

Sukhomlynsky News



From *I will tell you a story...*

The following reflection appears at the beginning of a section of the book entitled 'The child in the world and the world in the child'. The stories in this section often relate to the psychology of young children and the way they perceive the world.

On adulthood

Learn to think about your own growth to adulthood ...

Is it necessary to talk to a child about this? Many years of experience have convinced me that a common weakness of upbringing in schools, and especially in families, is the treatment of a child as an eternal infant. Forgetting the reality that today's child is tomorrow's adult often leads to unpleasant surprises. The education of maturity is an important issue in values education, in which the intellectual, moral and creative development of a human being intersect. I have in mind the exceptional importance of the early years for the education of creative abilities, so that a divine spark can be discovered in everyone. This is not just a question of psychology. An individual's personal happiness, and consequently the happiness of the community as a whole, ultimately depends on what abilities are developed in each individual, what facets of their personality are developed and continue to shine throughout their life. It is impossible to imagine a harmonious society if children transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood without ever experiencing success or discovering aptitude for anything. And issues often begin in early childhood when children are preparing to go to school and are studying in the early grades. The issue of nurturing and developing children's abilities is a broad ethical issue. I have been convinced by many years of experience that the foundations of our abilities are laid in childhood. It is important to teach young people to think about their path to adulthood, if they are to develop maturity of thought and maturity of spirit.



The child in the world and the world in the child

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

*This month's newsletter contains more stories from **I will tell you a story...***

***Philosophy for Children**, mostly from a section of the book entitled 'The child in the world and the world in the child'. Stories in this section present insights into child psychology and the path from childhood to adulthood. Once again, I am including one of Sukhomlynsky's reflections that accompany this section of the book.*

The remainder of the newsletter contains fifteen little stories or vignettes from the section 'The child in the world and the world in the child'.

I hope you enjoy them.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



Stories from *I will tell you a story...*

How the sun sets

A teacher and a little boy liked to watch the sunset. Every night they would go to the edge of the village. From the top of an ancient burial mound, they would watch the sun disappear below the horizon.

For three days in a row—the day before yesterday, yesterday and today—the boy had observed the same thing: a fluffy little cloud floating in the blue sky above the fiery disk of the sun.

'Teacher,' the boy asked, 'Is that little cloud the same one we saw yesterday and the day before yesterday?'

'No, it's not the same one,' replied his teacher. 'Yesterday it was not the same one as the day before, and today it is not the same one as yesterday.'

The little boy became thoughtful. The fiery disk of the sun sank below the horizon. First it was reduced to a narrow band of crimson, then just a little spark and finally even the spark disappeared.

'Teacher,' the little boy asked, 'Where did yesterday go, and the day before yesterday?'

The teacher gave the boy a hug and gently stroked his head.

A handful of wheat

An old farmer named Grandpa Karpo brought a sack of wheat to the mill. Soon his turn came. He carried his sack over to the basket used to feed grain into the millstone, opened his sack, and began to pour the heavy grains from one hand to another. Joy shone in his eyes. Then, with a heavy sigh, he fed the grain into the millstone. He felt as if he were parting with a dear friend.

When there was only a little wheat left in the basket, Grandpa Karpo took a handful of grain and put it into his pocket.

At home he dug a seedbed, took the grain from his pocket, and planted the wheat. 'You can live happily here,' he said.

The chick

A hen settled on an egg. She sat there for a long, long time. The egg grew so warm that a chick developed in it. At first, he slept. Then he woke up and saw that everything around him was yellow. The chick thought that the whole world must be yellow. The chick became cramped in his yellow world, so he started pecking at the yellow wall. He pecked for a long time and managed to make a hole in the eggshell. Through this hole, the chick could see a whole new world, with a pale blue sky, green trees, and a dark blue river. The chick was delighted that the world was so beautiful. He spread his wings, broke open his yellow home, and burst out, cheeping, 'Cheep, cheep, cheep.' That was him saying, 'What a wonderful world of blue and green!'

The storks have arrived

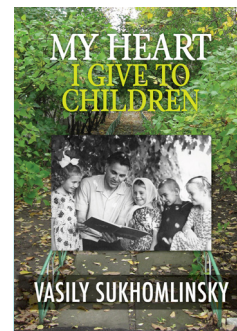
'The storks have arrived,' says my mother. 'They bring a key from the sun. With that key, they open huge golden gates, and the sun rises higher and higher in the sky. The sun wakes mighty thunder from its slumber in the gullies. Mighty thunder wakes up and rumbles in the clouds, casting flashes of lightning here and there. That is what the storks bring in the spring. They live in pairs and build nests on the roofs of homes and barns.'

