



"Euritmia" painting by Eleonora Briigliadori (Rome, Italy)

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JANUARY 2016

Dear Reader

by Márta Domokos, Hungary

You are now reading ENSWaP's (formally INSWaP) fifth newsletter which is entirely comprised of reports and impressions of our ninth conference. The conference was – as ever – a wonderful opportunity to meet other Steiner Waldorf parents and friends, and to exchange ideas and experiences. We had a great time in Stockholm, with inspiring lecturers and great discussions, as you might gather it from Johanna's and Kathuna's articles. It was a well-organised meeting – although the organiser's opinion might differ (see Mikael's article). Christopher's lecture reflected perfectly the theme of the conference: *Measuring Knowledge vs. Learning for Life*. We have already decided on the place, date and theme of the next conference and Mariam describes in her article why it is worth attending such a meeting.



The beautiful layout is again the work of Margarida Tavares from Italy. So see you next year and have fun reading this newsletter. For any questions and suggestions please contact marta.domokos@feherlofiawaldorf.hu. We wish you all a wonderful 2016!

ENSWAP

Annual Meeting 2016
Hungary

We would like to invite you to next year's meeting which will take place in Hungary, in Nemesvámos at the Fehérlófia Waldorf School.

The meeting will be from the 30th of September till the 2nd of October 2016. The theme of the conference is "Why Waldorf?"

Further information will be sent to you in spring 2016 and in our next newsletter.

You can also contact Márta Domokos on marta.domokos@feherlofiawaldorf.hu





To Host a Conference by Mikael Cederqvist, Sweden

You sit with parent friends and plan the conference. You think you have covered it all. What can possibly go wrong? Let me tell you.

Thursday, the day before the conference starts, the chef announces that he has some strange stomach disease and is not allowed to work in the kitchen. He was supposed to cook Friday dinner and the lunches on Saturday and Sunday. Thanks to good friends and personnel it was solved after an afternoon of wild panic. Of course to an extra cost.

On **Friday** evening I was supposed to make a speech about the Swedish mentality. I made a PowerPoint with some pictures to describe what I was talking about. At the break after the first lecture I plugged in my old Mac computer to the projector, or rather tried to plug it in... There just wasn't any connection between the two at all. The feeling of panic crawled over me once more. Luckily I found one of the music teachers at school who kindly lent me his PC.

Saturday after lunch we went on an excursion to the anthroposophical village at Ytterjärna by car. To minimise the number of cars used we asked some of the participants at the conference to drive. One of the cars was driven by one of our Russian friends. Off we went, and suddenly one of the cars broke out of our cortege and disappeared in a totally wrong direction. It was our Russian friends.



A German lady, who was in the car, later claimed that she had been kidnapped by the Russians. It turned out that they went to the central station to pick up a friend who had just arrived from Russia. Saturday evening, party dinner in the greenhouse. "Where are our Italian friends?", someone asked me. I don't know, I said. So, I run down to their hotel. They are not in their rooms. I don't have their phone numbers. Standing outside the hotel wondering where they are I suddenly see them strolling along from the subway station. They had been to Stockholm city. They were not in a hurry - but I was.

Back at the dinner party we discovered that there was no room for the two Italian families at the table. In fact, there was no room for an extra table. Somehow, with the help of a shoehorn and Harry Potter's magic wand we managed to lay another table. How we counted the number of our guests so poorly I still don't understand.

Sunday afternoon. They have left, gone home. Finally no more worries. A feeling of emptiness comes over me.

I won't be doing this again... at least not for a year or two. □



Attending ENSWaP 's Annual Meeting Is a Magnificent Extension of a Waldorf Parent's Commitment.

by Mariam Francq, France



When as parents we opt for Waldorf we surely know, or will soon find out, that we shall also be spending a lot of time at school! So to speak, this is ideally "part of the deal". Not only do we bake cakes... but we also paint, we garden, we attend meetings, lectures, study groups, class outings and trips... well, there is no end... Of course the obvious reason is to accompany our children as well as possible by acting upon our chosen ideal, i.e. the most harmonious education for them. By committing ourselves in this manner, our children realise how much we also care for their school and wish to uphold it. So imagine the impact if we also decide to participate beyond our school and even beyond our borders! And this goal can easily be reached by attending the European Network of Steiner Waldorf Parents and Friends who hold an annual meeting which is prepared the whole preceding year and is held in a different country every year.

