural differences, perfectibility through self-cultivation and the collective achievement of an ordered human community with broader base and outreach (p. 71).

On this basis, de Bary (1981) also points out that the ecumenical Learning of the Mind-and-Heart was expressed not just in the "mind of the sages, but also in the mind-and-heart of common humanity requiring the ruler/leader to identify with both" (p. 71). Its reach extended to the subsequent native Ming dynasty (1368 to 1644) founded by the peasant rebel leader Zhu Yuanzhang lasting into the foreign-ruled Qing Dynasty uninterrupted for almost four centuries as well as to the other peoples of East Asia (p. 72).

The Ming Neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming (b. 1472) continued the tradition of the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart school through the investigation of things in order to tap the metaphysical principles that underlie the physical universe, only found in concrete objects, yet apprehended through the mind of the experiencing self (Fong, 1984, p. 142). Only after many years of thinking and the investigation of things did Wang, in his own words, suddenly *realize* that "to understand the truth of the sages, one's own nature is self-sufficient" (p. 143). From then on, he taught his students exclusively about "extending one's own innate intuitive knowledge" (p. 143). Furthermore, transformation of the world is a phenomenon that issues from within, for, as geographer Yi-fu Tuan (1998) points out, "before transforming, we humans do something extraordinary, namely 'see' what is not

there...and seeing what is *not* there lies at the foundation of all human culture" (p. 6, emphasis added).

What could an aesthetic dimension offer today's talented individuals in the West who are preparing for positions of leadership? I propose that the possibilities are more than was once thought. Organizational theorist Russell Ackoff (1998) recognized that transformational leaders are made not taught, because wisdom is an aesthetic function that includes truth, plenty, the good, beauty/fun (ideals). Ackoff noted the paucity of the aesthetic dimension in business school curricula:

Although business schools had been adept at preparing future leaders in the function of science—data, information, knowledge, and understanding—they have neglected the production of wisdom that presupposes all four, because it is primarily a function of ethics and aesthetics that involves the conscious insertion of values into human decision making and evaluation of its outcomes (pp. 2–3).

A recent livestream (forum) sponsored by the Young Global Leaders with the World Economic Forum, drew this praise from Stephen Young, the director of the *Caux Round Table*:

What their program reminds us of is art and beauty, a deeply moral emotion, actually (is) open to all of us. We so often let our attention and concerns get wrapped up in organizations, hierarchies, contests of will and power, technologies, money and cold, hard laws of science that we overlook beauty as a source of meaning and hope (#Findingbeauty).

Writing in 2019, another noteworthy observation by Stephen Young was that "the internet has moved humanity beyond materialism as the principal source of wealth to intangible forces of mind and heart as the creators of wealth" (p. 2).

The lesson from China's emphasis on the mind-and-heart can instruct on what Gallagher (1998) sees as an imperative to reconnect with "depth" (p. 139). In today's rapidly changing age of globalism, entire cultures are "trapped at the surface level", alienated from the deepest languages of our humanity; this has become a central issue that will require a broadening of the agenda from the personal to the cultural—using models that can encompass the spiritual, cultural, and artistic (p. 139). In this way, contact points with a fuller range of human capabilities can be reopened by tapping the "capacities of the heart in its strivings for wonder, searching, listening and receptivity and life options for compassion and love" (p. 139).

Christopher Michaelson, professor of business ethics, sees the importance of the humanities in business as a way of cultivating an appreciation for what is valuable in itself; that is, even if there is no immediately apparent measurable financial value (2010 p. 210). Although acknowledging the arts and humanities may not contribute to shareholder wealth, Michaelson sees them as supporting "a more humane form of capitalism in which objects and persons of no apparent value—a work of art or a needy non-stakeholder—warrant our attention for their own sake" (p. 210).

In his research on intuitive leaders, higher education theorist Robert Birnbaum (2000) defines them as "intuitive scientists" who recognize patterns based on extensive experience and judgment more than data (pp. 174–175). As described by art critic Michael Kimmelman (2003), the late, charismatic MOMA curator, Kirk Varnedoe was such a visionary leader who

saw that cumulative, everyday thoughtful decisions have a lot more impact on an institution's destiny than any master plan, because ultimately what surfaces are "emergent strategies" that converge in time in some sort of consistency of pattern (p. 10). This type of manager, as Birnbaum (2000) notes, resembles an artist in that he or she acts as a transformer with the ability to readily access intuitive thinking, and is capable of carrying sense data from one domain to the other (p. 193).

