

Sukhomlynsky News



Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

How a little girl saw herself

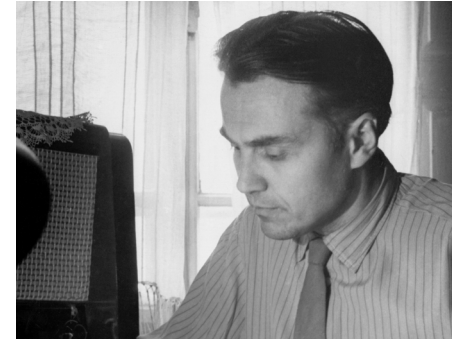
One day little Sonya threw a tantrum. She wanted to go out to play, but her mother said that she must have some breakfast first, and then she could go out. And at that she burst into tears.

She thought her mother would beg her, 'Dear Sonya, please come and have some breakfast.' But her mother did no such thing. She said, 'All right, if you're not hungry you can go out to play. But you will not be getting anything to eat until dinner time.' And with that, her mother left the room.

Sonya started screaming even more. Suddenly, through her tears, she saw herself in a little mirror that was standing on the table. At first, she did not understand who that little girl was in the mirror. Why was her face all screwed up and why were her eyes red? Why did she have tears all over her face? In her surprise Sonya stopped crying, and then she realised it was her reflection in the mirror.

Sonya was ashamed. Was that really her? She looked around to see if her mother could see how ugly she was when she was crying. Her mother was not there. Sonya quickly wiped away her tears.

From that day she never threw a tantrum again. She sometimes wanted to. Sometimes her lips screwed up and her eyes filled with tears, but then she remembered the mirror and felt ashamed. That was how the mirror helped Sonya to see herself.



Developing sensitivity

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

This month I am completing my presentation of stories from the section in Sukhomlynsky's Ethics Anthology entitled 'The harmony of work, happiness and duty', and beginning my presentation of stories from the final section of the book, which is entitled 'Develop your sensitivity'.

The story 'How the hare was punished', is from the section on work, but it contrasts interestingly with the story 'How a little girl saw herself', from the section on sensitivity. The little girl in the latter story develops a degree of self-awareness, and is able to view herself critically. The hare in the former story, with its humorous ending, is completely lacking in any critical self-awareness.

I hope you find the stories interesting.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

Two spades

A man bought two new steel spades. He attached one of them to a handle, and it became a hard worker. The spade was used for digging the vegetable garden, chopping up beet to feed to animals, digging holes for planting trees in the spring, and scraping ice off steps in winter.

Meanwhile the second spade lay in the storeroom doing nothing. A year passed, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty years passed. The first spade laboured away while the second spade did nothing.

Fifty years passed and the spade's owner grew old. One day he looked at his hard-working old spade and said, 'Look at you. You poor old girl. You're worn out and full of holes... It's time for you to have a rest.'

He removed the hard-working spade from its handle and put it under a bench in the storeroom. And that was where the two spades met—the hard-working one and the idle one. The idle one, recognising her sister, said, 'So, it looks like your master does not need you anymore. How old and worn out you look...'

'Aren't you ashamed to speak like that!' replied the hard-working spade indignantly. 'Look at you! You're rusted all the way through! At least I am worn out through work, while you have rusted through because you have done nothing.'

'What is work?' asked the idle spade in surprise.

The hard-working spade began to tell her all about trenches dug for the foundations of a large building, about a deep well, about a dam... But the idle spade could not understand a word she said. She asked, 'Why don't I understand anything that you are talking about? We speak the same spade language.'

'You don't understand because you have never experienced the joy of work.'

How the hare was punished

In a wide, green clearing in the forest was a little town where hares lived. They lived as one big, happy family, and all helped each other. They built little homes for themselves and guarded their little town from the cunning fox and the evil wolf. They posted sentries in the forest, and as soon as a fox or a wolf approached, they hid in their little homes, where they had nothing to fear.

The hares had a big vegetable garden where they grew cabbages. Every day they worked in the vegetable garden, watering the cabbages and pulling out weeds. The hares did not like idlers. If any of the hares tried to avoid doing their share of the work, all the hares gathered in the clearing, sat the idler on an old tree stump, and pulled a hair out of their tail. For hares this was considered extremely shameful. Of course, at the same time they also made speeches, criticising laziness and idleness.

Then one day something unheard of happened in that happy family of hares. One young hare went to the vegetable garden during the night and ate all the cabbages. The indignant hares gathered in the clearing and began to discuss how to punish the offender. They unanimously decided to banish the young hare. He could go wherever he wanted.

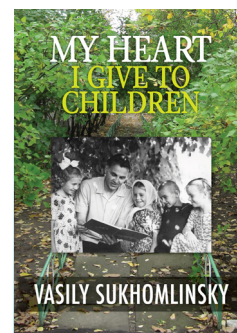
The offending hare burst into tears and said, 'That's not fair. I have never been sat on the old stump. No-one has ever pulled a hair out of my tail. No-one has ever criticised me or made speeches about my behaviour. Why am I suddenly being given such a severe punishment?'

