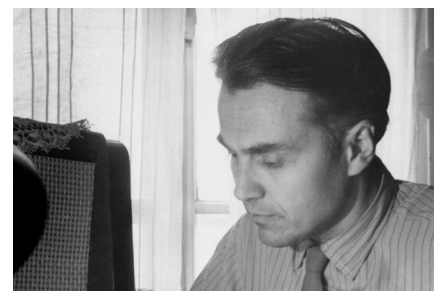


# Sukhomlinsky News

No. 66  
February 2021



## Aesthetic education and all-round development

### Aesthetic education

In this issue we continue our translation of the seventh chapter of *Pavlysh Secondary School*, which is on aesthetic education.

#### The perception of beauty and the cultivation of feeling (cont.)

On summer days the children admire the beauty of a sea of wheat, its waves undulating in the wind. We show the children how the wheat swells and ripens, how the sunflowers bloom, how the tomatoes redden, and the melons turn yellow.

The education of aesthetic culture and refined feelings begins with the perception and appreciation of beauty.

Everything of beauty that exists in the surrounding world, and that is created by people for each other, must touch the hearts of children and ennoble them. We read to the children, and re-read three or four times, such literary works as Gogol's *Evenings on a farm near Dikanka*, Turgenev's *A sportsman's sketches*, Korolenko's *The blind musician*, Chekhov's *Steppe*, Prishvin's short stories, and poems by Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov, Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, Heinrich Heine, and Adam Mickiewicz. We attach great significance to the reading of literary works in which the beauty of nature is extolled.

For such readings we choose a setting that is reminiscent of the images of nature described by the author. Language helps us to feel the subtlest manifestations of natural beauty more deeply, and the beauty of nature reinforces the emotional colouring of language in the consciousness of the children, adolescents and young men and women, allowing the music and flavour of language to touch their hearts and minds. For each year of study, we have selected works (or extracts from longer works) that we read in natural settings. Such readings educate sensitivity to the emotional colouring of words and enable language to become more deeply embedded in the spiritual lives of children, to become an instrument of thought.

[Continued on the following page]

Dear readers,

This month we are continuing our translation of the final chapter of *'Pavlysh Secondary School'*, on aesthetic education.

Among other things, this month's extract examines what it is that makes a person beautiful, with a particular focus on character, or 'beauty of soul'. It seems that for Sukhomlinsky 'human beauty' is synonymous with 'human virtue':

'In our concept of human beauty, we give pride of place to spiritual beauty: being true to one's convictions, humaneness, steadfastness in the face of evil.'

In concluding a passage on the role of aesthetic education in all-round development, Sukhomlinsky writes:

'It is a school's task to ensure that the appreciation of beauty, developed over many centuries of human culture, is acquired by every human heart, and incorporated into a person's aesthetic makeup and their moral relationships with others.'

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

## Aesthetic education (cont.)

### Aesthetic education and all-round development during adolescence and youth

Aesthetic education, which gives direction to the cognitive and creative activity of a student, and the to the development and satisfaction of their spiritual needs in their many involvements, encompasses all aspects of the spiritual life of a developing personality. Aesthetic education is inseparably linked with the formation of a person's philosophical outlook, with the aesthetic and moral ideals of children, adolescents, and young men and women.

Beauty is a source of a person's moral wealth. James Aldridge, in one of his addresses to readers, said that it is impossible to be a cynic and at the same time to love Dickens, that the two were incompatible. The task facing a school is to ensure that beauty becomes a powerful means of moral education in childhood, during the infancy of the nervous system, when a child's soul is very sensitive to the emotional colouring of thoughts and images, of everything that a child sees, absorbs and thinks about.

During the infancy of the nervous system, up to the age of seven or eight, and later, during its adolescence, from seven or eight to ten or eleven years of age, when the formation of the mind, feelings and will is ongoing, it is exceptionally important that a child senses beauty, takes delight in it, admires and is amazed by the wonderful creations of human hands, and the miraculous beauty of nature, of that which is uncreated by human hands. Amazement, wonder, reverence for beauty, during the years of childhood and adolescence, is that element in human relationships without which genuine education, and the genuine establishment of human culture, are unthinkable. Human culture is most subtly

expressed in the culture of feelings. We must acknowledge that much that is studied in school will be forgotten with the passage of time, but all things of cultural value that have been touched by human thought leave a trace in our souls, especially in our feelings and emotions.

From a child's first days at school, we help them to develop the concept of a beautiful, socially oriented human being, of the lofty and majestic content of their thoughts and feelings. This concept is clothed in flesh and blood, in living examples of highly moral conduct and heroic deeds.

In our concept of human beauty, we give pride of place to spiritual beauty: being true to one's convictions, humaneness, steadfastness in the face of evil. From time to time we decoratively redesign our display on 'Human Beauty'. The display includes accounts of peoples' actions, lives and destinies. These accounts clearly demonstrate the oneness of the moral and aesthetic ideal, in a way that is comprehensible to children, adolescents, and young men and women. We seek to ensure that children not only read about, but dream about fine, beautiful people, and that they discuss their future pathway in life with their friends.

