

Anthroposophical Society in New Hampshire

Ascension and Whitsun Newsletter

2026



From: *The Language of the Clouds*, a two-part article by Ernst Lehrs, first published in *Notes and Correspondence of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Association of Great Britain*, Vol. 5 #7 and Vol. 5 #8.

.....It has already been mentioned that Goethe had come into contact with Howard's theory, and that he had grasped at once the significance of Howard's views. Goethe too shows us that he had a definite notion of what really goes on **in the lofty sphere beyond the cirrus clouds**. His genius was always inclined to express in a poetical form just his deepest insight into the workshop of Nature. So after having become fully acquainted with Howard's terminology, and having himself established to a certain degree his individual ideas about meteorology, he composed four most beautiful verses on the nature of the four different cloud formations (see above this extract, with photos of the cloud types), bearing as titles Howard's four terms. Let me here refer just to one point in Goethe's verse on Cirrus where in concluding the description of the ever rarifying upward movement he says: (in a slightly different translation than the above quotation)

Thus lastly, what below had gently been brought forth,

Above flows quietly into the Father's womb and hand.

In these two lines Goethe lets us see clearly, though with one glimpse only, that he knew something of the mysterious transition of physical matter into spiritual essence up there at the border of the greater earth.

Our present age is prepared to bring into full scientific cognition what men like Howard and Goethe could only touch upon. Yet the knowledge of that other world is an ancient one and was only lost in the age of "useful thought". For this reason, it is not even difficult to find a suitable term for that *fifth* sphere which borders on the sphere of the Cirrus. Past ages of human culture supply us with various names which we might choose, according to the point of view from which we look at it. When Rudolf Steiner chose the term Etheric World for it, he revived a Greek word in its true ancient meaning. For ETHER, actually A-I-TH-EE-R, means that agency of the universe which is beyond the four elements, Earth, Water, Air and Fire, that bears the seeds of all that exists in the physical world. Its proper meaning is "*the blazing one*" or "*the radiantly flaming one*". How must this sphere have been beheld by man in ancient times to induce him to give it such a name!

Another term suggests itself when we consider that no formed objects exist in that etheric sphere, and that everything there is in the state of pure *potentiality*. The universal Ether is a mighty agency which out of itself has borne, and to a certain extent is continually bringing forth the multitude of physical existences. It is a world power, not of clearly outlined, space-bound objects. For that other prior state of existence, ancient languages had a word whose meaning has been turned upside-down in later times. It is the word CHAOS. Nowadays, "chaos" means a state of disorder and destruction, thus a state *below* the well-ordered physical world, a stage in which mere Death holds sway. In its original meaning this word signified that high state of existence where no distinct forms could be found, but which is the germinal state of all, whence Life streams down upon the earth.

This is the state of existence described in the beginning of the Bible: --"And the earth was without form and void". The original word in the Hebrew is TOHU-WA-BOHU. The actual state of tohu-wa-bohu is a state in the mighty process of world creation very much earlier and very much more spiritual than anything we can find in the present epoch of cosmic evolution. Yet a reflection of tohu-wa-bohu is still present in our otherwise shaped-out world of today. **It is working in the heavenly womb into which the cirrus clouds vanish in order to return as fertile rain.**

So this state of creative activity is characteristic of remote times on earth, and of the distant spheres of space around the earth. But it is also present much nearer at hand in all the important stages of transition in the cycle of nature's life, where number-bound scientific thought has never been able to discover anything real. Rudolf Steiner spoke of it so impressively to the farmers when showing them how to bring it into their manure and compost-heaps in order to give the plants a foundation of existence not entirely alienated from the primeval state of creation. Wherever Rudolf Steiner speaks of "chaos" in such a connection he uses the word in its true original

meaning. In this sense one has also to see chaos at work in the life-cycle of each individual plant. Without passing through this state the plant could never produce a new seed. When it leaves its actual vegetative sphere, the green leaves; when in the flower all material heaviness is nearly overcome and the volatile substances are produced which are called "essential" oils (sometimes also called "etheric" oils); and when finally, the plant bursts into the pollen—there Chaos is prepared, as essential for the plant as for anything living in the world.

In this way the plant lives within small compass through stages exactly similar to those which we find spread out through the vast realms of the atmosphere. The plant becomes an image of that which goes on in the region of the clouds; and the clouds let us see an image of what goes on in the life-cycle of the plant on earth. Widening our view in this way we can truly see:--

In the FLOWER	the plant's state of	CIRRUS
In the LEAVES	"	CUMULUS
In the ROOT	"	STRATUS

Beyond the "cirrus" sphere is formed the seed that drops to the earth carrying new life into it—whether this be the seed of the plant or the rain-drop from under the heavens.

