



A Route Back To Wonder, by Fabiana Fondevila

“What is a sunset without clouds? A circle that crosses a straight line,” says Gavin Pretor-Pinney, founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society, creator of an original form of activism and of a manifesto that begins: “We believe that clouds are unjustly maligned and that life would be immeasurably poorer without them.”

Clouds? Could they really be a motive for activism? At first glance it might seem at least curious that someone would want to devote his life to convincing his fellow Earthlings to look up and marvel at the spectacle of altocumulus, altostratus and cumulonimbus. But we only have to go back to childhood to understand. Who among us didn’t spend long moments lying on the grass identifying rabbits, mountains and unicorns in the fanciful forms drawn across the sky? Who was not surprised to see how those images transformed themselves from one moment to the next before our eyes? Or perhaps a better question would be: when did clouds stop captivating us? When did we stop raising our eyes to the sky?

Clouds have always been a source of inspiration and wonder. Not for nothing have they featured in works of art across the centuries. Starting in the Renaissance, they even came to be used as metaphors for the divine. But why should we as adults learn to live again with our heads in the clouds? Purely in terms of common sense, obvious answers include: because identifying the shapes and types of clouds allows us to predict the chance of rain and to know whether we can expect a hailstorm, or a light but incessant drizzle that will cause moss to grow in unexpected places. This would indeed be good reason to look up at clouds; but it barely scrapes the surface of their potential.

We don’t want to look at clouds to divine the weather forecast; we want to look at them so that we can dream again and remember that magic and beauty surrounds us at every step. We want to find in them a route back into wonder. “It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important,” says Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s Little Prince. Let’s waste time learning to love the world, every day, a little bit more and better. Let’s waste time on what’s truly important!