

# A Glimpse of Heaven: The Philosophy of True Health

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## Chapter XV: True Freedom

It is likely that most of us have an understanding of what the word freedom generally means - in a cultural, political, and/or conventional sense of the word. It is a notion that obviously should not be taken lightly, and the outlook of True Health only serves to (most) respectfully complement our common notion of what freedom is.

Without a sense of freedom in our day-to-day lives, e.g., a genuine feeling of security and freedom of thought, expression, and choice, it is a much more tenuous undertaking to grow as human beings.

Even so, freedom does have its liabilities, even when practiced honestly and respectfully. It often seems to lead many of us to embrace the impression that we are entitled or deserving of this or that...even many things. It becomes quite simple for us to take things for granted, without taking into serious account the history and inherent sacred trust with which freedom brings. The freedom to enjoy a sense of security brings with it the responsibility that *everyone around us* deserves that same sense of safety and security. It can be easily argued that healthful freedom of thought, expression, and choice necessitate a genuinely well-meaning awareness of responsibility toward endeavoring to constantly improve ourselves. Within the traditions herein, this outlook is inclusive of gauging the quality of our thoughts and choices by their inherent degree of healthfulness: Are our thoughts and choices those which bring us into open light and honesty, or do they bring us into a closed darkness and promote dishonesty with ourselves and others?

Freedom is a splendid thing...it is absolutely necessary if we are striving for ongoing and unlimited self improvement. Freedom is worth much less if we do not display an abiding appreciation for its greatest (inherent) gift: that *there is always room for improvement*. Certainly, we have the freedom to choose to get stuck on an unhealthful stagnant plateau where there is little or no growth. Ralph Waldo Emerson addressed this issue quite eloquently, e.g.: *Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you.*

True (healthful) Appreciation of freedom is not displaying of a blind sense of entitlement; it is not relishing in the addiction of denial, dishonesty, selfishness, boredom, blame, and complaint; it is not being lost in hate, greed, and ignorance. True appreciation of freedom is found in unselfish acts, most particularly those which are without need of any sense of recognition. It is a compassionate empathy for the plight of others; it is speaking with love and really meaning it; it is thinking and acting according to the hallowed notion that we are all equal; it is the virtue of a spirit of heartfelt goodness; it is the true value and responsibility of well-meaning service; it is the true responsibility of learning and developing critical thinking skills; it is the true responsibility of avoiding anger; it is feeling deeply grateful versus feeling entitled/ deserving; it is manifesting the ability to look with honest and healthful pleasure within, versus looking solely for pleasure externally and superficially; it is 'doing it until it works' - never giving up; it is true appreciation of the miracle of each moment; it is developing a healthful physical, emotional, interpersonal, and vocational way-of- life which makes the world a better place - strategically

deciding what you want the story of your life to say. In a proverbial 'nutshell,' it is the True Responsibility of Making the World a Better Place.

Now, in keeping the above tenets in mind, please think of what this level of True Appreciation of freedom could mean to us in our daily lives. If you are fortunate enough to have been born in, or have come to live in a place where freedom is a right, is there a truly valid excuse for believing or acting as if such a level of appreciation is not a responsibility? Even if freedom is your right, it is likely more healthful to view freedom as a privilege.

To be fair, it is certainly important to acknowledge that freedom, as stated earlier, does have its liabilities, its difficulties. It could be said that, in some ways, living in a place where freedom is *not* a right might be simpler or easier. When looking at this issue, it is obvious that freedom requires a lot of us if we choose to feel and display a purposeful awareness of the responsibility of choosing how to (on multiple levels) direct our lives... 'eyes-wide-open.' To take the point even further (and once again), it is especially so when such awareness is inclusive of a deeply-rooted sense of genuine responsibility toward making the world a better place.

It is of some import to keep in mind that an obvious great number of people have been and still are being born into societies in which freedom was and is not in any way a given - quite the contrary. Even so (and as mentioned in an earlier chapter), there are two things which all of us as human beings can absolutely control - the fashion and depth by which we realize insight into ourselves, and the fashion by which we view and interact with others. Many of those born into less-free societies have succeeded in realizing genuinely formidable levels of deep appreciation and insight. And many of those succeeded in genuinely making the world a better place - on a truly substantive level.

In any case, it is likely that, most of us (if we could choose) would prefer to be born into societies in which freedom is a right. It should be obvious by now that the point of this writing is not to set forth that life can be easy for any of us. Of course it is not easy - but that is an extremely relevant point in the whole issue. The real point is that, by working...and working...and working at enjoying a deeper and deeper True Appreciation of the Miracle of Each Moment in life's journey, it *can be better... and better...and better all along the way.*

While there will always be battles and skirmishes in life, coming from various directions, the True Health outlook is that through True Effort one can reach a point of insight in which one has *won the larger war...*the 'war' which we *all* fight within ourselves. This degree of loving and appreciative insight, and the ramifications of its practical application, *is* True Freedom. It is lightening our loads of preset patterns of thinking which encumber a clear and healthful eye within ourselves and toward our external world. It is a lightness of being which allows us a common and purposeful spine-tingling glimpse of True Love - inclusive, yet well beyond simply what we experience otherwise.