..... Through Howard's self-description, which Goethe translated into German and later published with his own writings on the subject, it becomes clear that Howard had met Nature's Spirit in his own way by carrying his innate religious mind into the sphere of scientific knowledge. Goethe on his side had raised scientific cognition into the sphere of romantic experience of the universe. It was a beautiful moment in the intercourse of the English and the European folk-souls, when the faithful observation of a son of the wind-and-weather swept Island could be welded together with knowledge of the tranquil continental seer and thinker. The Celtic relationship with the spirit of the Elements was the impulse moving in the depths of Howard's soul, in his devotion to the kingdom of the clouds. Greek clarity of eye and mind enlightened Goethe's studies. Wherever these two spiritual streams, the Celtic and the Hellenic can meet, there will be results of similar importance for the present epoch of human evolution.

When man of old perceived the many-colored arch of the rainbow in the sky, he saw it as a bridge between the Gods and men. In the 19th century such a spiritual bridge was formed out of clouds between the folk-souls of Mid-Europe and the Western Island when Goethe and Howard found each other. Clouds have spoken to human minds and have assured them that there is something which guarantees the presence of the ever-active spirit of Life in the world.

The gradation of the cloud forms has led us into super-terrestrial spaces which bear the founts of life. No wonder that the clouds in their various shapes so often display the archetypes of all sorts of earthly formations. Why should it not be that the very same forces which form an elephant on earth sometimes, on their way down, get hold of the vapor in *statu nascendi* and stamp their characteristic seal upon it? What hitherto seemed to be a mere play of phantasy thus

acquires quite a different and serious aspect. May it here be told that Rudolf Steiner once drew people's attention to the fact that the clouds above Stuttgart and the surrounding part of Württemberg often showed quite a peculiar dragon-like aspect. Now it is a well-known fact that in that whole district the soil is crowded with remnants of gigantic prehistoric animals. Pointing to this fact Rudolf Steiner explained that the very same astral forces which in bygone times had formed those huge reptiles were still actively working; only having no longer any foothold in the animal kingdom on earth they make themselves visible in the volatile body of the clouds.

Here again the clouds reveal something which is not so directly apparent in the nearer objects of nature around us. Whoever has had the opportunity, for instance, on a high mountain, of walking into a cloud which he has seen from a distance, will have been surprised to notice the vivid movement of the single particles of matter which constantly change their place within that form. This phenomenon is only an instance of what takes place in all living bodies on the earth, including our own human one, where we do not realize it so clearly. It is the constant form that is ours, whereas the substance of our body is but a continuous flux of matter through that form. Form on the other hand is always the expression of a spiritual being, just as the form of our own body is the expression of our own individuality; and the changes and movements of such a form are the expression of the inner activity of that being, as our own gestures and the play of our features are the expression of our inner emotions. This is why Howard very correctly spoke of the *countenance* of the sky.

Form rules over matter. This also explains to us why it is possible for the same formative forces which create the manifold forms in nature to produce similar forms in the atmospheric vapor, and why so often a definite relationship is found between the characteristic features of a certain district on earth and the typical cloud forms above it.

The Swedish poet Strindberg used to study these striking coincidences and found it quite helpful even to exchange the names of the corresponding appearances. "The Alps resemble certain clouds and certain clouds resemble the Alps; the outlines of a leafy wood resemble green clouds and the cumulus clouds resemble white leafy woods. For all things are created as counterparts of one another and the nether world corresponds to the upper one."

Such is the language of the clouds. If we take it in its full significance, we feel in thankfulness what we can once again lift our eyes in sincerity to as a divine world which abides "in the Heavens". For a mind that has experienced that split which Ruskin has described (earlier in the essay) it must say to itself:--If the whole universal space is but an indifferent stark void, such as science describes to us, throughout which a number of material bodies are spread without apparent purpose, why then should one think that the Divine resides in the Heights? In the script of the clouds, however, read in the way we have tried to describe, we can find reconciliation between the great religious images and exact scientific insight which also quenches our thirst for the beauty of the world.

Who has more need to read this exalted script than the modern "farmer", whose daily work is the nursing of life on earth?

