

The Building of a Bridge

By: Nicholas C. Lee, MD

In Friedrich Nietzsche's book, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's opening speech starts by describing his decision to come down from his mountain top and rejoin the world of men.

Having attained the age of thirty, Zarathustra left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. Then he rejoiced in his spirit and his loneliness, and for ten years did not grow weary of it. But at last his heart turned - one morning he got up with the dawn and stepped into the presence of the Sun and thus spake unto him:

'Thou great star! What would be thy happiness were it not for those for whom thou shinest? For ten years thou hast come up here to my cave. Thou wouldst have got sick of thy light and thy journey but for me, mine eagle and my serpent. But we waited for thee every morning and received from thee abundance, blessed thee for it. Lo! I am weary of my wisdom; like the bee that hath collected too much honey, I need hands reaching out for it. I would feign grant and distribute it until the wise among men could once more enjoy their folly and the poor once more their riches. For that end, I must descend to the depth, as thou dost at even, when sinking behind the sea thou givest light to the lower regions, thou resplendent star! I must, like thee, go down, as men say - men to whom I would descend. Then bless me, thou impassive eye, that canst look without envy even upon excessive happiness. Bless the cup which is soon to overflow, so that the golden water flowing out of it may carry everywhere the reflection of thy rapture. Lo! this cup is about to empty itself again, and Zarathustra will once more become a man.'

Thus Zarathustra's going down began.

There are many meanings in this passage which are of great significance, but the essence of it is surely that here is a great initiate who has gained much wisdom through lonely seeking only to find at the end that to find true fulfillment he must share this wisdom with others who have not progressed as far along the path as he has. Having scaled the heights himself in search of eternal truth and enlightenment, he now finds it necessary to turn back, to 'go down' to those less fortunate or less enlightened than himself and share his wisdom with them. We may find parallels with this vision in the work of Rudolf Steiner, who was many things to many men during his time on Earth, but above all was a great teacher who spent much of his life imparting his wisdom to others and showing those seekers after true knowledge the path of Anthroposophy by which they might themselves attain wisdom.

This desire to help others to attain knowledge and wisdom has a long and honorable history in the teaching of medicine. One of the more significant passages in the Hippocratic oath deals with the veneration of the teacher by the pupil:

To consider dear to me as my parents him who taught me this art; to live in common with him and if necessary share my goods with him; to look upon his children as my own brothers, to teach them this art if they so desire, without fee or written promises; to impart to my sons and the sons of the

master who taught me and the disciples who have enrolled themselves and have agreed to the rules of the profession, but to those alone, the precepts and the instructions.

Such a respectful and loving approach is reminiscent of Rudolf Steiner's statement in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* where he describes how the seeker after spiritual truth must set out on the path: "A certain fundamental attitude of soul must be the starting point. The spiritual investigator calls this fundamental attitude the path of veneration, of devotion to truth and knowledge."

Things have, of course, changed in our modern world, but spiritual truths do not change; and one of the major difficulties with which the teacher of medicine - and particularly the teacher of anthroposophical medicine - has to contend is the highly critical, one might even say cynical, approach to the acquisition of knowledge in today's world. How best should one approach the imparting of anthroposophical medicine to those not familiar with the work of Rudolf Steiner? How best to bridge that gulf of cynicism and mistrust?

I believe that we in the medical profession, particularly in the English-speaking world, need to consider with great care how we should introduce our colleagues, particularly our younger colleagues, to anthroposophical medicine. Certainly, a great deal of good work is being done by bodies such as the *Arztliche Fortbildungsstätte* in Arlesheim, but I believe that more needs to be done within our own countries. Should we not perhaps hold workshops to consider this question? Anthroposophy has never inclined towards the evangelical approach and, if anything, tends to hide its light under a bushel. The rationale behind this is presumably because it is necessary to wait for the individual to make the first approach towards entering the path of spiritual enlightenment from his or her own free will before a helping hand is extended, but I would submit that we need to consider very carefully the form which that help should take and also whether such a passive waiting might now be outdated in the light of all the grave ethical and moral questions facing us now at the end of the 20th Century. Should we now be making anthroposophical medicine and its therapeutic modalities much more widely known in today's materialistic and rapidly-changing world? Like Zarathustra, is it now time for us to come down from the mountain?

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