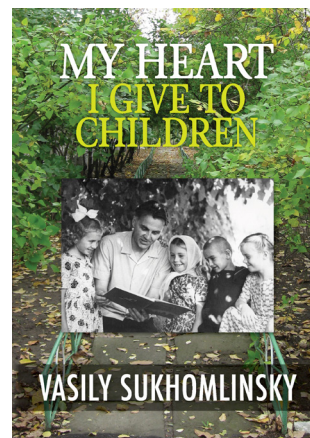
Among the virtues that we emphasise, as constituting a person's inner spiritual beauty, we give pride of place to integrity, to acting and living in accord with one's convictions. We show acting for the common good to be not a sacrifice, but the source of true happiness, of a genuinely full spiritual life.

All the rich moral heritage, created by humanity in the past, and being created in our own times, must enter the hearts of children, adolescents and young men and women.

In one of our displays on 'Human Beauty', we put up

 **REALLY GOOD  
BOOK SHOP**

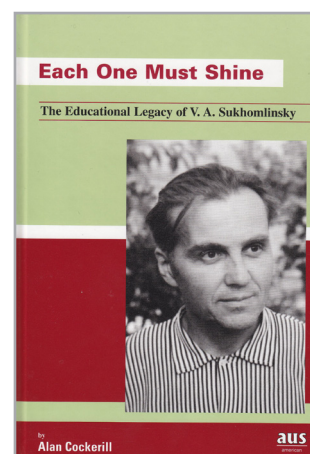
<http://www.thereallygoodbookshop.com.au/>



**AUS\$24.95**



**AUS\$14.95**



**AUS\$34.95**

**All the above titles are  
also available from  
Amazon,  
The Book Depository,  
and other major online retailers.**



a portrait of the family of Uzbek blacksmith Shaakhmed Shamakhmudov, who, during the years of the Great Patriotic War, adopted fourteen orphans from the twelve different nationalities. Our children were amazed to read about his exceptional humaneness and love for others. In the same display we posted portraits of heroes who repeated the heroic deed of Aleksandr Matrosov...

Examples of human beauty, entering the spiritual life of children, force them to think about their own actions. In consequence, thoughts, feelings, and relationships within the community, are inspired by moral beauty.

We are always careful to ensure that the ideal of a person's spiritual beauty, their actions and their work for the good of society, are sacred and dear to students in the middle and senior years. It is especially important that spiritually beautiful people excite young people's thoughts and prompt them to think about their own futures.

In early adolescence each student should already have experienced love and admiration for someone who embodies beauty of soul.

We give every adolescent books to read about such people, their lives and destinies. Our young people fall in love not only with famous people, whose names are known all over the world, but also with the spiritual beauty of simple people. In their young hearts they develop the conviction that moral valour and beauty can be achieved by people not only in heroic circumstances, but also in our daily working lives.

The connection between aesthetic and moral education is also manifested in an aesthetic appreciation of work. Exploitative oppression over many centuries perverted people's attitudes to the things of value that they created. People only felt responsible for their own property, for what

they owned. In the moral make-up of contemporary humankind, this feeling of ownership, of possession, is one of the most burdensome things we have inherited from the past. Overcoming this relic of the past is essential for the integrity of the moral and aesthetic ideal.

We strive to conduct work education and moral education in such a way that students invest all their best spiritual qualities in their work, 'objectifying' themselves, in such a way that they love the actual process of work and feel the beauty of creativity. That is why in work education we attribute such great significance to individual work interests and seek to ensure that every adolescent or young man or woman creates a favourite workspace, that their work takes over their heart and soul.

Aesthetic education is closely connected with the education of curiosity and inquisitiveness. The urge to involve oneself in investigative, experimental work is at the same time a way of satisfying the aesthetic urge for beautiful, intellectually fulfilling work. If intellectual work is accompanied by intellectual inspiration, if a person, in their thoughts, senses their power over nature, they will overcome any difficulties, and will not be disheartened by failures. Thought is most often uplifted by feeling when mind and hands participate simultaneously in work. That is why it is so important that students are inspired by physical work, in which the laws of nature are explored and applied.

An aesthetic orientation when teaching the natural sciences plays a major role in affirming materialist convictions. In teaching humanities subjects, it is important to cultivate feelings of a lofty, heroic and dramatic nature. Such feelings are experienced when a student appreciates the beauty of serving one's homeland, the beauty of a heroic act carried out in the name

of the happiness of the nation. Teachers of humanities subjects seek to present a historical event or social phenomenon as a manifestation of the struggle of progressive social forces for a better future for their people, and the students feel the beauty in this struggle. For instance, when describing the selfless defenders of Thermopylae, the heroic actions of Ivan Susanin, the heroic death of Nikolai Gastello, or the selfless labour of millions of women and adolescents during the years of the Great Patriotic War, we reveal those characteristics of people's spiritual worlds that express devotion to one's convictions and an active love for one's homeland. The aesthetic orientation of intellectual education involves throwing light on the historical experience of humanity, affirming the present, and awakening dreams for the future. It is important to evaluate the past emotionally as well as intellectually. The emotional and aesthetic evaluation of historical experience determines to an enormous extent which 'spirits of the past' (in Marx's words) we summon to our aid, which things from the past we wish to develop and perfect, and which we consider it necessary to discard.