Our network has existed for eight years and this year we counted 13 countries which have been regularly attending the last few years. We are so happy to gather together and learn about "the others": their way of functioning, their situations, their success stories or sore points. By exchanging these facts and discussing them, we learn so much more about what it means to be Waldorf... very much alike, or so different while sharing the same deep values. In order to make it easier for parents to come, their older children (roughly 10 and up) are also welcome and taken good care of by the young generation of the hosting country. They also

go back with vivid impressions of other sights and people.

Our international identity is evolving, as we evolve our objectives and means for achieving them. We are currently addressing such questions as how to attract more participants and countries, how to raise money in order to bring costs down as much as possible and also to subsidise those for whom the expenses are an obstacle. Many of us are more or less funded by our National Parents' Association... wherever there is one; or we manage in other ways.

We are more than happy to answer any questions or suggestions and invite you to visit our site: waldorfparents.net.



ENSWAP: Working Groups

Next year's meeting: Márta Domokos (Hungary), Mikael Cederqvist (Sweden), Karin Dauer (Austria), Chia Koskinen (Finland) **ECSWE contact:** Margarida Tavares (Italy), Hilde Lengali (Norway), Ahmed Abdel-Karim (Germany) **Communications:** Gitte Lassen (Iceland), Chia Koskine (Finland), Mariam Francq (France), Margarida Tavares (Italy) **Website:** Luca Ventura (Italy) **Newsletter:** Margarida Tavares (Italy), Márta Domokos (Hungary) **Waldorf exchanges:** Johanna Burkart (Germany) **Funding:** Mariam Francq, Anita Legzdina (Latvia), Monica Picchi (Italy) **Adviser:** Christopher Clouder (UK)

My First Meeting with ENSWaP

by Khatuna Khartishvili, Georgia

It has become a tradition in our newsletter to ask someone who attended our annual conference for the first time to write about their experiences. This year Khatuna Khartishvili from Georgia has accepted the challenge.

When I decided to write the article "my first ENSWaP" I had no idea how difficult this might be. It is one thing to share the experience verbally after such a wonderful meeting, to jump from one subject to another, to let your impressions talk for you spontaneously, emotionally ... But to write an article ... why is it so difficult? I think because the ENSWaP meeting in Stockholm was neither a business meeting, nor a regular conference, but an alive event, full of warm feelings and joy... It is really hard to shape the ENSWaP meeting's atmosphere in words. But since we - human beings - are still weak in telepathy, I have no other way but to write an article to share my impressions with you.



I first heard about ENSWaP and its annual meetings last spring from our school manager. Internet information was not rich, but still enough to inspire me. I understood that participation in the annual meetings might be helpful for our school's parent's association, which was new with many questions and some pending issues... And I decided to contact ENSWAP.

The first person from the ENSWAP board who replied to my email was Ms Anita Legzdina from Latvia (now I would say my dear Anita). Her first email was so friendly and supportive that I and I understood that our parent's association may join ENSWaP. A bit later Hilde Lengali, the head of the

Norwegian parent's association (a very charming lady by the way) contacted me. Anita's and Hilde's efforts made my trip to Stockholm possible. I am very thankful for this.



I believe the ENSWaP meeting in Stockholm was very important for all participants and for me personally. WHY?

It was an alive process showing that ENSWaP is an open association ready to listen, share, help. Mikael's presentation on Sweden as the land of extreme - funny and interesting - was a great start. The atmosphere was so friendly that we, newcomers, felt ourselves at home.

The main topic of the meeting "measuring or knowledge for life" was actual for each participant and the lectures given by Christopher Clouder and Godi Keller inspired us. We could focus once more on the difference between knowledge for life and measuring for success. Waldorf pedagogy gives free, responsible, idealistic people to society. Today popular "measuring" education produces warriors running after success, money, external impressions. Parents have to choose. To be able to make a choice we should at least know both ways, their goals, side effects. I believe each parent brought back home something special for them, got answers their questions.

My personal outcomes after my first ENSWaP meeting:

Waldorf tradition is not as long and strong in Georgia as in Scandinavian countries or Germany. The ENSWaP meeting made my trust in Waldorf pedagogy and generally in human beings stronger.

I felt gratitude to our school's teachers and management. *Though having heavy financial problems they do their best to keep Waldorf principles.*

Our school and parent's association are in the Waldorf mainstream. We can take into account experience of others on working with state structures and keeping Waldorf principles, live with a worldwide Waldorf movement but still be an active part of our country.

