Learning from Leonardo

Excerpt from *How to Think Like Leonardo DaVinci* by Michael Gelb

Baby ducks learn to survive by imitating their mothers. Learning through imitation is fundamental to many species, including humans. As we become adults, we have a unique advantage we can choose whom and what to imitate. We can also consciously choose new models to replace the ones we outgrow. It makes sense, therefore, to choose the best "role models" to guide and inspire us toward the realization of our potential…

In *The Book of Genius* Tony Buzan and Raymond Keen make the world's first objective attempt to rank the greatest geniuses in history. Rating their subjects in categories including "Originality," "Versatility," "Dominance-in Field," "Universality of Vision," and "Strength and Energy," they offer the following as their "top ten."

10. Albert Einstein
9. Phidias (architect of Athens)
8. Alexander the Great
7. Thomas Jefferson
6. Sir Isaac Newton
5. Michelangelo
4. Johann Wolfgang van Goethe (German writer)
3. The Great Pyramid Builders
2. William Shakespeare

And the greatest genius of all time, according to Buzan and Keene's exhaustive research? Leonardo DaVinci.

There are seven principles that Gelb believed defined Da Vinci's work, using terms from DaVinci's native language, Italian:

Curiosità: An insatiably curious approach to live and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning
Dimonstrazione: A commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistakes
Sensazione: The continual refinement of the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience
Sfumato: Literally "going up in smoke"; a willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty
Arte/Scienza: The development of the balance between science and art, logic and imagination; whole brain thinking
Corporalita: The cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness and poise
Connessione: A recognition of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and phenomena; systems thinking