

REFLECTIONS ON UNITY AND LIVING WELL

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“Do or do not... There is no try.”

--Master Yoda, from *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*,
directed by George Lucas (Lucasfilm, 1980)

“The number 42: ‘The Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything’”

--Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (Pan Books, 1979)

In order to sustain and to thrive, the fields of Economics and Law depend upon the harmonious unity of diverse resources and upon the montage of human culture. Though the United States does not have an official language, the one that we most commonly use one is English, specifically, American English, which is the *de facto* national language (“FYI: English Isn’t the Official Language of the United States,” by Harmeet Kaur, CNN, 15 June 2018). Americans speak many other languages in the United States. These include indigenous languages as well as those brought to the country by colonists; enslaved peoples; and immigrants from Europe, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. We also have several languages--including Creole and Sign Language--that developed in the United States; next to English, Spanish currently is the most popular language in America. Approximately 430 languages are spoken or signed by the population, of which 176 are indigenous to the area. Fifty-two languages formerly spoken in the country’s territories have become extinct; most of them are Native languages.

Our greatest asset in Detroit and Southeast Michigan could be the people who form our cultural mosaic of different language-groups from many geographic regions of the world. The population of our area speaks at least 126 languages at home. Twelve percent of people ages five and over use a language other than English at home in the Metro Area (*Census Bureau Reports at Least 350 Languages Spoken in U.S. Homes*, Release Number CB15-185, 3 November 2015).

The unity of a people depends collectively on building and maintaining a strong economy. Economic development depends upon laws. Through the political media and the blame laid upon large cultures for the extreme acts of violence by small groups, the fragmentation of human society and the marginalization of specific groups undermine the evolution of our local, national, and global societies and economies. Bringing people together in harmonious unity enables us to extend a vast trade network outward to every country in the world. However, in order to accomplish this task, we need to develop and to adhere to a code of living that integrates and transcends the philosophies, religious beliefs, and day-to-day social behavior of our culturally rich members.

Over the decades, I (Dr. Sase) have explored and reflected on ideas and traditions that appear as the roots of most of our active cultures and religious traditions today. Many early traditions, older suggestions, and rules for living translate well into our modern concepts and languages. During this holiday season, we adhere to the practices of our numerous “Celebrations of Light.”

Many traditions have built their sets of rules and celebrations for living upon Forty-Two Ideals, a listing of essential elements of behavior that come from antiquity. These Ideals refer to ancient laws,

philosophies, and concepts that promote order, balance, truth, reciprocity, harmony, righteousness, morality, and justice. Some scholars suggest that the Ideals have inspired about 80% of our modern Codes for Living in sacred texts worldwide.

In pre-Judaic pre-Christian, pre-Muslim eras, the peoples of the greater Mediterranean region attributed these Ideals to the Ancient Egyptian Goddess of Truth, Justice, and Order. Archeological research suggests that a Deity known as Ma'at first surfaced during the period of the Old Kingdom (2613 – 2181 BCE). However, scholars note that this entity and his/her ideals likely existed in earlier forms. Usually, the cultures of that era depicted this Deity as a winged woman. As a goddess, she often appears with a white ostrich feather atop her head. In Egyptian spirituality, this feather served as an essential tool in the “Heart of the Soul” ceremony, which determined and directed the journey to the afterlife. During the funeral, the priest who conducted the service weighed the deceased’s essence of the soul against a feather’s weight on the Scales of Justice. Persons having led a good life would have a Heart of the Soul as light as a feather.

Pic 2

Many cultures personify this Deity as the god/goddess who transformed the universe from chaos to order at the moment of creation. Also, they credit this entity with guiding the actions of mortals. The Forty-Two Ideals were recorded in the Pyramid Texts more than 4,300 years ago. Many of our ancestors considered these ideals as the norm for nature and human society in this world and the next. However, in studying the Forty-Two Ideals, we may wonder whether they represent thought collections from even earlier times of our human development. As recorded in the Pyramid Texts, these Ideals represent the standards for nature and society in both this world and the next. The Pyramid Texts have survived as a collection of ancient Egyptian religious inscriptions carved on the walls and sarcophagi in the pyramids at the Saqqara Necropolis. To people of those times, these ideals represented the ethical and moral principles that every person should follow throughout his/her daily life.