I understood that our school has to be more integrated in society, more open to the media. We have to work for popularising Waldorf education in Georgia.

Other's experience has helped me to understand some current issues at our school, to find a way for better communication and cooperation with school teachers.

And last but not least: for me personally each minute of talking with Johanna from Germany and Iztok from Slovenia was so helpful - I understood my teenaged daughter better (thank you, Johanna) and understood myself as a Waldorf parent who should trust more in providence... (thank you, Iztok).

Also my very precious experience was communication with Mariam from France. At first glance a bit strict, but so friendly, charming and always young Mariam - I know I can always get a wise advice from you.

I miss my new friends from ENSWaP, I hope to see all of you next year.

There were many other things in frame of the meeting in Stockholm – visit in an anthroposophic village, impressions after the tour of Kristofferskolan, warm and friendly conversations during Fika, city tour of the beautiful, very special Stockholm, and I hope my friends from ENSWAP will write about this... □

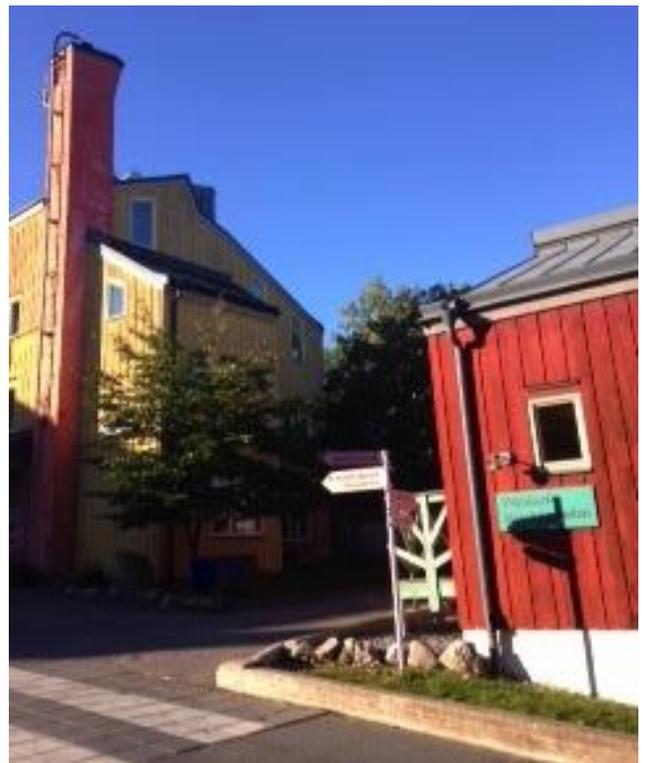


Share Waldorf Education – International Annual Conference 2015

by Johanna Burkart, Germany

On Friday, 9th of October we arrived at Kristofferskolan in Bromma, in the western part of Stockholm. The Swedish Waldorf School with its colourful yellow, blue and red wood-panelled buildings is located on a steep, rocky hill. We were warm-heartedly welcomed by Swedish pupils of the 7th and 8th degree, their parents and international participants of the conference.

Mikael, organiser of the conference, introduced us to Sweden - the country of extremes – which offers the full cultural range between “lagom” (not too much, not too little), the equalising Law of Jante, an increasing multiculturalism, modern spirit and tolerance (do it your way – I do it my way).



A network of Waldorf parents from the 13 participating countries came together to exchange ideas and experiences. We started by reporting from the different countries, collecting feedback from *Hungary (35 schools), Norway (approx. 30 schools), France (approx. 25 schools), Latvia (2 schools), Austria (16 schools), Italy (50 schools), Germany (235 schools) and Finland (26 schools) and Sweden among others.*

The problems these schools face can be summarised as follows:

- No or increasingly less subsidies from governments are causing problems for parents with lower income.
- Lack of acceptance by the government leads to private movements in the underground (e.g. in Russia).
- High subsidies like in Latvia result in lazy “bringing parents” and less participation; education is perceived as a consumption good.
- Difficult to stay attractive for new parents.
- Potential future teacher shortage (e.g. in Germany, Finland). *Christopher Clouder*, lecturer, writer and freelance educationist from the UK, addressed the question of “What are we educating our children for?” (Christopher’s lecture is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter). The day was concluded with a delicious dinner at the school, engaging discussions and lively thought exchanges.