It is likely that life will always hold varying levels of frustrations and annoyances - but we *can* learn to honestly witness ourselves. In the story of our life, from one moment to the next, we can elect to be a good actor or bad actor. We do have the wherewithal to choose to be more than just pawns to our internal and external encumbrances. We can choose *how* frustrated and

annoyed we become and by what fashion we display such feelings: Life *can* be without destructive and debilitating anger... in utilizing truly substantive healthful loving compassion and empathy. It can be done, through a meaningful acceptance - a realistic healthful empathy and optimism complemented by a lack of co-dependency. When someone wrongs us, we can be a good, healthful model and learn how to truly mean it: as is commonly said, "two wrongs don't make a right." We can *lovingly* act to never give in...and we need not ever 'bend-over.'

It is easier to accomplish all of this when we can embrace the notion that each of us has historically 'rocked the boat' - and will likely do so again. It is easier to forgive ourselves for past infractions, when, in the here-and-now, we can display honest and well-meaning empathy and forgiveness for similar behavior in others. In the traditions herein, this healthful mien is viewed as being in direct congruence with the true responsibility of supporting others - and one aspect of an honest and loving true freedom.

While it is evident that 'nothing is perfect' herein this life, we can healthfully *choose* to learn to interpret things in a more and more unblemished and selfless light - a light which can become brighter and brighter and brighter. Once again, the greatest gift of all is that there is always room for improvement - deeper insight. Taking advantage of this 'gift' is exercising true freedom on a next-to-perfect level. And, in addition to that being said, it would be easy to say that such is as good as it gets on this Earth - but it would be dishonest and misleading. It *does* get better still, and better. *And* at such a point, it is traditional in these arts to reflect a bit of profundity which truly and honestly is meant in a spirit of heartfelt respect and appreciation:

*The Way that can be told is not the eternal way...the Way that can be told is the mother of all (material and tangible) things (which can separate us).*

The following handed-down analogy sets forth the detail in a seemingly strange and possibly distressful fashion:

*The Way manifests in the madman screaming,  
"If the stars are not words, then stop calling them stars."*

Some things can only be (truly) understood by *witnessing* - whether it be of this Earth and the *living story thereof*, or in a *glimpse of heaven*.

Both levels of...(?) existence have commonalities, and there are many means by which to make *this* world a better place. Albeit, all meaningful ways as such are inclusive of these things: True Freedom, aka the *accumulation of light and lightness*, and its almost-unblemished and/or genuinely unblemished true love and true responsibility of universal compassion and healthfully-balanced empathy. As said, there are many means by which to make the world a better place - but *all* meaningful ways, to be exact, are inclusive of this level of grace and the freedom to artfully appreciate what we have.

This living awareness is among the pinnacles of True Health, as described in the following saying (which is symbolic of life and all of its potential in connecting-the-healthful-dots):

*The Lotus Flower Blossoms*

*There is a place where, wherever you are there,  
whatever you are doing...no matter what,  
in any given moment, there should be  
nowhere you would rather be.*

*It is where you are **right now** - and you have  
the ability to so deeply and artfully appreciate  
your life and its living...to connect one  
healthful insight to the next, and make  
them all one...learning to witness  
this already-existing **truth**.*

*In the wilderness of our  
existence...a place of budding  
flowers about, about to unwrap in a  
showing of perfect appreciation  
for all to thrive upon,  
we are the flowers which can  
blossom again and again in each  
season of our deeper and deeper insights...  
all connected...each better and more  
healthful than before.*

*It is not unlike Heaven...and it can  
become Heaven, with enough insight  
and appreciation.*

*It takes quite a few sparks, glimpses –  
spine-tingling moments...as a way-of-life  
which becomes more and more  
purposeful...more and more  
without time or space or distance.*

*More and more there is less and less  
to hide behind.*

In this writing, the discussion of True Health and making the world a better place has primarily been spoken of on a personal or individual basis. The following point brings us full circle to the central thesis of the Bright Beautiful School of Thought: the principle that *the world would be a much better and different place if more and more people took True Responsibility for their own health and wellbeing* - in short, *True Health Through True Responsibility*. If more and more of us are raised and/or raised-up to believe that our most important responsibility is to make the world a better place...a greater and greater majority, what would this mean? The short answer is that it can't be bad. The whole thing may sound naïve - but if you try to really look at it, it is difficult to fairly and scrupulously find fault with the notion.

Glen Hepker is the author of the book, *A Glimpse of Heaven: The Philosophy of True Health*. Glen Hepker has doctorate degrees in psychology and health/wellness arts, and he is a part-time individual and marital counselor, a wellness coach, and a master instructor of tai chi chuan, chi kung, kung fu, and health/wellness arts (which are intrinsically inclusive of the Ming Chia/Tao Chan philosophy found herein) at his wellness center/school in Mason City, Iowa.

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