Pic 3

The Ideals represent the ethical and moral principles that all Egyptian citizens expected to follow throughout their daily lives. These citizens were expected to act with honor and truth in matters involving Deity, family, community, nation, and environment. The principles for living a good life still resonate throughout the literature and oral histories of modern cultures and traditions. Perhaps by considering their sources, we may reconcile our differences and unite the various cultural and religious standards that exist now at the sunrise of the Age of Aquarius.

The fields of Economics and Law do not develop within a void. Both disciplines unify through the study of Sociology, Political Science, Spirituality, and many other behavioral fields. Law and Economics take root in morality, the production of goods and services, and the buying and selling of them. Therefore, these fields always have revolved around issues involving greed and the humane treatment of workers and the global environment. Law always has focused upon fundamental right from wrong as well as upon justice and mercy.

Ancient cultures and current ones of indigenous peoples have understood the interconnectedness of all. More specifically, as noted above, Law and Economics depend upon the harmonious unity of diverse resources and human cultures to sustain and to thrive. In past episodes, we have considered worldly philosophies referencing older traditions and rules for living and understanding. Since these Forty-Two

Ideals exist as one of these codes, the thoughts may survive with as much relevance today as they did in the Third Millennium BCE. Also, these Ideals translate well into our modern languages and concepts. I have taken and reflected upon them in my own words, not as a religion, but as essential tools for understanding our human culture. To make better sense of these prescriptions for living, I have synthesized this presentation from multiple sources. I merged the seeds of these thoughts into unification of positive affirmations and negative confessions, augmented with explanatory notes and reflections for modern times expressed in contemporary English.

THE FORTY-TWO IDEALS EXPRESSED AS POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS AND NEGATIVE CONFESSIONS

1) Let us honor virtue and not miss the mark. We should honor the virtue of integrity as realized and as voluntarily attained by each human being. In its essence, virtue is the Golden Rule: We should not do to our fellow humans that which is hateful to ourselves. We may consider integrity as good manners, benevolent love, hope, justice, temperance, peace, and kindness. We also may reflect upon faithfulness, self-control, and forgiveness, among many other virtues.

2) Let us benefit with gratitude, not through robbery with violence.

Appreciation affirms the world's goodness and the benefits that we receive from it. The source of this goodness lies outside of ourselves as we acknowledge that higher powers and other humans help us to achieve this goodness.

3) Let us remain peaceful and not steal. We should remain so because peace of mind prevents stress and anxiety in our lives by making us calm while awakening our inner strength and confidence. Though peacefulness remains independent of external conditions, it helps us to connect better with others.

4) Let us respect the property of others and not slay them. We should respect the rights of others to their property because this behavior helps us to get along with them. Through the harmony of positive interaction and respect, all of us may feel more valued, more safe, and more secure.

5) Let us affirm all life as sacred by not stealing food from others. We should affirm this sacredness because everything interconnects within life. Our Spirituality, Politics, and Economics intertwine. The indigenous peoples on our planet often refer to this belief with the term "Earth Ethic." When we realize the sacredness of Water, Air, Earth, and Energy, we become one with all.

6) Let us give offerings that are genuine and not swindled. Giving real offerings reflects our sincerity in our concern for others. As a result, the world around us produces authentic effects in the lives of all. Perhaps this reminds us that we should consider that tax deductions and potential notability merely represent the byproducts rather than our philanthropic purpose.

7) Let us live in truth rather than with deception. Living in truth brings us to wholeness and clears higher consciousness. Deceiving others offers only false riches and superficial success. Lust for power, possessions, and pleasure that we have witnessed daily in the media falsely appears to be the correct path. In reality, it leads to the inner death of our humanity.