Saturday, 10th of October

The day was started off with a guided tour of the Kristofferskolan, from the classrooms of the first/third grade to the main hall. Following the tour, the Norwegian teacher and writer Godi Keller gave a lecture about “**Parents anxiety in Norwegian schools and kindergartens**”. He pointed out that our education system only grades the measurable things:

Measurable

reproduction of a portion of facts
length, weight, speed
mathematics



Not measurable

feelings
confidence
happiness/pain
creativity
ability of divergent
thinking
force of will
original answers
unexpected answers

If schools exclusively focus on measurable things, these became too strong. The OECD organisation comes up with the standards of measurable things. Economy gets increasingly more influence in

schools, taught with the key words “*profit, productivity and client*”. In the eyes of politics a good school is good if it produces good measurable results. Therefore schools are blind to the social skills and the social ability of the children. In terms of intellectual development schools have to respect the different speed of learning – we also need dreamers – it should protect the slower children.

Can knowledge be standardised?

The problem of standardisation: you cannot measure if the children are touched by the topics. The parent’s attitude has changed increasingly as they are becoming consumers who are demanding education as an effort; it even happens that lawyers represent parents at parent’s evenings. The school’s main task is to cultivate and to strengthen the self-confidence of the pupils within themselves and in the world. Every school should be able to provide this nowadays.

The Norwegian word for confidence is “TILIT”, you can read it from both sides (palindrome).

A manifest from *Godi Keller* and *Hilde Lengali*:

1. *Every pupil keeping and strengthening her/his believe in her/himself.*
2. *Make pupil safe and secure, so they develop a strong confidence in the world, in people and in their own future.*
3. *Building life-happiness (joy of life) in each pupil.*
4. *Develop pupils’ curiosity and make them even more curious. Appreciate questions as well as answers.*
5. *Help pupils to be open and honest, encourage them to think outside the box and appreciate originality more than correctness.*
6. *Strengthen pupils’ force of will by being an active workshop for learning.*
7. *Value cooperation more than competition and social skills more than winner instincts.*
8. *Develop pupils’ skills for dialogue.*
9. *Teach pupils how to listen and to be in contact with their own and others’ feelings and needs.*

Lecture of *Örjan Liebendörfer*, principal at Lunds Waldorfskola. With a power point presentation Örjan showed the existing conflict in the educating policy between national education targets on one side and educational content of Waldorf schools on the other side.

Especially the fact that Waldorf education was not precisely defined by Rudolf Steiner makes it difficult to decide what content can be considered as Waldorf and what not. To clarify what defines Waldorf is a permanent process, we need to keep on asking questions. It can be expected that the quality of the content will be increased through this permanent process, which would not happen without these questions that eventually should be answered.



We visited the anthroposophical village in Ytterjärna, located 50 km south of Stockholm on the Baltic coast and surrounded by biodynamic farms. We visited the curative building of the hospital and the surrounding gardens with a wonderful view. This was followed by a meeting with the people of the **International Youth Initiative Program**. Participants from the age from 18 to 28, from all over the world, live and learn together for 10 months here. The International Youth Initiative Program (YIP) is a holistic educational program that strengthens young people's capacity to take initiative in the face of current global challenges. *Reinout* delivered a short



inside view into the program with examples of its wider perspectives and depth. To talk with the young participants of YIP and to see the bright light in their eyes was touching!

Back in Bromma we met up at the greenhouse of the school with a magical atmosphere between candles and plants of all kinds, hanging tomatoes and cucumbers. We had an excellent and delicious dinner.

Sunday, 11th of October

We started off with a refreshing warmup consisting of Norwegian and Swedish jokes.

Following we listened to the second part of the reports of the participating schools. First Russia (25 schools),

where some of the schools are Waldorf schools, some of them are just teaching Waldorf methods; some schools are in private houses. There are 5 schools in Moscow, 2-3 in St. Petersburg. Denmark (15 schools), has no national parents association – there are problems with the teacher education. Most of the school system is free of charge and there are a lot of alternatives. In Georgia (1 school) the school has problems with government and church – students have exceptionally good habits.



Then *Mirjam Burkart* from Germany, 19 years old, was presenting about her 6-months exchange, comparing the Waldorf school system in Germany with her exchange school in Cape Town, and describing experiences with the country and her host family as well as her own development in measurable (English) and unmeasurable terms of her personality.