The hares thought about it. The oldest and wisest hare came out and

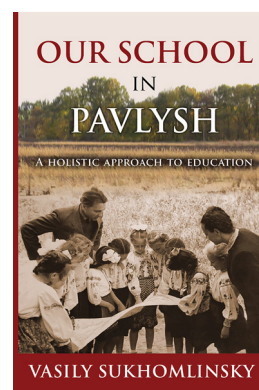


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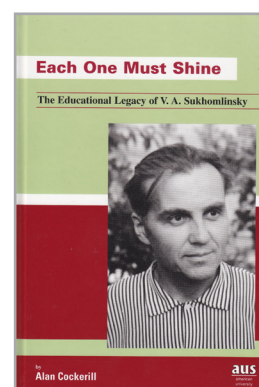
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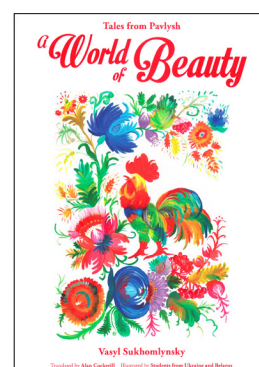
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made a speech:

'It is true that we ourselves are at fault. We did not bring up this hare properly. We should not punish him so severely. We should first sit him on the old tree stump and pull a hair out of his tail!'

So, they sat the offending hare on the old tree stump, pulled a hair out of his tail, and began to make speeches about his behaviour.

The naughty hare listened to their stern speeches with his head bowed, but his eyes kept wandering over to the vegetable garden. It looked like there were still a few cabbages left.

Why Petrik cried

Little Petrik's mother left him at home while she went to the shops. Petrik went over to the open window. On the windowsill stood a vase. A big, colourful butterfly landed on the rim of the vase.

Petrik wanted to catch the butterfly. He leant on the windowsill, reached over, and knocked the vase. The vase fell and smashed to pieces.

Petrik was very frightened. What would happen now? What would his mother say? The boy collected all the pieces of the vase, took them out to the vegetable garden, and buried them in the soil with his little spade. Then he sat by the window and waited for his mother to come home.

As soon as his mother came in through the door, Petrik ran over to her and said, 'Mum, it wasn't me who broke the vase. It wasn't me who took the pieces to the vegetable garden and buried them with my little spade.'

Petrik sensed alarm in his mother's eyes.

'Then who did break the vase?' asked his mother.

'The butterfly...,' said Petrik quietly.

His mother laughed. 'I can understand how a butterfly might break a vase,' she said, 'But how could it take the pieces to the vegetable garden and bury them?'

Petrik looked at his mother and burst into tears.

The doll in the rain

Zina was going to sleep, while outside a thunderstorm was raging. Dark clouds swept in from the Dnipro River and thunder rumbled. Rain beat like a drum on the iron roof.

There was a flash of lightning, and for a moment everything could be seen as clearly as during the day. Zina could see the rain pouring down, puddles of water in the yard, and—oh, what was that? Her doll Zoya was lying on a bench out in the rain.

She had forgotten Zoya and left her on the bench. How could that happen? Why didn't she remember Zoya as she was getting ready for bed? Why didn't she think of her when the thunderstorm began?

These thoughts made Zina very sad, and she began to cry. But the thing that really made her sad was that her Zoya was lying out there on a bench in the cold rain...

Zina got out of bed, quietly opened the door, and ran outside. The rain soaked her nightdress in an instant. The little girl ran to the bench, picked up Zoya, and hugged her to her chest.

When Zina opened the door into the house, her mother turned on the light and looked with fear at the empty bed. Then her mother saw her with her doll hugged to her chest, and she took a deep breath. She found a towel and wiped Zina dry, and helped her put on a dry nightdress. As she dried Zina, she said, 'You must dry Zoya as well... How could you leave her out on the bench?'

'It will never happen again, mummy,' said Zina.

Who will fetch some firewood?

On the edge of a village lived a widow with her three sons. Two of her sons were already young men—tall, strong and impressive to look at. The youngest son, Yurko, was still an adolescent, small and skinny as a rake. It was winter. The ground was deep in snow, a cold northerly wind was blowing, and frost was everywhere.

The mother quietly said, as if to herself, but so that her children could hear her, 'It's cold, but we have no firewood to light a fire. I wonder who could fetch some wood?'

The two older sons said nothing. They kept their heads down and looked at the floor.

'I'll go and get some wood, mum,' said the youngest son.

'You're not afraid of the frost?' asked his mother, looking at the two older boys.

