


Sukhomlinsky News



**There is no person in whom,
given skilled educational work,
a unique talent will not unfold.**



Welcome to our first newsletter!

Thank you for subscribing, and for showing an interest in the educational legacy of Vasily Sukhomlinsky. The aim of this newsletter is to make Sukhomlinsky's name better known amongst English-speaking educators, so I hope you will forward it on to anyone who you think may be interested.

This first article in this month's issue is taken from a lecture I gave last year at a conference in China. The full lecture can be downloaded from <http://ejr.com.au/sukhomlinsky/newsletter.html>. At this page it is also possible to sign up for this newsletter, (in case any of your friends or colleagues are interested.) In the first part of my lecture I outlined an argument for translating Sukhomlinsky's work, and for paying closer attention to it, so I thought that might be a good way to start a conversation about Sukhomlinsky. Work is progressing on my new translation of Sukhomlinsky's most famous work, *My Heart I Give to Children*. The manuscript is currently with an editor, and I hope to publish a book before the end of this year. I hope you find some material of interest in this newsletter.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

Why translate Sukhomlinsky's work?

This article is based on part of a talk given at a conference in Hefei, China, in November 2014. The conference was attended by about 400 delegates, mostly school principals. According to some Chinese scholars, Sukhomlinsky is the most respected and influential foreign educator in China.

I have set myself the goal of translating several of Sukhomlinsky's major works into English. Why do I think this is a goal worth pursuing? The first part of my talk will address this question.

As a species, humankind has achieved spectacular success in dominating the planet. The human population has multiplied to such an extent that it threatens to exhaust the resources it needs for survival. This has led to awareness of the issue of "sustainability", which is one of three central, cross-curricular priorities in the current Australian national curriculum for schools. Spectacular success in science and technology has given humanity the ability to send people to the moon, and to send probes into the deepest recesses of our solar system. We are developing the knowledge to combat diseases that have plagued humanity for millennia. However, this spectacular advancement in science and technology is accompanied by significant risks. Knowledge must be accompanied by wisdom, and a concern for the future of humanity. (continued on page 2)

In education there is nothing major or minor, just as there is no main petal among the many petals which create the beauty of a flower. In education everything is important—the lessons, the development of diverse interest outside lessons, and the relationships between students in a group.

The process of technological development, that began with the industrial revolution and the harnessing of fossil fuel, now creates environmental pollution and threatens global warming. The growth in scientific knowledge that led to Einstein's theory of relativity also led to the development of the atomic bomb. Intellectual development needs to be accompanied by the refinement of human nature. Otherwise, like the sorcerer's apprentice, we may find that the power we have unleashed is beyond our control.

Even at a personal level, intellectual knowledge does not in itself bring happiness. Without self-control, without emotional and moral development, happiness will elude us. Human beings have enormous capacity for both good and evil. Sukhomlinsky was aware of this, both intellectually (in his youth he read widely, including the novels of Dostoevsky), and through his life experiences (he and those closest to him suffered dreadfully from the fascist invasion of their country).

Throughout 22 years working at Pavlysh Secondary School Sukhomlinsky tried to understand the origins of good and evil in the human soul. He even visited young people in prison and tried to understand what had led them to commit crimes.

It is in this context that I consider Sukhomlinsky's educational legacy to be important. Sukhomlinsky developed a holistic system of education. He considered that educating the heart was every bit as important as educating the head. He also considered that children's health, emotional development and moral development provided a foundation for all further human development, and that intellectual development, while essential to human self-respect, and for the development of society, was just one aspect of education. In *My Heart I Give to Children* he wrote:

Studies are just one of the petals of that flower which we call education in the wider sense. In education there is nothing major or minor, just as there is no main petal among the many petals which create the beauty of a flower. In education everything is important—the lessons, the development of diverse interests outside

lessons, and the relationships between students in the group.

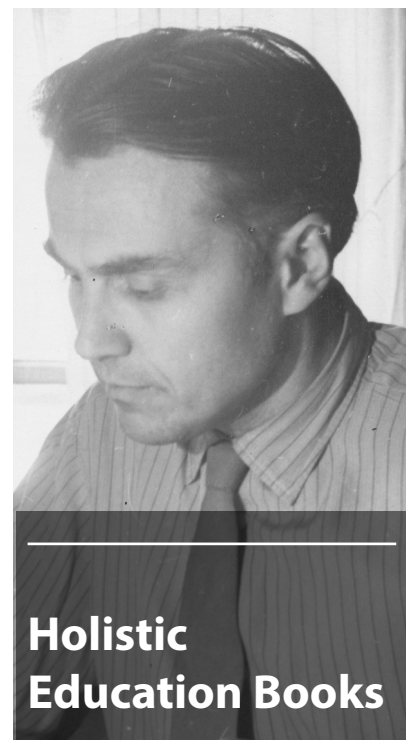
The quality of life of each individual depends to a large extent on the quality of their relationships with the other people who surround them: family, friends and colleagues. Where there is mutual respect, love, understanding and support, people have the opportunity to flourish and find happiness. Sukhomlinsky recognised this in his work, and consciously taught the children in his care to empathise with others. In one of his articles he wrote:

How important this is—to teach small children to recognise, from the eyes, movements and speech of the people around them, grief and joy, disappointment and concern, anxiety and confusion. If we do not carry out this work, a person may grow up to be an insensitive blockhead.