With a powerful lecture *Iztok Kordis*, the representative of ECSWE, talked about ECSWE and the 23-year old Waldorf school in Ljubljana. He reported that currently 26 countries are working together in ECSWE. They meet three times a year, last time in September in Bratislava, Slovakia. The task of ECSWE is to compare education in Europe, and to find a right way between “freedom and form”, between national standardisation and freedom of education as it is preferred by Waldorf schools. The basic work is lobbying in Brussels and working for other NGO's. Currently they are dealing with the TTIP Negotiations in the European Community. After that he reported about the Waldorf school in Ljubljana. The school has a very good public reputation, caused by a large number of public relations, lectures and workshops. The school was founded during the time that Slovenia became independent. The kindergarten and the school has developed an own Waldorf-curriculum, which was confirmed by the ECSWE and accepted by the national educational authorities. They have an open and convenient cooperation with the government and with other schools, especially with catholic schools.



What Are We Educating Our Children For?

Impressions of a Lecture

by **CHRISTOPHER CLOUDER**

written by **Márti Domokos, Hungary**, with
the participation of Christopher

This is my interpretation of yet another inspiring and highly entertaining lecture of Christopher's on current and future education. All eventual misunderstandings are entirely mine.

Educational institutions, like schools, that we create for children are a reflection of how we as adults see childhood. Children are expected to fit a structure that the adults create for them. In young children there is so much promise towards the future – however educational systems are adept at diminishing this promise.

In Steiner Waldorf education we try to allow the unknown being in a child to flourish, we try to help them develop their future potential. We cannot ignore the fact that they are surrounded by things that can deaden their souls. As parents, by stepping out of the regular education, we are making, consciously or unconsciously, a political choice about how we envisage the future of the world

Young children have a wonderful ability to smile at us and the world – our task is to help them keep that smile. A smile is a powerful force, it shows that we as human beings appreciate the human being in the other. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry described in 'Letter to a Hostage' how he realised in a life-threatening situation in the Spanish Civil War that he was going to stay alive rather be shot off-hand – simply by a guard smiling at him...

"Care granted to the sick, welcome offered to the banished, forgiveness itself are worth nothing without a smile enlightening the deed. We communicate in a smile beyond languages, classes and parties. We are the faithful members of the same church, you with your customs, I with mine."

Nowadays education has become such a serious business. Inner and outer smiles are discouraged. It should be our aim to help our children to keep their smile, and also to keep it in ourselves too. The warmth of smile unites us as human beings and we are very sensitive to its absence.

The world is changing at an enormous pace. Technological change and evolution are not linear, there are times when it goes more and more rapidly. We really do not know where it will take us. *"In looking at our cultural surroundings we have not only what acts in space but also what effects us from bygone eras. If we acquire a feeling for this, not only the past affects us but the future as well. It is our task to let the future work in us"* (Rudolf Steiner. *Education as a Social Question*. Dornach 17/08/1919) According to some futurologists children of today might still be working when they are 100 years old and between 30% to 80% of all the jobs that exist today will

There was an exhibition, called "living-line", of paintings and drawings from grade 1-12 of the school in the city hall of Ljubljana, showing the development of life. Under "summary of conference and next year" we fixed the theme: "How much Waldorf should be in Waldorf school" and the structure of ENSWaP in the future.

The opinion of the audience was that there should be a living responsibility instead of a fixed committee. With the following impressions of participants the conference was closed:

"We are not alone with ideas, hopes and feelings about the school"

"I was thinking of home during the conference. We look at the day by day problems, we keep on working. We will manage to find our solutions"

"We are not alone with our problems"

"Hope is the key"

"It is a big chance of European cooperation of parents"

"It is enriching to meet people – doesn't matter where they come from"

"We take back energy"

"We take back a smile and lightness"

My summary:

Although it was already the 9th ENSWaP meeting you can still feel the spirit and energy of the founders. The participants cling together for one issue: Waldorf pedagogy. It's a unique opportunity to discuss problems and to see other points of views within the Waldorf community.

It's a platform where you can hear about the full range of topics: about the problems of single schools and about themes in a national context. You can consider it a think tank which gives a preview of what could be Waldorf in future and what should be focused and developed in future to get a benefit for your own school, all embedded in the European context.

At the end of the meeting Mikael surprised us with a wonderfully guided bus tour through Stockholm.