8) Let us regard all altars with respect and not steal from any Deity. We should consider all altars with care because many paths lead to the level at which higher truths and consciousness exist. Since

ancient times, humans have respected these sites as the place, point, or vortex at which the divine and human worlds interact.

9) Let us speak with sincerity rather than through lies. We should talk with sincerity because it constitutes the bold, arduous path to moral perfection. When we understand right from wrong, our sincere speech helps us to “do what we say” while avoiding the opposite.

10) Let us consume only our fair share. We need to take only that share because of the scarcity of world resources. We find these resources spread across our planet to greater or lesser degrees of equality. Impartiality and honesty define the economics of a fair share, explaining the economics of freedom compared to unfair self-interest, prejudice, and favoritism. This practice forms the basis for “Knowing, Liking, and Trusting” a trading partner in business relations.

11). Let us offer words of good intent and not curse. Terms with good intention serve exceptionally well in situations of great struggle. On a battlefield, soldiers often envision the enemy as either subhuman or nonhuman. Words of good intent include calling those we confront as brave, enduring, honorable, sincere, and loyal to their cause. Are these not the terms that we would want opponents to call us in such situations?

12) Let us relate to one another in peace, not commit adultery nor close our ears to truth. We should relate to others in peace because this forms the path to the ideal of freedom and happiness among people. This sense of world peace reflects the idea of planetary nonviolence by which nations cooperate willingly to prevent warfare—a cessation of hostility amongst all humanity. Do the positive sides of these behaviors not help to preserve peace, harmony, and family stability at the smaller community level?

13) Let us honor animals with reverence and not commit bestiality. We should keep animals revered because of inherent value and equality of life, both human and nonhuman. As a species, have we forgotten our place in the food chain? Have we ignored our responsibility for dominion practiced on this planet? Ethical stewardship involves protecting animals from unnecessary exploitation and suffering.

14) Let us remain trustworthy and neither bring sadness to others nor feel sorrow without reason. We should be reliable because being trusted provides a greater good than being loved. On a higher plane, the ability to trust others requires that we remain knowledgeable and well-informed. Only then can we as humans trust one another to govern ourselves.

15) Let us care for the Earth and not assault anyone. We should care for the Earth because we have dominion, but not absolute control, over it. We have neither the moral right nor the technical ability to exercise complete regulation and to exploit this planet. As the dominant sentient beings, we remain responsible for guarding, protecting, and serving as stewards of the Earth.

16) Let us keep council and not deceive ourselves or others. This act means that we should be discreet, careful, and circumspect in what we say concerning our thoughts, deeds, or situations. In addition, we should keep the appropriate secrets of others in confidence.

17) Let us speak positively of others and not contrive to steal their property. Not speaking positively of others produces negative attitudes and conversations that act like diseases, which devour the “Essence of Being” in our minds, bodies, and spirit. When directed within a group, positive-speak helps to unite while negative-speak alienates and destroys. Actions that infringe on the physical and intellectual property of others lead to the destruction of trust and trade-benefits.

18) Let us remain balanced with our emotions by the avoidance of eavesdropping. Keeping our feelings balanced plays a critical role in achieving happiness, success, and lasting relationships. Medical science tells us that people who age best have positive feelings and experience positive actions in their lives. Our ability to remain emotionally intelligent helps to keep our nervous systems in balance, ensuring that our immune systems can preserve and repair our bodies.

19) Let us be trustful in our relationships and not falsely accuse anyone. Trust is the foundation for building strong bonds with others. Research suggests that trust serves as an essential ingredient in any healthy relationship as we define trustworthiness by honesty and dependability. Speaking falsely about comrades in arms or those who oppose us only serves to erode any sense of reliability.

20) Let us hold purity in high esteem while avoiding anger without reason. We should preserve this virtue and regard it with respect. Let us think well of what frees us from anything that debases or pollutes us or our environment. Within ourselves, a sense of purity suggests freedom from guilt, evil, or inappropriate elements that may contaminate our lives.