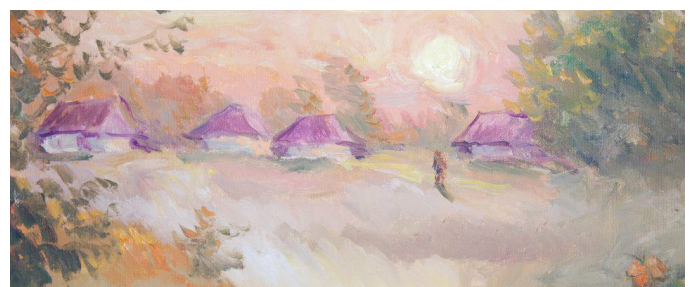
'No, I'm not afraid,' said Yurko, putting on his coat.

'All right, my boy, thank you,' said his mother with a sigh. And she kissed him goodbye.

Yurko left, and it became very quiet in the house. It was as if everyone was listening to see what would happen next. Even the wind outside fell silent.

The older brothers raised their heads, looked into their mother's eyes, and said, 'We'll go into the forest too, mum.'

'Thank you, my boys,' whispered the mother, and gave a sigh of relief.



Think correctly about work

The grade five students planted a host of young rowan trees. One day they would grow into a flourishing grove, but for the time being it was necessary to water them and take care of them. The rowan trees were allocated to students. Each student had four little trees to water. Mariika and Olya sat next to each other, and their rowan trees were next to each other as well. The girls arranged to come at the same time and water their trees together.

Mariika found watering the first little rowan tree was easy, the second a little more difficult, the third was difficult, and she barely had enough strength left to water the fourth. But then one day Olya fell ill, and the Pioneer leader asked Mariika, 'Could you water Olya's trees? You are good friends with her.'

Mariika gave a deep sigh, took her bucket, and walked to the rowan trees. She kept thinking that now she had to water eight trees. She would have to carry eight buckets of water from the well.

The girl set to work. She watered one tree, a second tree, a third tree... And then she noticed something strange. The work seemed easy. When she got to the sixth tree it became harder. The seventh tree was really difficult, and she barely had enough strength left to water the eighth tree.

'I get it,' thought Mariika, as she finished her work. 'Now I know how to make the work easier. I need to think that I have to water twelve trees. Then it will be quite easy to water eight trees.'

And that is what she did the next day. As she was preparing to do her watering, she kept thinking, 'I have to water twelve trees. I have to draw twelve buckets of water from the well and carry them to the rowan trees.'

While she was watering, she kept thinking the same thing: 'I have to water twelve trees.' She watered eight trees and did not feel any tiredness. Then Mariika remembered some words her teacher had said: 'The most difficult thing is to teach yourself to think correctly about work.'

You did not lose something, you found something

When a boy turned twelve years old, his father gave him a new spade and said, 'Go into the field, son, measure a plot 100 feet by 100 feet, and dig it up.'

The son went into the field, measured the plot of land, and began to dig. It was hard to dig at first, but gradually he got better at digging and got used to the spade.

The work went better and better as he got

towards the end of it, but when the son plunged his spade into the soil to turn the last sod, the spade broke. The son returned home feeling ill at ease. What would his father say about the broken spade?

'Forgive me father,' said the son, 'I have lost some of our property. The spade broke.'

'But did you learn to dig? Was it hard for you to dig at the end, or was it easy?'

'Yes, I learned to dig, and it was easier to dig at the end than at the beginning.'

'Then you did not lose something. You found something.'

'What did I find, father?'

'A thirst for work. That is most valuable discovery.'

Why didn't you look for my glasses yesterday?

Misha came home from school very happy. As soon as he walked in the door he shouted, 'Grandma! Grandma! Come quickly and look at my school diary. We've been given our marks and my marks are good!'

Misha's grandmother took the diary in her hands and wanted to look at Misha's marks, but she had mislaid her glasses, and without them she could not see properly. Misha began to look for the glasses. He looked on the shelf and crawled under the table. Then he crawled under his grandmother's bed, and there, against the wall, he found the glasses. His grandmother had dropped them there without noticing.

'Why didn't you look for my glasses when I asked you yesterday?' said Misha's grandmother reproachfully. Misha didn't know what to say.

Dad's presents

Misha, who was eight years old, was visited by his classmate Fedya. When Fedya arrived, he announced joyfully, 'My dad went into the city yesterday. He brought me presents: new skates and a torch.'

Misha listened to him in silence and looked out the window with wide open eyes. Fedya asked, 'Would you like me to bring the skates to show you?'

'No thanks,' answered Misha, and he burst into tears.

Fedya was surprised. When he came home, he asked his mother, 'Why did Misha cry when I told him about Dad's presents?'

'Because Misha's father has left his family. Your happiness reminded Misha how unfortunate he is. You mustn't tell an unhappy person about your happiness.'

Fedya thought hard about what his mother had told him.