

# Sukhomlynsky News



## Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

### The most important thing is to make yourself feel

Genya was studying in grade four. Whatever questions the teacher asked, Genya immediately gave a full and correct answer, and got full marks. Genya wrote better than everyone else, and solved problems faster.

But his classmates did not like Genya. He showed off his intelligence too much. He would answer the teacher's question and look around the class as if to say, 'I'm the cleverest.'

In spring the class was getting ready for a hike. The children were happy. What fun it would be to hike and spend the night in the forest!

They thought about what things to take, how to cook dinner, how to build a shelter for the night. They decided to take just one blanket and one bowl between two children. They quickly sorted themselves into pairs. But nobody wanted to share a blanket and bowl with Genya.

Genya started crying, went to the teacher and said, 'I've never said a rude word to anyone... Why don't they like me?'

The teacher answered, 'It's not easy to make yourself speak up. It's even harder to make yourself keep silent. And harder still to make yourself think. But the hardest of all, is to make yourself feel.'

'How do I make myself feel?' asked Genya.

'You need to see people with different eyes. You're pleased that you're cleverer than everyone else. But you should be sad that there is no-one cleverer than you. Because anyone who thinks he is better than everyone else ends up lonely.'

'Thanks for the lesson,' said Genya. 'So, should I go hiking with my classmates?'

'Yes, go. Take your own blanket and bowl and begin your new life. Open your eyes and learn to see people differently.'



## More stories of sensitivity and compassion

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

This month's newsletter contains a final selection of stories from the end of Sukhomlynsky's *An Ethics Anthology* and a number of stories from *I Will Tell You a Story: Philosophy for Children*. This 2016 publication Ukrainian language publication contains about 300 stories in addition to those that were contained in the 1990 Russian language publication *An Ethics Anthology*, and I will present translations of some of these 300 stories in the newsletter over the course of this year. I plan to publish all the stories in a book once editing is complete.

One of the stories that I have not previously published is 'Straw hats', which appears on page 3 of this newsletter. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. I think it could provide the text for an excellent picture book. I imagine a background story behind the explicit text in which both the boy and the old man have lost family members during World War II. It might be possible to suggest some of this background in a picture book.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

# Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

## The slingshot and the sparrow's nest

Eight-year-old Yurko came to school with a slingshot. There was still lots of time before lessons would start. He sat under a lilac bush and watched the sparrows happily chirping as they flew from branch to branch.

Suddenly all the sparrows rose into the air and flew off somewhere. Only one sparrow remained, still chirping quietly and tenderly. Then it began to clean its feathers with its beak. Yurko aimed and shot a stone at the sparrow. He hit it right in the head. Some blood splattered on a leaf and the sparrow's body fell like a stone at his feet.

Yurko was suddenly afraid. 'Did I really do that?' he thought. He felt somebody's hand on his shoulder. Yurko looked around and saw Afanasii Ivanovich, his teacher. Afanasii Ivanovich parted the branches, and the boy saw a sparrow's nest in the lilac bush. Five little chicks peeped out of the nest. Featherless and helpless, they cheeped pitifully as they stretched out their beaks.

'Now they have no mother,' said the teacher quietly. Yurko stood pale and silent.

'Well, you'd better go to your lesson,' said Afanasii Ivanovich with a sigh. 'And tomorrow we will come and see how the chicks are doing. No-one can help them now...'

That night, Yurko hardly slept. He kept seeing the chicks, pitifully stretching out their beaks, waiting for their mother to come.

The next day Afanasii Ivanovich came up to Yurko and asked, 'Well, will we go and see how the chicks are doing?'

Yurko burst into tears.

## Fearful Lenya

A boy named Lenya studies in grade three at our school. He is so shy and fearful that even his mother once told him, as he headed off for school, 'If you are so fearful, even the chickens will peck you.' Lenya had blushed when he heard those words. They reminded him of something that had happened during the winter. Lenya had been on his way to school, and a large rooster had been perched on his neighbour's gate. Lenya had walked around it, but the rooster had run after him, raising its head as if it wanted to jump on the boy. Lenya had run away from the rooster and the other children had seen it. Since then, they had teased him...

In the spring, a new girl came to our school and joined grade three. She had blue eyes and blonde hair and her name was Olya. They sat Olya next to Lenya. She asked him, 'Do you like to swim?'

Lenya answered something inaudible.

'Can you jump into the water?'

Lenya's face turned red, and he said nothing.