Thank you Mikael!

disappear in the next 10 to 20 years. Our children will have to live with many jobs and multiple careers, but in our contemporary society they are still educated as if they were meant to have just one type of job throughout their lives as in the past. Although we do not know exactly what they will need, we cannot isolate them from the changes of the world. This is where our battle lines as parents and as educators lie.



Contemporary education is based on testing. There is an aim towards standardisation: every child should know exactly the same information, despite the above-mentioned changes. Basically a PISA test assesses how well the pupils pass the PISA test, and not actual life-skills. In some cases pupils at primary schools in China are tested for nine hours on end. This is not out of bad intentions, but nevertheless education, because of this pervasive mind-set, is becoming extremely competitive. There is even a wave of suicide amongst the “underachievers”. It also can happen that teachers or schools cheat at these tests, thereby giving the school better results and consequently more pupils. And if you learn how to do that your school by increasing the average scores will get more funding.

Educators from Western Europe used to visit Finland, where there was a high level of educational achievement; nowadays they admire China as that country has among the highest PISA scores and where they used rote memorisation techniques. As a professor at Beijing Normal University stated, “*The education system here puts heavy emphasis on rote memorisation, which is great for student’s test taking ability but not for problem solving and leadership abilities or their interpersonal skills. Chinese schools just ignore these things.*” Children of today’s Europe too have increasing, mainly stress-related, mental issues. There is an epidemic of pressure and because of this and an increasingly competitive school life this age has the tendency to become an age of loneliness. For teenagers, young adults and older people it is can difficult to find contact with other human beings. The digital “one-eyed God” in the home only gives an illusion of companionship.

How long can we resist this kind of testing in Steiner Waldorf schools? We as adults have a paradoxical responsibility, we cannot build walls around our schools – if we do, these walls will need to get stronger and stronger, and we might find ourselves and our children on insulated fortified islands. A Steiner Waldorf school is a learning environment with a sense of community that participates in our world, but not in isolation. What can we do, how can we develop in us and in our children a sense of a shared world humanity?

In Canada they have started with a project “*Roots of Empathy*”. In this project a mother and her 2-4 months

old baby are put into a class (up to seventh grade) and the pupils observe this baby. Just through the presence of a baby watched, admired and with the interaction with the mother month after month, like a heart-softening magnet and becoming a part of the rhythm their lives, bullying in these classes goes down by 50%. Even the teachers become nicer to each other and their pupils. This shows that empathy can be readily caught, and not so easily taught, and it can be strengthened and developed in children. So the next evolution in education could be: a smile and a baby. Simple and inexpensive really.

Back to testing: tests can be tools in education, but they should not become the goal of education. Teachers are constantly pushed into situations where they have to deny their intuition. It also seems that we educate our children for a very harsh world – but although it may not seem like it as we consume what the media puts before us, the world has, in many regards, become a better place than it used to be. Homicide rates have fallen everywhere, even if that is not the impression we get from the media. The world seems horrid and awesome, but actually in some senses we have improved our humanity to each other. The fact that we generally think that homicide, cruelty, child abuse and other atrocities are wrong is, in itself, is already an enormous improvement in our consciousness. Such concerns were not expressed in the world a few centuries back.

In their book *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* the authors [Richard G. Wilkinson](#) and [Kate Pickett](#) write of the “pernicious effects that inequality has on societies: eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, (and) encouraging excessive consumption”. They argue that health and social problems are significantly worse in more unequal rich countries. At the basis we are social beings: being financially rich does not necessarily make us happier. Above all we need to be soul-rich and spiritually nourished. Small children smile and accept us as we are. We should keep this quality alive in our educational systems and then there would be fewer teachers leaving because they feel something is wrong in the practice of their vocation.

With finding humility in ourselves we also find inner strength although the forces ranged against us might seem awesome. And our best weapons in this world are these: imagination, a smile - and a butterfly. □

*Man's biggest wealth
is his incompleteness.
With this I am wealthy.
Words that accept me the way
I am—I don't accept.
I can't stand being just
a guy who opens
doors, who pulls valves,
who watches the watch, who
buys bread at 6 in the
afternoon,
who goes out there,
who sharpens the pencil,
who sees the grape, etc., etc.*

*Forgive me.
But I need to be Others
I intend to revitalize man
by using butterflies.*

**Manoel de Barros
1916-2014
(from "Mist biography")**