21) Let us spread joy and not seduce the spouse or child of another. True happiness spreads because of its message. The quality of satisfaction fills the hearts of all who encounter it. A smile, a kind word, or the smallest act of caring can turn around a life. Furthermore, actions of joy create cycles of good will that emanate and touch many lives. However, using acts of fun for the seducer's self-serving pleasure erodes the physical, mental, and spiritual health of intimate communities.

22) Let us aspire to be the best that we can and to avoid polluting ourselves. This aspiration demands unity as opposed to division. The Seventeenth-Century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes argues that high achievement demands focus, preparation, and continued determination. In his book *Leviathan* (London, 1651), Hobbes argues that a political state could be a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy. However, its political character does not affect its goal of unification. Unity remains a matter of transparency. This pre-condition means that we need to be willing to invite others and to let them in.

23) Let us communicate with compassion and avoid terrorizing anyone. Compassionate communication helps to create vibrant relationships based on respect and good will. When we speak honestly and calmly, we transform criticism and blame into understanding. When we break the patterns of thinking that lead us to anger and depression, we can resolve conflicts peacefully.

24) Let us listen to opposing opinions without disobeying the law. Opinions reflect a judgment, a viewpoint, or a statement about subjective matters. However, ideas supported by facts become arguments in a debate or in a court case. Different individuals may draw opposing opinions from the same set of facts. Nevertheless, we recognize that one view supported by a group of factual points eventually overrides another idea this is formed only by analyzing the supporting arguments. Therefore, we may define collective or professional opinions as those that meet a higher standard of substantiation.

25) Let us create harmony while avoiding excessive anger. American fantasy novelist Laini Taylor says, "Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is accord—harmony" (www.lainitaylor.com). Similarly, the Indian nationalist and author Mahatma Gandhi states in his book *Women and Social Injustice* (Navajivan Publishing, 1945) that we always should "aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed." By purifying our thoughts, everything may become well. Finally, Anglo-American philosopher Alan W. Watts tells us in his book *Beyond Theology: The Art of Godsmanship* (Vintage,

1973), “Through our eyes, the universe is perceiving itself. Through our ears, the universe is listening to its harmonies. We are the witnesses through which the universe becomes conscious of its glory, of its magnificence.”

Pic 4

26) Let us invoke laughter without cursing any Deity. American philosopher John Morreall believes that the first human laughter may have begun as a gesture of shared relief at the passing of danger. Also, laughter may indicate the trust of our companions since relaxation resulting from laughter inhibits the biological fight-or-flight response. Finally, laughter diminishes or eliminates the suffering that we may experience from a traumatic loss. More than cursing, laughter increases our likelihood of making our way through a trauma; thereby, we flourish once again.

27) Let us be open to love in various forms and avoid violent behavior. This type of love includes the one that embodies sexual desire and passion. Moreover, we may value the love reflected by friendship developed between brothers in arms who have fought side by side on the battlefield and often have sacrificed for one another. This love parallels the kind of love embodied between parents and their children in the desire to save the other from harm. We strive for selfless love, the kind that we extend to all people from patience and caring; for a deep understanding of family members; and for charity to strangers. If we like and feel secure in ourselves, we have greater compassion for others. These kinds of love stand opposite to violent behavior.

28) Let us forgive and not disrupt the peace. We identify forgiveness as the intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense. The act of forgiveness requires that we let go of negative emotions such as vengefulness and develop the increased ability to wish the offender well. In contrast, our refusal to forgive does not empower us; instead, it enslaves us. Very rarely does feeling contempt for others make a significant difference in their lives. Above all, make peace, not war.

29) Let us behave kindly and not act hastily or without thought. Kindness forms an attractor by which others seek us out. However, in order to communicate empathy, we need to pay attention to the events happening around us. When we show kindness to others, it makes them happy. As a result, the more that we can give compassion to others, the more that happiness will enrich our lives.

