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CSR AND CONNECTED LEADERSHIP: THE MASTERS OF THE HUAINAN

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In the second century BCE scholars gathered at the court of the Chinese King to debate philosophy and statecraft. Their conversations were recorded in the text: "The Masters of the Huainan."

They identified five types of wasteful consumption that are "the source of all disorder" - wood, water, earth, metal and fire. The text railed against miners who "exhaust the riches of the earth:"

"Any one of these five types of wastefulness is sufficient to bring about the loss of the Empire," they warned.

The nature of the "tragedy of the commons" is such that when companies can externalise the costs they impose on the environment, there is little short term incentive to them to desist.

The environment cannot answer back.

"Connected Leaders", however, are different. They impose "win win" solutions, rather than "win lose" ones. Nowhere is connected leadership more in evidence than in relation to its attitudes towards the environment.

John Browne, former CEO of BP has said that the ability of "companies to confront issues of long term industry viability without the certainty of short term returns" is critical to the delivery of effective environment policy.

Investment in game changing technologies will be critical for the development of policies that will respect the environment. But - in the short term - these technologies will contradict the need for short and mid term profitability.

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There is a need for a "circular economy" - one which makes products that can be recovered, and regenerated at the end of each serviceable life.

In his book "Heart of Darkness" Joseph Conrad spoke of the "sordid buccaneers" who had torn up the African landscape with no regard for the environment, or local communities.

Another Chinese sage wrote in the first century BCE: "Crooks and upstart industrialists exploit the common people with their dishonest practices. They appropriate the bounty of our natural resources as their own rich inheritance. But we will put down the wealthy traders and great merchants. We shall not give the advantage to the over bearing and aggressive."

Disdain for commerce was engrained in ancient China. The Chinese elite believed that enterprise was dangerous, and immoral. John Browne says that when a list defining seven categories of criminals was published in 97 BCE, in order to explain who would be conscripted for a criminal campaign, the last four categories were as follows: "merchants, former merchants, sons of merchants and grandsons of merchants."

The Connected Leader understands these fears. His leadership ensures that these fears are not justified.

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Mark Jenkins advises clients on how to achieve commercial resilience in high-risk/non permissive environments. Among Mark's specialist areas of expertise are the management and motivation of traditional communities such as Bedouin tribesmen in the Sinai Desert, Somali Muslims in NE Kenya and Eastern Orthodox Christians in remote parts of Eastern Europe. He has a particular interest in Islamic culture and has worked on the staff of HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammed bin Talal, Special Advisor and Personal Envoy to HM the Hashemite King of Jordan. Other interests of Mark's include renewable energy, especially solar power, and economic solutions which are based on the principle of sufficiency, rather than consumption.

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