Sukhomlinsky was a highly intelligent and sensitive human being, and a masterful teacher. He retained the capacity to be a child and to relate to children, and earned children's respect through his consistent kindness towards them and faith in them. He also had an exceptional capacity to reflect and write about his educational experience. Sukhomlinsky's personal, artistic and intellectual attributes made him an exceptional educational authority of world significance.

When I wrote my thesis about Sukhomlinsky, I argued that he belongs to a humanistic tradition that traces its roots to ancient Greece and Rome, and that educators in English speaking countries can find inspiration and food for thought in his writings. I still believe this to be the case. I believe Sukhomlinsky offers us understanding that can help us educate responsible and caring global citizens, capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

The question then arises, which of Sukhomlinsky's many works should a translator select to begin with? Sukhomlinsky himself has given us some guidance on this question. During the final years of his life, Sukhomlinsky knew that he did not have long to live, and tried to record for posterity all the knowledge he had gleaned during his remarkable educational career. He



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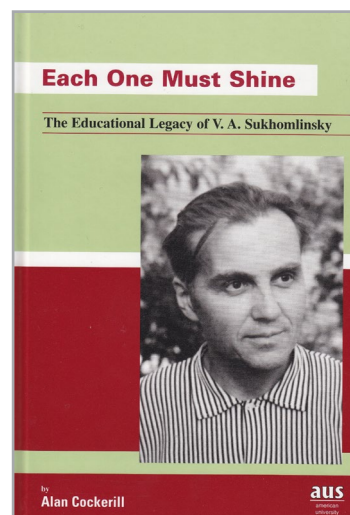
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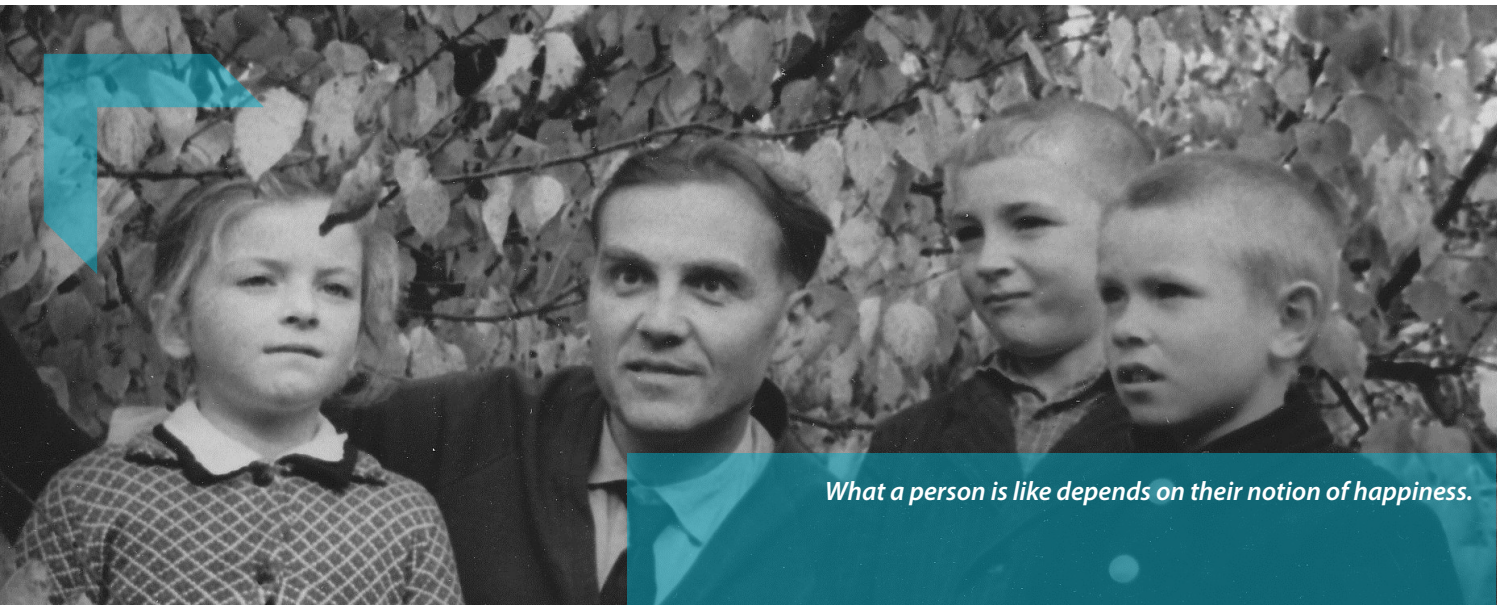
Vasyl Sukhomlinsky

Translated by Alan Cockerill | Illustrated by Students from Ukraine and Belarus

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What a person is like depends on their notion of happiness.