Education in Selflessness

On [January 24, 2026](#) By [Ridzerd](#) In [Anthroposophy](#), [Christ](#), [Egoism and Love](#), [Various quotes](#)

We can search through the entire evolution of the world without finding a deeper understanding of selflessness than that offered by Christ's appearance upon earth. To know Christ is to go through the school of unselfishness, and to become acquainted with all those incentives to human development that fall gently into our souls, warming and animating every unselfish inclination within us, arousing it from passive to active soul. Under the influence of materialism the natural unselfishness of mankind was lost to an extent that will be fully realized only in the distant future. But by contemplating the Mystery of Golgotha, by permeating our knowledge of it with all our feeling, we may acquire again, with our whole soul-being, an education in selflessness.

Source: Rudolf Steiner - GA 152 - [The Four Sacrifices of Christ](#) - Basel, June 1, 1914

Submitting to whatever the future may bring

On [January 25, 2026](#) By [Ridzerd](#) In [Anthroposophy](#), [Various quotes](#)

We need only to remember the feelings of fear and anxiety that gnaw at our soul-life in face of the unknown future. Is there anything that can give the soul a sense of security in this situation? Yes, there is. It is what we may call a feeling of humbleness towards anything that may come towards the soul out of the darkness of the future. But this feeling will be effective only if it has the character of prayer. Let us avoid misunderstanding. We are not extolling something that might be called humbleness in one sense or another; we are describing a definite form of it — humbleness to whatever the future may bring. Anyone who looks anxiously and fearfully towards the future hinders his development, hampers the free unfolding of his soul-forces. Nothing, indeed, obstructs this development more than fear and anxiety in face of the unknown future. But the results of submitting to the future can be judged only by experience. What does this humbleness mean?

Ideally, it would mean saying to oneself: Whatever the next hour or day may bring, I cannot change it by fear or anxiety, for it is not yet known. I will therefore wait for it with complete inward restfulness, perfect tranquillity of mind. Anyone who can meet the future in this calm, relaxed way, without impairing his active strength and energy, will be able to develop the powers of his soul freely and intensively. It is as if hindrance after hindrance falls away, as the soul comes to be more and more pervaded by this feeling of humbleness toward approaching events.

Source: Rudolf Steiner - GA 59 - [Metamorphoses of the Soul: Paths of Experience Vol. 2: Lecture 4: Nature of Prayer](https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA059/English/RSP1983/19100217p02.html) - Berlin, 17th February 1910

<https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA059/English/RSP1983/19100217p02.html>

The Festivals and Their Meaning:

Ascension and Pentecost GA 169, June 6, 1916, Berlin

IV. Whitsun: a Symbol of the Immortality of the Ego

To turn our minds to thoughts connected with the Whitsun festival seems to me less appropriate during these grave days¹ than would have been the case in earlier years. For mankind is passing through fateful ordeals and at such times it is not really fitting to call up feelings of inner warmth and exhilaration. If our feelings are right and true we can never for a single moment forget the suffering that is now so universal, and in a certain sense it is actually selfish to wish to forget it in order to give ourselves up to thoughts that warm and uplift the soul. It will therefore be more fitting to-day to speak of certain matters bearing on the needs of the age, for our recent studies have shown very clearly that many of the reasons for the sufferings of the present time lie in the prevailing attitude to the spiritual, and that it is vitally urgent to work for the development of the human soul in order that mankind may go forward to better days. Nevertheless I want at least to start with thoughts which will bring home to us the meaning of a festival such as Whitsun.

There are three festivals of main importance in the course of the year: Christmas, Easter, Whitsun. Everyone who has not become indifferent, as is the case with the majority of our contemporaries, to the significance of such festivals in the evolution of the world and of humanity will at once perceive the contrasts between these three festivals, for the difference in the kind of experiences associated with each is expressed in their outer symbolism. Christmas is a festival connected above all with the joys of childhood, a festival in which a part is usually, if not always, played by the Christmas Tree brought into the house from snow-clad nature outside. Our thought also turns to the Christmas Plays so often performed among us and which for centuries have brought uplift to the simplest human hearts at this season by reminding them of the great and unique event in earth-evolution when Jesus of Nazareth, or, to be quite exact, Jesus who came *from* Nazareth, was born in Bethlehem. The festival of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth is a festival connected with a world of feeling engendered by the Gospel of St. Luke, by those parts of the Gospel which make the most general appeal to simple hearts and are the easiest to understand. It is therefore a festival of universal humanity, intelligible, to a certain extent at least, even to the child and to men who have preserved a childlike quality of heart and mind. Yet it brings to such childlike hearts something great and mighty which then becomes part of their consciousness.