30) Let us act respectfully of others and not overstep our boundaries of concern. When we treat everyone whom we encounter with respect and courtesy, we help to keep society running smoothly. Good manners serve as a way to respect the space and time of others. These actions mean respecting everyone, not only the people whom we know or those whom we perceive as having a higher status than we do. This act includes being respectful of people who differ from us, even if we do not understand them very well.

31) Let us be accepting and not exaggerate our words. This effort requires cognizance of the reality of a situation by recognizing the process or condition without attempting to change it or to protest it. We assent to it and find rest within it. Acceptance includes a cheerful welcome and belonging as well as favor and endorsement. This acceptance also can constitute the act of believing or assenting. Self-acceptance involves loving ourselves and being happy with the person we are now. It becomes an inner agreement to accept, appreciate, validate, and support who we are in the moment. However, exaggeration distorts the communication of our true nature.

32) Let us follow our inner guidance and not work evil upon the world. When we begin to feel lost or confused, we instinctively search for direction. Rather than relying on someone else to show our way to us, we can choose to look within to find the answers. In order to accomplish this, we turn to our inner selves, creating a harmonious forum. In this space, our inner guidance flourishes. Within this place, we can listen for wisdom without judgment and without the need to ask others for help. Hopefully, such guidance will prevent us from working evil unintentionally.

33) Let us converse with awareness while avoiding evil thoughts, words, or deeds. In our modern society of uber-achievers, we may tend to fall into the trap of believing that working harder will move us forward and upward. However, hard work only can take us so far. If we fail to emphasize our awareness of self and of those around us, we cannot leverage our previously untapped personal qualities. This condition means that, in order to converse with understanding, we need to develop empathy. In turn, compassion will help to dissuade us from thoughts and actions of evil.

34) Let us bring goodness to the world by not polluting our waters. Many of us find that “doing good” is more complicated than just being compassionate. Goodness involves doing kind and helpful things that support other people’s positive actions in both the present and the future. Ultimately, each of us needs to develop and to maintain our code of ethics. From this, it matters that we follow through with these beliefs, not just by a superficial dedication to a specific ideology or to a set of rules. Pollution of waters may include the sea of humanity.

35) Let us give blessings and avoid speaking with anger or arrogance. The bestowment of a blessing infuses someone or something with divine will, holiness, or whatever we consider positive in our universal consciousness. Therefore, benefits come to us through a direct association with what we may experience as Deity. Expressed blessing leads to a bestowment wished upon someone to share the goodness that flows from the Cosmic All.

36) Let us keep the waters pure by not cursing anyone in thought, word, or deed. We need to keep physical waters pure in many places worldwide. Metaphorically, this ideal carries a higher meaning. In a letter to the French general and politician Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “The only security of all is in a free press. We cannot resist the force of public opinion when permitting expression freely. [One must submit to the agitation it produces.] It is necessary, to keep the waters pure” (*The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Memorial Edition*, The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904).

37) Let us speak with good intent without placing ourselves atop pedestals. Though we live in a communication-saturated world, very little of the communication that we experience is effective. The majority of messages that we send are misinterpreted, misunderstood, or simply disregarded. To be a good human being requires effective communication to and from us. Speaking more merely adds to the clutter. If we talk less but with good intent, we often find that our words have a more significant impact.

38) Let us praise the Deity while not stealing or misusing that which belongs to God. Whatever we may perceive as the nature of Deity, praising him/her/it provides recognition of “The All” that resides in us and beyond us. We experience this life within bounded time and space. Therefore, we might ask, “How small is this point of life within the unbounded Eternity and Infinity?” Canadian-based philosopher Matshona Dhliwayo offers a concise answer, stating, “Infinity dwells in a sage’s mind. Eternity resides in

a guru's heart. Divinity rests in a master's soul" (*The Little Book of Inspiration*, Wisdom Inc. 2016). The result forms as the exaltation of this Cosmic All of the creation in which we humans participate.