'Wherever there are storks, there is happiness,' says my grandmother,

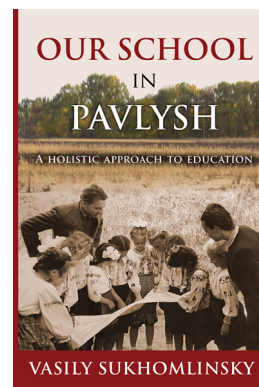
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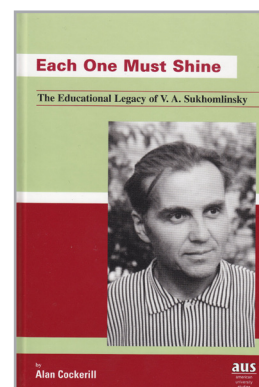
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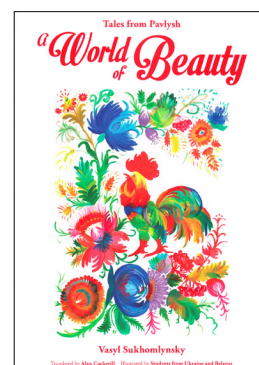
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'Because they are birds of the sun. They greet the sun early in the morning and bid it good night in the evening. At dawn, the storks take off from their nests and fly high in the sky. They screech and croak, joyfully welcoming the sun. In the evening, they stand in their nests and gaze westwards.'

'That is them wondering how many days more the sun will keep rising higher in the sky,' says my mother, 'And when its path will begin to get lower. In the autumn, the storks will fly away. Then they will circle above their nests for a long time, saying goodbye to their home, to Ukraine. They always promise to return in the spring.'

Where did that little boy go?

Once little Petryk and his grandfather went to the pond to fish. They sat on the bank and cast their fishing lines. Petryk's grandfather told him, 'When I was a little boy, like you, the pond was very, very deep here. There were carp as big as this ...'

'Grandpa, were you really a little boy?'; little Petryk asked incredulously.

'Yes, I was. I swam here, fished here.'

'Where did that little boy go?' wondered little Petryk.

The stillness of the evening

We are in the school yard. The sun has set. A starling flies out from his nesting box, flits off somewhere, and returns almost immediately. His chicks are quiet. Doves are sitting on the roof of their dovecote. One dove starts cooing and then falls silent. A little bee is running late. She hurries home from a long day foraging for honey for her little ones. A sparrow under the eaves, half-asleep, breaks the silence with a short cheep.

Everything is still. Stars twinkle in the sky. We walk from the village to a field, so we can listen to the evening music of the steppe. The field is still. The quiet song of a quail breaks the silence. The little bird bids good night to the sun. Or perhaps it wants to hasten the sunrise?

Far away, a girl's voice sings, '*The wind is blowing in the field*,' and this makes the field seem even more still and quiet. It seems that everything is listening to her pensive song: the wheat, the forest, the lofty ancient burial mound in the steppe, and the village.

The old man and the swallow

Every morning, when a baby boy woke in his cradle, he could see a swallow's nest just above his window. The swallow was always busy taking care of her chicks, flying back and forth, bringing food to her little ones and cheeping tenderly.

The first word the boy spoke was 'mamma', and the second word was 'swallow'. The boy stood up

on his two feet, learnt to walk, and then to run. The years passed by. Every autumn, the swallow would fly south for the winter, and then return in the spring.

The boy went to the city to study. His busy life meant that he did not visit his home village for many years. He married, had children, and then grandchildren. His grandchildren had their own children. The boy became an old, old man ...

One day, this old, old man felt a sudden desire to go and visit his home village. Why he felt this sudden impulse, he could not say. As he travelled to his village, he told himself, 'There is probably no trace of that swallow's nest ...'

He arrived in the village, entered his front yard, and could not believe his eyes: in the very same place, above the very same window, was the same nest. And busily going about her business was the same swallow, with a grey stripe on her wing.

The old, old man was deeply moved. His hands began to tremble, and tears glistened in his eyes.

At least I saw the dear sun again!

It was wintertime. The sun was shining, but it was frosty and bitterly cold. A boy came to the greenhouse, where chrysanthemums were in bloom: white, blue, pink, azure and violet. The boy took a sky-blue chrysanthemum and hid it in his pocket. He was burning with shame for what he was doing, but he so much wanted to bring a sky-blue flower to his mother.

The boy walked home. On the way, the flower began to suffocate, and begged the boy, 'Please take me out of your pocket. I cannot breathe!'

The boy was surprised. 'But it is freezing outside,' he said. 'You will die!'

'Take me out anyway,' the flower replied.