The Easter festival, although it is celebrated during the season when nature is waking to life, leads our minds to the portal of death. By contrast with the tenderness and universal appeal of the

Christmas festival, the festival of Easter contains something infinitely sublime. If human souls are able to celebrate the Easter festival truly, they cannot fail to be aware of its transcendent majesty. It brings the sublime conception of the Divine Being who descended into a human body and passed through death. The whole riddle of death and the preservation in death itself of the eternal life of the soul—this is the great vista presented by the Easter festival.

These times of festival can be experienced in their depths only when we recall many things made real to us by Spiritual Science. Think only of how closely connected with all the festivals celebrated in the world in commemoration of the births of saviours are the thoughts arising from the Christmas festival. We are reminded, for example, of the Mithras festival celebrating the birth of Mithras in a cave. All these things are evidence of an intimate connection with nature. That Christmas is a festival linked with nature is symbolised in the Christmas Tree, and the birth, too, leads our minds to the workings and powers of nature. But because the birth of which Spiritual Science has so many things to say is that of Jesus of Nazareth, it is a birth fraught with infinite significance. And remembering that the Spirit of the earth awakens in winter, is most active during the season when outer nature appears to lie sleeping in a mantle of ice and snow, we can feel that the Christmas festival leads us into elemental nature herself, and that the lighting of the Christmas candles is a symbol of how the Spirit is awakening in the wintry darkness of nature.

If we would relate the Christmas festival to the life and being of man, we can do so by remembering that man is also connected with nature when he has separated from her spiritually, as he does in sleep, when in his ego and astral body he has gone into the spiritual world. His etheric body remains bound, supersensibly, to the physical body, and represents the part of man's being which belongs to elemental nature, to that elemental nature which awakens to life within the earth when the earth is shrouded in the ice of winter. It is far more than an analogy, indeed it is a profound truth to say that in addition to everything else, the Christmas festival is a token that man has in his being an etheric, elemental principle, an etheric body through which he is linked with elemental nature.

If you think, now, of all that has been said in the course of many years about the gradual darkening and decline of man's forces, you will realise how closely all the forces in the human astral body are connected with the death-bringing processes. The fact that we have to develop the astral body during our life, and that in the astral body we have to receive the spiritual, means that, in doing so, we bring the seeds of death into our being. It is quite incorrect to believe that death is connected with life in an external sense only, for the connection is most inward and fundamental. Our life is as it is only because we are able to die in the way we do. But this is bound up with the whole development of man's astral body. Again it is more than an analogy when we say: The Easter festival is a symbol for everything that has to do with the astral nature of man, with that principle of his being which, whenever he sleeps, leaves the physical body together with him and enters the spiritual world whence descended that Divine-Spiritual Being Who in Jesus of Nazareth actually passed through death. If one were speaking in an age more alive to the spiritual than is our own, what I have just said would be recognised as reality, whereas in our days it is taken merely as

symbolism. It would then be realised that the purpose of instituting the Christmas and Easter festivals was to provide man with tokens of remembrance that he is connected with spiritual nature, with that nature that brings death to the physical, and to provide him with tokens reminding him that in his etheric body and astral body he is himself a bearer of the spiritual.—In our days these things have been forgotten. They will come to light again when humanity has the will to acquire understanding of spiritual truths such as these.

But now, besides the etheric body and the astral body, we bear within us as that which is supremely spiritual, our Ego. We know something of the complex nature of the Ego. We know especially that it is the Ego which passes from incarnation to incarnation, that the inner forces of the Ego build themselves up and shape themselves to that form which we carry forward into our being in each new incarnation. In the Ego we rise again from death to prepare for a new incarnation. It is by virtue of the Ego that we are *individuals*. If we can say that the etheric body represents in a certain sense that which is akin to birth and is connected with the elemental forces of nature, that the astral body symbolises the death-bringing principle that is connected with the higher spirituality, so we can say that the Ego represents our continual rising again in the spirit, our resurrection into the spiritual realm which is neither nature nor the world of stars, but pervades them all. And just as the Christmas festival can be connected with the etheric body and the Easter festival with the astral body, so the Whitsun festival can be connected with the Ego. This is the festival which, representing the immortality of the Ego, is a token of the fact that we, as men, do not share only in the universal life of nature, do not merely undergo death, but that we are individual immortal beings, rising ever and again from death.