Summer arrived, and there were only a few days of school left. One day after lessons, Olya suggested, 'Why don't we all go swimming?'

The whole class went. Olya led us to the riverbank and said, 'Whoever is game can jump after me!'

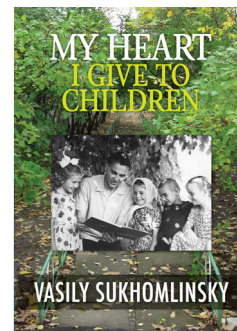
And she leapt from the riverbank, which was five metres high at that point. Olya swam back and lay on the sand. One after another the boys and girls began to jump. Lenya sat there, pale and silent, looking over at Olya.

Finally, Lenya made up his mind. He took a run up, closed his eyes,

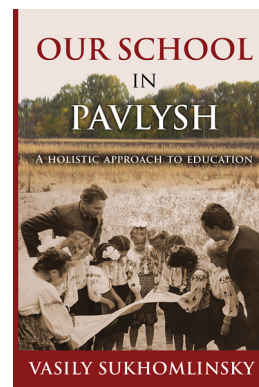


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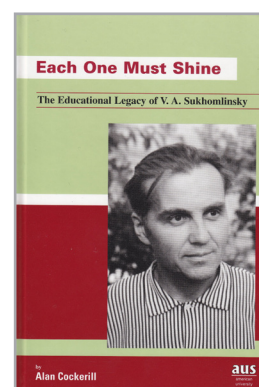
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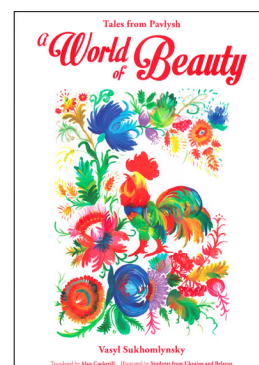
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and jumped. Then he swam back, and climbed out of the water, his eyes shining with joy. He asked Olya, 'Do you want to go swimming again tomorrow?'

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## Stories from *I Will Tell You a Story: Philosophy for Children*

Most of the stories in Sukhomlynsky's **An Ethics Anthology**, a 1990 Russian language publication, also appear in a more extensive 2016 Ukrainian language collection entitled **I Will Tell You a Story: Philosophy for children**. Both collections were compiled by Sukhomlynsky's daughter, Professor Olha Sukhomlynska. The 2016 publication also contains about 300 stories that were not included in **An Ethics Anthology**, and with this month's newsletter I will begin the publication of some of these 300 stories. It is hoped that the complete collection will be published later this year in a book.

Alan Cockerill

### Straw hats

A young boy came from the big city to a quiet little town on the banks of the Dnipro River\* for his summer holidays. He was met by a sailor who worked on a steam ship that cruised up and down the Dnipro, all the way to the Black Sea. The sailor took the boy to the home of an old wartime friend of his father's.

The boy settled into a small room with a window that looked out on the Dnipro. Every day, the boy would go to the beach to play and to swim. The beach was crowded with other holiday makers who enjoyed spending their summer vacation at that hospitable town with its white houses.

On the very first day, the boy noticed an old man sitting by the riverside. He was sitting on a rock, and three large straw hats were spread out beside him on the sand, though he himself, for some reason, was not wearing a hat. His face was lined with deep wrinkles, and he sat gazing at the waves of the Dnipro. The boy observed throughout the day that nobody bought any hats from the old man. All three straw hats lay on the beach untouched until evening.

The boy felt sorry for the old man. Every day the boy was given fifty kopecks\*\* to buy himself an ice-cream. One day, the boy approached the old man and asked him how much a hat cost.

'Twenty-five kopecks,' replied the man quietly, but he did not raise his head or look at the boy.

'I'll take two hats, please,' said the boy.

The old man gave the boy two hats and put the coins into his pocket. The boy expected that the old

man would be grateful and would thank him, but the old man did not even look at him. It seemed to the boy that the man was concentrating on something in the distance.

The next day, there were three new straw hats laid out by the rock. And again, nobody approached the old man to ask him about his hats. When it was time for the boy to have lunch, he took out his ice-cream money and bought two more hats from the old man. The old man did not raise his head this time either, but the boy could swear that he was listening attentively to his every word.

It continued like that every day: the boy would buy two hats from the old man and take them to his room looking out on the Dnipro. Now he observed that the man listened attentively not only to his words, but to the sound of his footsteps.

The last day of the summer holidays arrived. The boy's father was coming to collect him. The boy went to see the old man one last time and bought two more hats. He was about to leave, when the man lifted his hand and rested it on the boy's shoulder.