For Neo-Confucians, infusing wisdom into daily relationships, with both family and work colleagues, further underscored "the cultivated human person as the keystone of human flourishing" (de Bary, 2011, p. 122). It was also a theme echoed at Davos, the 2012 World Economic Forum. For Tony Schwartz (2012), Energy Project's president and CEO, the theme "to transform the world, we must first transform ourselves" resonated with him as the forum's biggest takeaway (p. 1).

As Ackoff (1994) summarized in a *Youtube* presentation *quality* must contain the notion of *value* that is *not* merely directed towards "efficiency" but rather directed towards "effectiveness", and, the difference between the two is what distinguishes "knowledge" from "wisdom" (Crawford-Mason & Dobyns; emphasis added).

The Art of Leadership: Hope Made Real?

Nancy Adler's questions to the business leadership community are as prescient today as they were when she posed them in the pre-pandemic landscape: who are we as human beings? How can businesses influence life on the planet for good? (2006, p. 497)

In the conclusion of *The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook* (2018), Linda M. Kelley and her colleagues acknowledge the enormous realities pressing in on us economically, socially and environmentally. Yet, despite having our notions of control and power challenged exponentially, Kelley's counsel is to "choose playfully" with a spirit of possibility by quoting Johan Huizinga from his book *Homo Ludens*:

In play we move below the level of the serious, as a child does; but we also move above it—in the realm of the beautiful and sacred...to dare, to take risks, to bear uncertainty, to endure tension—these are the essence of the play spirit (1950, pp.19 & 51, in Wirttenberg et al., 2018, p. 440).

Acknowledging the deeper meaning of 'play' from "the realm of the beautiful and sacred" can offer an antidote to our current fault lines and stasis: only through each individual's mindful gathering of attention and intention of the authentic self can we cooperate in co-creating a more equitable world.

What lessons can be drawn from Zhao Menfu's life and leadership that suggest a strategy for incorporating wisdom instruction into Western education today? In deflecting praise for their paintings as 'the play of the brush' Zhao and his peers invite us to go beyond merely seeing a pretty scene to a space beyond the visual field of objects presented by the painter who embodies traits such as "perceptiveness, creativity, expressiveness and skill" (Dewey quoted in Fesmire, 2003, p. 5). Zhao also assigns to us the role of the astute viewer of the painting to bring an ability to see the quality of the brushwork, the invisible idea made visible on paper, as well as into the mind-and-heart of the painter. Finally, if we could make a beginning to 'see' through the lens of an amateur sensibility and intuitive wisdom, our reward would be a capacity "to recognize that the painter's self-representation in the painting is not *magic* at all, but *genius*" (Wen Fong, personal correspondence).

If business school students are unable to take up the practices of the brush arts, they can do the next best thing to gain sagely counsel embedded in works of art by visiting the world's museums. Contemplating works of art is a participatory act that sharpens our 'listening with our eyes' that enables us to enter into a 'deep dialogue' with the painting's maker through shared meaning.

For more than 20 years, the university and community college students in my introductory Asian art history course have been required to go to a museum (often their first visit ever to view Asian collections), select a work of Chinese art, look at it closely and reflect on it and write a personal essay. With what seems to come naturally to young people, they bring a reverence to the assignment, and welcome the intimate attentiveness, self-awareness, and judgment that even this brief exercise demands. They bring to the assignment an awe that takes them beyond the obvious to the invisible, to access the deeper, richer meanings. In particular, they ask how they can build a world whose creativity will evoke similar awe centuries later. That is, they have taken the first step to thinking about wise leadership.

Afterword:

Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy and paintings are as much revered today as they were by his peers during his lifetime and subsequent generations. See a video on Zhao's *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* (1296) scroll painting that includes a painting demonstration:

<https://www.comuseum.com/painting/masters/zhao-mengfu/autumn-colors-on-the-qiao-and-hua-mountains/#>

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