considered the works written during the last years of his life to be the most valuable, as shown in a letter to A.E. Boim in 1967. I believe it is the works written during the final years of Sukhomlinsky's life that provide the most comprehensive account both of his mature educational philosophy, and of his educational experience. The three works from

Sukhomlinsky's final years that I consider most important to translate and publish into English are: *My Heart I Give to Children*, *The Birth of a Citizen*, and *Pavlysh Secondary School*. Other books that I would like to translate include: *An Ethics Anthology*, *How to Educate a Genuine Human Being*, *100 Pieces of Advice for School Teachers*, and *Letters to My Son*. I plan to publish

my translation of *My Heart I Give to Children* during the second half of 2015. I will continue to translate his little stories for children over the next couple of years, and possibly some chapters from *100 Pieces of Advice for School Teachers*. Other major works may need to wait until I retire from full-time teaching, possibly in 2018.

Progress on publication of *My Heart I Give to Children*

I began work on a new translation of *My Heart I Give to Children* in April 2014, having taken long service leave for that purpose, and the first draft was completed in January 2015. Since then I have carried out some editing of the translation, and in July I sent it to a professional editor, Lisa Hill, for copy-editing. I expect this editing to be completed by early August,

and will then proceed to design and printing of the book.

If any subscribers to this newsletter would like to preview the book, and give feedback as beta readers, please email Alan at ejr.cockerill@gmail.com. I would welcome any feedback about the content and any errors that you notice.



Vasily Sukhomlinsky
My Heart I Give to Children

Translated by Alan Cockerill



Archival film footage of Sukhomlinsky at work can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCksMOPYzas> .





Stories for Children

Like the wing of an oriole

We went into the forest to admire the autumn colours. We stopped by a tall maple, and sat down. How beautiful it was! The maple stood tall in its bright, multi-coloured dress, its leaves neither stirring nor whispering.

“Look, children, the maple has gone to sleep. It is dreaming of all the things it saw from Spring to Autumn. This yellow leaf is like a golden dandelion that the maple saw in the spring. Now it is remembering its beauty it in its dreams, and the leaf has turned yellow. That leaf over there is a tender pink, the remembrance of a morning dawn, while this one tells of a red sky in the evening, before a windy day.

On that twig over there you can see a leaf as bright and beautiful as the wing of an oriole. Probably an oriole settled there, and now the maple is dreaming about its beautifully coloured wing.”

We fell silent and admired the beauty, as if afraid of waking the maple from its enchanted dreams.

Joy in a Child’s Eyes

On a warm sunny day everything joyfully welcomed the spring. The orchards were flowering, the birds were twittering. In the azure sky cranes were flying in formation. Somewhere a spring brook was happily babbling.

But underneath a tall poplar a little boy was standing and crying. He did not see the orchards in flower. He did not hear the twittering of the birds. To him the sky seemed black, not blue. The V-shaped formation of cranes seemed a thread of tears.

People walked past the little boy and did not notice him crying.

Only one old man saw the crying boy, walked up to him, and put his hand on his head. The old man spent a long time talking to the boy, asking him about something. Through his tears, the boy told the old man all about what was troubling him.

They talked like that for about an hour. Their conversation ended with the boy smiling. He noticed that the orchards were in flower. He heard the birds twittering. He saw the formation of cranes shimmering in the blue sky and thought, “Spring has come!”

The most beautiful thing is when one person dries another’s tears and awakens a smile.

Lazy Pillow

Little Irina has to get up very early to go to school, but she doesn’t feel like it, she really doesn’t feel like it.

In the evening Irina asks her grandpa: “Grandpa, why don’t I feel like getting up in the morning? Teach me, grandpa, how to sleep so I feel like getting up and going to school...”

“It’s because you’ve got a lazy pillow,” answers grandpa.

“And what can I do to it, so it won’t be lazy?”

“I know a secret,” whispers grandpa.

“When you don’t feel like getting up, take your pillow outside into the fresh air, and give it a good beating with your fists. Then it won’t be lazy.”

“Really?” says Irina joyfully. “I’ll do that tomorrow.”

It is still dark, and she has to get ready for school. Irina doesn’t feel like getting up, but it’s time she gave that pillow a lesson, and beat the laziness out of it.

Irina jumps up quickly, gets dressed, takes her pillow outside, puts it on a bench and pummels it with her fists.

She comes back into the house, puts the pillow on the bed and smiles.

The cat is miaowing on the floor, there’s a blizzard outside, and grandpa is chuckling into his beard.

Other News

The most active promoter of Sukhomlinsky’s ideas in the USA has been Dr Robert Weiss, who for many years was director of Medford Education International, in Oregon.

Dr Weiss collaborated with educators from Russia and Ukraine, and brought them into dialogue with American educators. Sukhomlinsky’s legacy was of particular interest. He also made an edited translation of Sukhomlinsky’s *I Give My Heart to Children*. An eBook edition of this translation is available from Smashwords at: <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/293798>

Dr Weiss has also written about Sukhomlinsky in his online blog at:

<http://discoveryandwonder.com/category/vasilij-sukhomlinskij/>