Pic 5

39) Let us remain humble and not steal from or disrespect the deceased. As a small point of light within The All, humility may be the most difficult virtue for us to develop because we may fear it at the same time that we seek it. However, when we avoid taking credit for an accomplishment, when we praise others, when we help them to succeed, when we learn from them, and when we admit our own mistakes, we move closer to this ideal. The only way to be humble is to be humbled. So when we go last or when we serve someone else, we are humbled and are put on the path to humility. In respect to the deceased, let us recall the mortuary aphorism, in Latin, "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum dicendum est*" (translation: "Of the dead, nothing but good is to be said"). In other words, this aphorism indicates that we must speak of the deceased in a socially appropriate manner. We should not talk ill of the dead because they no longer can justify themselves or their actions.

40) Let us achieve with integrity rather than taking food from children. We achieve with integrity because it requires the integration of self, identity-maintenance, and standing for something good. Integrity constitutes moral purpose and virtue. Our value systems provide us with frameworks within which we act consistently and expectedly. Conceptually, integrity implies wholeness--a comprehensive worldview that emphasizes authenticity and honesty while requiring that we work according to our chosen viewpoint. Those of us who remember the original film of the book *The Diary of Anne Frank* (directed by George Stevens, Twentieth-Century Fox, 1959) may recall that Mr. Van Daan, who lived his wife and son in the secret annex with Anne and her family, stole bread from the children and was eating it during the night. At first, the others thought that mice were eating the food until Mrs. Frank, who discovers the truth, confronts him, saying, "We're all of us hungry! I see the children getting thinner and thinner! Your own son Peter... I've heard him moan in his sleep he's so hungry! And you come in the night and steal food that should go to them... to the children!"

41) Let us advance through our abilities without rudeness. Throughout our lives, periodically we contemplate our accomplishments and strive to develop our integrity further. We do the latter if we view our lives up to that time as successful. However, suppose that we view our lives as unproductive or feel unaccomplished in essential goals. In this case, we may develop dissatisfaction with life, creating a sense of despair that can lead to depression and hopelessness. Our final developmental task in life is retrospection--we look back on our lives and our accomplishments. Those passing from time-space to eternity-infinity often tell us that we develop feelings of contentment and integrity during this passage if we believe that we have led good and productive lives in the end. At this point our individual Heart of Soul is as light as a feather.

42) Let us embrace the All without destroying what belongs to the Deity--to God. In doing this, we accept The All, The One, The Absolute, The Creator, The Deity, The Great Spirit, The Supreme Mind, The Ultimate Good, The Cosmic Father, The Universal Mother (or other words of recognition) enthusiastically. One Hermetic maxim states, "While All is in The All, it is equally true that The All is in All." From most of those with whom I have discussed this matter over the decades, we seem to consider The All as more complex than merely the total of the universe. Perhaps we may say that everything in the universe rests within the "*****" (choose your own best term) of The All. Any effort to further this discussion would more than fill the pages of a newspaper.

In Conclusion

These Forty-Two Ideals serve as a starting point for us to continue to develop our modern unifying life-code. We easily could add another thirty points, at least! Since our most significant assets in Detroit and Southeast Michigan—not to mention the world itself—reflect our cultural mosaic, we may find wisdom through the study of the Ideals along with other early tenets for a successful life. Law and Economics lay within the context of such teachings. Therefore, it may behoove attorneys, economists, and other professionals to adapt the behaviors outlined in these ancient works for personal and professional growth and for the evolution of society as a whole.

A Seasonal Wish

For holiday fun that many can play virtually or in-person, choose a favorite public figure, perhaps a notable politician, and rate his/her performance on a scale of one to ten for each of these Ideals. Guests may wish to consume libations moderately during this game.

We hope that this overview of the Forty-Two Ideals attributed to Ma'at edifies our readers while providing a valuable resource for the year-end and the beginning of 2021. We wish joyful holidays as well as a healthy and prosperous New Year to our readership.

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