And how beautifully this comes to expression when the Christmas thought, the Easter thought and the Whitsun thought are carried further! The Christmas festival is directly connected with earthly happenings, with the winter solstice, the time when the earth is shrouded in deepest darkness. In celebrating the Christmas festival we follow as it were the law by which earth-existence itself is governed; when the nights are longest and the days shortest, when the earth is frost-bound, we withdraw into ourselves and seek for the spiritual that is now alive *within* the earth. The Christmas festival is linked with the Spirit of the earth; it reminds us ever and again that we belong to the earth, that the Spirit had perforce to come down from cosmic heights and take earthly form in order to be a child of earth among the children of earth.

The Easter festival has a different setting. You know well that Easter is determined by the relation of the sun to the moon on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring, the first full moon after the 21st March. The Easter festival, therefore, is fixed according to the relative position of the sun to the moon. In a wonderful way, then, the Christmas festival is linked with the earth, and the Easter festival with the cosmos. At Christmas we are reminded of what is most holy in the earth, at Easter of what is most holy in the heavens. But the thought underlying the Christian festival of Whitsun is associated in a most beautiful way with what is even above the stars—the universal, spiritual, cosmic fire which individualises and in the fiery tongues descends upon the

Apostles. It is the fire that is neither heavenly alone nor earthly alone; it is the all-pervading fire which individualises and passes into each single human being. In very truth the Whitsun festival is linked with the whole universe. **Just as the Christmas festival is connected with the earth and the Easter festival with the stars, so is the Whitsun festival directly connected with man, with individual man, inasmuch as he receives the spark of spiritual life out of the whole universe.** What is bestowed upon mankind in general through the descent to the earth of the Being who was both God and Man, is made ready for every individual human being in the fiery tongues of Pentecost. These fiery tongues represent what lives alike in man, in the stars, in the world.

And so for those who are seeking for the spiritual, this festival of Whitsun has a meaning and content of special profundity, calling ever and again for perpetual renewal of the spiritual quest.

In our days it is necessary that these thoughts of the festival should be taken in a deeper sense than at other times. For how we shall emerge from the grievous events of this age will depend very largely upon how deeply people are able to experience these thoughts. That souls will have themselves to work their way out of the present catastrophic conditions is already beginning to be realised here and there. And those who have come to Spiritual Science should feel with even greater intensity the need of the age for new strength to be infused into the spiritual life, the need to surmount materialism. This victory over materialism will only be possible if men have the will to kindle the spiritual world into living activity within them, to celebrate the Whitsun festival inwardly and with true earnestness.



Calendar of Events

Summer 2026

Summer Camp opportunities for children

Immersion in the Arts 2026 (see attached poster)

Wild Rose Summer Camp (see attached poster)

Groh Farm Summer Camp (see attached poster)

Adult Education courses

Kairos Institute at the Center for Anthroposophy: Emergency Pedagogy Course
(see attached poster)

Renewal Courses www.centerforanthroposophy.org

<https://centerforanthroposophy.org/programs/renewal-courses/>

The AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools in North America) conference will be held in Wilton at High Mowing School on Monday, June 22nd to Thursday, June 25th. Here is the schedule. [You must register for the conference in order to participate in workshops and events.](#)

<https://web.cvent.com/event/1ee7c4b9-429c-4a7b-a9af-345d029db72e/websitePage:6195b8b6-06cc-439b-8c24-cec67ebbec45?previewToken=ce8eb5ebfc82a6c26433181358bcd5f8863b61f292bb52c5482de5fd441b1512b368cde70a0ad8e0acd39a6bd3901392e4336501de8095e23546a1e999e8f725>

June and July in Wilton look like this:

Saturday, June 6th High Mowing Graduation (contact the school for questions: 603-654-2391

Saturday, June 13th High Mowing Alumni Weekend, Alumni Association Meeting
Weekend of June 20-21, AWSNA delegates and special groups arrive

Monday, June 22nd to Thursday, June 25th, AWSNA Conference at High Mowing School, Wilton

Sunday, June 28th, Renewal Week One (in person) courses begin (questions to Center for Anthroposophy: 603-654-5708)

Sunday, July 5th, Kairos Course begins and also Renewal Week Two (online)

Sunday, July 12th Antioch Waldorf Teacher Training
(<https://centerforanthroposophy.org/programs/antioch-university-waldorf-teacher-education-program/>) and also WHistep Waldorf High School Teacher Training begins (<https://centerforanthroposophy.org/programs/waldorf-high-school-teacher-education/whistep/>)