'Farewell, young man,' he said quietly. 'You are a good person.'

The boy felt his heart contract with compassion.

'How do you know that I am leaving?' was all he could whisper.

The old man raised his head, and the boy saw that he had no eyes.

They sat in silence for a long time.

'Do you make these hats yourself?' asked the boy.

'Yes, I make them myself... At night... If it wasn't for this work, I would have died by now.'

The boy sighed heavily and said, 'I'll come again next summer. Please don't die! All right?'

'All right, young man,' promised the old man softly, and his hands trembled. 'Now I'll have to make sure I don't die.'

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\* The Dnipro River is the longest river in Ukraine and the fourth-longest river in Europe. It flows from north to south right through the centre of the country, dividing Ukraine into two parts.

\*\* A kopeck, or 'kopiyyka' in Ukrainian, was a monetary unit used throughout the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, during the time that Sukhomlynsky was writing. It was roughly equivalent to one cent.



*The Dnipro River (see acknowledgement on page 4)*

## The rainbow in the icicle

During the day, snow started melting and water dripped from the roofs, but during the night it froze again.

Yurko came out and saw a huge frozen icicle hanging from the roof. The sun rose and the icicle sparkled in many different shades of blue, pink, red, turquoise, and yellow. Yurko stood there, holding his breath in awe. The icicle was so beautiful, like a rainbow!

On the roof, beside the icicle, sparrows were chirping. They were admiring the icicle too.

## The boy and the snowflake

A snowflake fell from the sky. It was fluffy, soft, light, crystal clear, and as beautiful as a star.

A boy was standing on the ground. He was watching the snowflake fall and was thinking to himself, 'It is going to fall under somebody's feet and will be trampled'... No, it must not fall to the ground! It must not be trampled underfoot!

The boy raised his hand. He wanted to caress the snowflake. But it fell onto his gentle, warm palm and melted. Almost crying, the boy gazed at his palm, and the drop of water sparkled like a teardrop.

## The green apple and the rosy apple

A young apple tree grew in a garden. Two flowers bloomed on it: one at the top of the tree and the other on the lowest branch, very close to the ground. Two little apples formed: one at the top of the tree and the other at the bottom. Both apples were tiny, green, and covered with a silky coating. A little boy ran by the tree. He looked at the apples and screwed up his face. 'You look sour,' he said.

The summer days were hot. The bottom apple was comfortable in the cool shade. The top apple was exposed to the heat of the sun. The bottom apple was happy, and told the top one, 'I'm glad I am down here. The sun does not burn me. How can you live so close to the sun?'

The top apple did not reply.

The summer came to an end. One day, early in the morning, the bottom apple looked up and saw that the top apple was golden and rosy. The bottom apple looked at itself. It was still green and covered with a silky coating, almost the same as it had been in springtime.

The bottom apple was stunned.

'Why are you so rosy?' it asked the top apple. 'And why am I so green?'

'I spent all day in the sun and was not afraid of its rays, but you hid in the shade,' replied the rosy apple.

## The waterlily and the fish

In a pond lived a little fish. He noticed that as soon as the sun set, a white waterlily descended and hid underwater, and that early in the morning it rose up and showed off its beauty all day.

The fish wondered why the lily behaved that way, so he asked it, 'Why do you hide underwater at night, and then come out of the water during the day?'

The lily answered, 'I want people to admire me. They look at me in the daytime and say, "What a beautiful flower the lily is!" But who will see me at night? At night, everything is black.'

## Sunset

The sun descends below the horizon. Where does it go? What does it do during the night? The blazing orb touches the horizon and disappears, but the sky is still aflame. Why? Because the sun has a garden where it rests during the night. There is a large lake in this garden, but instead of water, the lake is full of molten gold, because the sun itself is made of molten gold. The sun lies down to rest in this blazing lake, spreading its mighty shoulders and stirring up the molten gold. Flecks of fire are sent flying, pouring down like golden rain. The blue sky turns crimson, and this crimson evening sky lasts until the sun settles down.

## A 'grandma's summer'

A 'grandma's summer' is what we call those warm autumn days when the sun still shines gently and silver gossamer threads float in the air. An old grandmother sits on a bench, warming herself in the sun. Her shoulders are covered with a warm shawl. She gazes at a field and her eyes are sad because there is nothing left there. The field is empty and quiet. But then the old grandmother smiles, because she sees a tiny chamomile flower by the road.



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