Aesthetic education is also closely connected with physical education. We seek to promote the notion of the harmonious development of the body, of beauty in work, in movement, in overcoming difficulties. At our school's spring Festival of Beauty, we conduct sporting competitions judged on the basis of beauty of movement. Students in the junior classes present the victors with flowers.

It is a school's task to ensure that the appreciation of beauty, developed over many centuries of human culture, is acquired by every human heart, and incorporated into a person's aesthetic makeup and their moral relationships with others.

[To be continued next month.]



# Stories

## The hand withheld

A mother took her five-year-old son, Mitya, to the park. For a long time, they walked along the narrow, stony paths, and then sat down to rest on a bench.

Suddenly a cat appeared out of nowhere. It sat next to Mitya and purred, looking at him.

Mitya smiled, and his hand reached out to stroke the cat, but his mother pulled his hand away.

The cat got up, came over to Mitya, rubbed its side against him, and purred even more loudly.

Mitya raised his arm again, and nearly stroked the cat, but his mother slapped his hand and said, 'Don't touch the filthy thing...'

Mitya's eyes shone with tears.

A few days later Mitya and his mother went to the park again. This time there were lots of children playing there. One little boy, about three years old, accidentally stood on Mitya's foot. Mitya looked at the boy angrily and pushed him in the back. The little boy cried.

'Why did you hurt that little boy?' asked his mother in amazement.

'What was he doing standing on my foot? The filthy thing...'

## The telephone receiver

Thirteen-year-old Kostya lived in a small town on the Dneiper and was in grade six at school.

Recently his mother had been allocated a nice apartment in a three-storey building, on the second floor. Near the building was a telephone booth, where you could make a call at any time, even in the middle of the night.

One day Kostya looked into the telephone booth and decided to cut off the receiver. 'I can make my own telephone at home,' he thought. 'I will talk with my friend Yura, who lives on the third floor.'

So, he did. He cut off the receiver. But where would he get a receiver for Yura? They went together and found another phone booth three blocks away. They cut off the receiver there and managed to make a telephone line and chat with each other. They had a lot of fun. His mother saw the phone but did not even ask where it came from.

Several days passed. One night, Kostya woke up and heard a groan. His mother was groaning. She asked him to turn on the light. Kostya turned on the light and saw his mother lying there, very pale, breathing heavily.

'It's my heart... Kostya...' his mother whispered, 'Go to the telephone booth... and ring the ambulance... You know how to phone...' and she lost consciousness.

When his mother mentioned the telephone booth, Kostya was horrified. He had cut off the receivers in the two nearest phone booths, and they had not yet been replaced. He had checked today... What was he to do?

Kostya ran onto the street, crying. What was he to do now? Where could he go? He remembered that there was a phone booth near the railway bridge and ran in that direction.

Kostya ran through the unfamiliar silence of the sleeping town. His heart thumped in his chest. The boy wanted to shout to the whole world, 'My mum is dying! Please, kind people, help me!'

He reached the bridge, but there was no phone. Kostya groaned and wept and ran back home.

He opened the door into their room. His mother was lying there, pale, without breathing.

'Mum! Mum!' wept the boy, and fell on his knees by the bed.

## A mother's grey hairs

Every evening, seven-year-old Tarasik greeted his father as he came home from work. Those were happy moments. His father opened the door, Tarasik ran to meet him, and his father lifted him into his arms. His mother smiled as she prepared their dinner.

One day Tarasik came home from school and saw his mother sitting by the window, thoughtful and sad.

'Why are you sad, mum?' asked Tarasik anxiously.

'Dad won't be coming home anymore,' said his mother quietly.

'What do you mean, he won't be coming home?' asked the boy in astonishment. 'Where will he go?' The boy could not get his head around the idea of his father not coming home.

His mother said, 'He won't be living with us anymore... Well... He came today and took his things. He's gone to live with another woman...'

'Why?' shouted Tarasik. 'Why has he gone to live with another woman?'

His mother did not know what to say. She feverishly thought of something to say to her son. Then she said the first thing that came into her head: 'Because I have some grey hairs... and that woman doesn't have any grey hair...'

Tarasik burst into tears, hugged his mother, lifted his little hand, and stroked her black hair, flecked with a few, shining grey hairs. Then he quietly said, 'But it's your hair, mum... Your hair is the most beautiful hair... Doesn't dad understand that?'

'He doesn't understand, Tarasik...'