

It seems to me that real happiness lays in hope and imagination. More than that, I'm sure it does. One is happy in the measure that one can hope or imagine. Neither yesterday nor today matter, everything depends on tomorrow!

Years ago I was with a friend looking down on a bay on the Aegean coast. The sea changing between turquoise and ice blue. A small beach surrounded on three sides by sheer cliffs. The sun about to set on one side. The air neither cold nor hot, gravity almost impossible to perceive. Tranquility, serenity, peacefulness... It was so magical that if pink angels had descended on us at that moment we wouldn't have been surprised. At once we both longed for the same thing: to be a part of the scenery. One glance was enough. We descended the slope. After wandering on the beach for a while, my friend said:

-This place looked better from up there!

I had thought the same but hadn't dared to confess it.

-Yes, I answered and we climbed back up to where we had come from.

The dream is always more beautiful than reality. It is more pleasing to imagine being somewhere than to actually be there.

We had been dreaming of building an Institute of Mathematics with my friend Sevan Nişanyan for years. We would stay up into the small hours of the night drawing up plans for our institute almost each time we met. We must have realized every single model of schools from Indochina to Rome. Losing ourselves in our plans, we would imagine everything down to the last detail. Or rather he would talk and draw, and I would listen. But sometimes I would get caught up in my imagination and make plans by myself as well. When we were done we would pause and look at our Institute with admiration.

- Let's build another one...

- Let's...

Youth means a good part of hope and dreams. Because if having lived little is a definition of youth, then having many years left to live, having a future should be an equivalent definition of youth. The future means hope, and hope means dreams. As one gets older, one has no other possibility than to try to turn back the sequence "youth-future-hope-dream" in order to try to catch youth once again.

The Institute we dreamed of for years with Sevan Nişanyan is finally becoming reality, in the shape of the Mathematics Village, half lost in the wilderness. It is where I am now. When I sat down to write this, it was approaching midnight, now it's a little past. The volunteers and the workers are having an animated conversation, full of guffaws, and are letting the day's fatigue off their shoulders. After joking around a bit with them I went on my way back to my tent. After a while I turned off my flashlight. I had never seen such pitch darkness. I looked up to the sky to see if I could see a star. Little did I expect to find a whole festival up there! While I walked, I thought about the future, about the young who would learn mathematics here, I imagined mathematicians proving theorems, discovering new theories. They would also walk these dark paths in the middle of the night, they would also look up and be surprised...

It will be a magnificent place. Reality will be better than the dream.