The boy took the flower from his pocket. But the flower was not done. 'Put me on the ground, please,' it asked.

The boy lay the flower on the snow. It stretched out, straightened its petals, sighed, and whispered, with a faint smile, 'At least I saw the dear sun again!'

How a butterfly sheltered from the rain

Dark clouds covered the sky, blocking the sun. Thunder rumbled and it began to rain. When the first drops of rain began to fall, a little butterfly was flying among the trees. One of the raindrops fell right on him. 'Oh, no!' thought the butterfly, 'What should I do? Where can I shelter from the rain?' And he flew to a beetroot and hid under its broad leaf. The rain poured down, but the butterfly was no longer afraid, because he was safe and dry under the leaf. He even dozed off. When he woke, it was already dark, and the rain had stopped.

Autumn in the melon plantation

Early in the morning, my dad and I go to the melon plantation. Our horses amble slowly, as if they too are listening to the morning stillness. The east turns red, and a nightingale trills in the meadow. We pass a tall, spreading poplar. Some bird that lives in it has woken up, perhaps disturbed by the sound of our cart. She is sitting on a branch and cleaning her beak.

In the melon plantation, everything is drenched in a heavy dew: vines, watermelons and rockmelons. Bathed in dew, the watermelons look like silver balls.

Near the hut, Grandpa Panas sits hunched over. He is gazing to the east, waiting for the sun to rise. I notice something near a huge watermelon. What is it? It is a hare! He is sitting and drinking dew from the vine. I do not want to disturb him. He looks over at me and waves his paw, and it seems to me that he is smiling. What a happy morning it is!

The boy and the chickadee

A boy set up a bird feeder in his garden. A little chickadee flew over to him. She was not afraid of the boy. She bravely took food from his hands, so the boy asked her, 'Would you like to be my chickadee?'

'All right,' replied the chickadee. 'I'll be yours, and you can protect me.'

One day, the boy fell ill. He asked his mother to open the window a little. His mother opened it, and the chickadee flew in and sat on the table near the boy's bed.

'Please get well soon!' she said. 'The frosts and blizzards are coming, and who else will protect me?'

The moon in the trough

My mother poured some water into our trough. The sun sank below the horizon, and the moon rose. When it climbed high in the sky, I could see the moon in the water, looking just the same as in the sky, round and white. I wanted to take a closer look at something that looked like a small cloud on the moon's surface. I leaned over the trough, but the moon was far, far away. I thought that when morning came, I would be able to see what was on the moon's surface more clearly.

But in the morning, there was no moon in the sky or in the trough.

The playful sunbeam

Little Tymko wakes up very early in summer. He has so much work to do, feeding the pigeons, watering

the flowers, reading his book, and drawing a picture to illustrate a fairytale. When he wakes up, he watches a playful, pink sunbeam creep towards his bed. As soon as it touches his pillow, Tymko quickly gets up and does his exercises.

But today Tymko does not feel like getting up. He could not say why it is he feels that way. The sunbeam touches his pillow and jumps right up onto it. 'What will happen next?' wonders Tymko, and he just keeps lying there in bed.

But then the sunbeam creeps all the way across his pillow and touches Tymko's face. It burns him, like a hot coal. Tymko feels ashamed that the sunbeam has caught him napping. He jumps out of bed and does his exercises.

Many years pass, and Tymko becomes an adult, with children of his own. But he never forgets the shame he felt when that burning sunbeam caught him napping.

Because it is night

Yulia asks her mother for a large sheet of paper.

'What do you need paper for?' asks her mother.

'I want to draw everything that lives in my room,' she replies.

Yulia's mother gives her a large sheet of paper, and the little girl sits down to draw.

Half an hour later, she shows her picture to her mother. The paper is not white anymore, but black all over.

'Look what I have drawn, Mum,' Yulia exclaims joyfully. 'Here is my bed, and this is me, sleeping in the bed. Here on the carpet under my bed is a horse with a fiery mane. My dolly Melanka is right beside me. The fish in the aquarium is sleeping, and so is the cat, and there is a blizzard outside.'

'But why can't I see any of those things?', asks her mother. 'Where is the bed? Where is the horse with the fiery mane? Where are the doll and the cat?'

'You can't see them because it's night,' Yulia answers, and thinks to herself, 'Why doesn't Mum understand?'

Two butterflies

Two butterflies flutter over a green meadow. One butterfly is white, the other is red. They meet, land on a green leaf, and start boasting to each other.

'My wings are more beautiful than yours,' says the white butterfly. 'I am like a white cloud.'

'No,' objects the red butterfly. 'My wings are more beautiful. I am like the sun.'

The sun sets, and it gets dark. Now both butterflies are grey.