

Regenerating Forces Depleted by Zoom

In what follows are three quotes from Rudolf Steiner that could be relevant for the teacher who is seeking a way to regenerate the life forces that have been drained through excessive “Zooming”.

1. “One can reach a conception of the ‘I’ only if one does not think of it as being inside the bodily organization and as receiving impressions ‘from outside.’ One should conceive this ‘I’ as having its being *within* the general lawfulness of the things themselves, and regard the organization of the body merely as a sort of mirror through which the organic processes of the body reflect back to the ‘I’ what this ‘I’ perceives outside the physical body as it lives and weaves within the true essence of the world.” (*Riddles of Philosophy: Part II, Chapter VIII*)
2. “Electricity... must be recognized in its true character — in its peculiar power of leading down from Nature to Sub Nature. Only man himself must beware lest he slide downward with it. In the age of Natural Science, since about the middle of the nineteenth century, the civilized activities of mankind are gradually sliding downward, not only into the lowest regions of Nature, but even *beneath Nature*.... This makes it urgent for man to find in conscious experience a knowledge of the Spirit, wherein he will rise as high above Nature as in his sub-natural technical activities he sinks beneath her. He will thus create within him the inner strength *not to go under*.” (*Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts: From Nature to Sub Nature*)

If we picture the “I” when Zooming as living in this realm of sub-nature (rather than in the living forces of nature or in the soul-spiritual forces of one’s fellow humans), then the exhaustion one experiences through such technology may not be so surprising.

Is there a way to balance this? We speak constantly of the necessity for a healthy “breathing process” in Waldorf education, so how can we find the necessary “out-breath” to balance our submersion in sub-nature? In the final quote, Rudolf Steiner relates how we can bring life into our thoughts (thereby rising above our normal consciousness) through nature observation:

3. “For this discovery of the life in thoughts, however, the expenditure of conscious will is necessary. But this cannot simply be *that* will which appears in ordinary consciousness..... One can particularly help oneself in pursuit of this goal by observing the life of nature with inner heart's [*Gemüt*] involvement. One seeks, for example, to look at a plant in such a way that one not only takes up its form into one's thoughts, but also, as it were, feels along with its inner life, which stretches upward in the stem, spreads out in the leaves, opens what is inside to what is outside with its blossom, and so on. In such thinking the will is also present in gentle resonance; and there, will is a will that is developed in devotion and that guides the soul; a will that does not originate from the soul, but rather directs its activity upon the soul. At first, one quite naturally believes that this will originates in the soul. In experiencing the process itself, however, one recognizes that through this reversal of the will, a spiritual element, existing outside the soul, is grasped by the soul. When will is strengthened in this direction and grasps a person's thought-life in the way indicated, then, in actual fact, out of the circumference of his ordinary consciousness, another consciousness arises that relates to his ordinary one like this ordinary consciousness relates to a weaving in dream pictures.” (*The Riddle of Man: New Perspectives*, pp. 139-40)

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