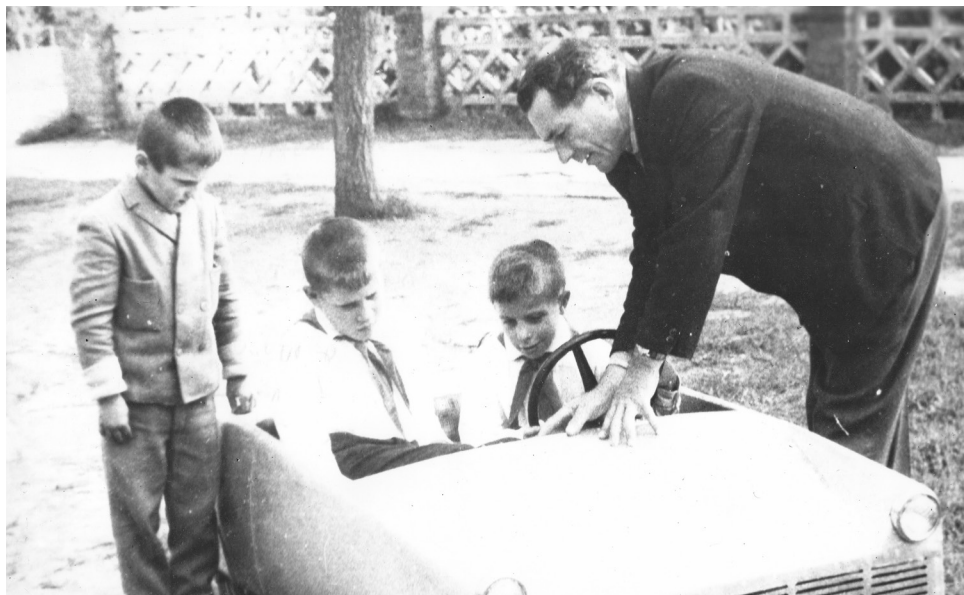


Sukhomlinsky News

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Intellectual education

Dear readers,

This month I have translated material from the fifth chapter of 'Pavlysh Secondary School'. This chapter is about 'intellectual education', which could be rephrased as 'education of the intellect'.

What is noteworthy about Sukhomlinsky's approach is that education of the intellect is seen as part of the education of character more broadly. Sukhomlinsky considered that the acquisition of knowledge should contribute to the formation of an active 'philosophy of life' or 'world view'. (Most of the time I have translated the Russian word 'mirovoznrenie' as 'philosophy of life', though I have also translated it as 'world view'.)

I was interested in Sukhomlinsky's reference to the work of Albert Petrovich Pinkevich, an eminent educator who contributed a lot to the formation of the Soviet education system, but who was arrested and shot during the Stalin terror of 1937.

I have also translated three stories from Sukhomlinsky's Ethics Anthology.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



Intellectual education

In this issue we have translated extracts from the fifth chapter of *Pavlysh Secondary School*, on intellectual education.

The essence of intellectual education and its goals

Intellectual education ... includes the acquisition of knowledge and formation of a scientific world view, the development of cognitive and creative abilities, the development of a culture of intellectual work, and the education of an interest in and urge for intellectual activity, for constant enrichment of our scientific knowledge and for applying it in practice.

Intellectual education takes place during the process of acquiring scientific knowledge, but is not to be identified with the mere accumulation of a certain volume of knowledge. The process of acquiring knowledge and enhancing its quality will only become a factor in intellectual education when knowledge is transformed into personal convictions, into a spiritual wealth that is reflected in philosophical life goals, in work, social activity and interests. The formation of a philosophy of life is at the heart of intellectual education.

'The actual spiritual wealth of an individual is entirely dependent on the wealth of their actual relationships', wrote Marx and Engels. Intellectual education means the constant enrichment of students with all the spiritual wealth of society. Such enrichment harmoniously combines the process of study in school and the life of society.

Marx wrote that people's minds are always connected by invisible threads to the body of the nation. The mind of a developing person imbibes the ideology and psyche of the nation, its convictions, traditions, its intellectual, moral and aesthetic culture.

[Continued on the following page]

Intellectual education (continued)

Instruction is a very important form of intellectual education. The success of intellectual education during the process of instruction is determined by such factors as the richness of the whole spiritual life of the school; the spiritual wealth of the teacher, the breadth of their vision, their erudition and culture; the content of the curriculum; the methods of instruction; and the organisation of students' intellectual work in class and at home.

During the process of instruction, the main aim of intellectual education is intellectual development. 'We should strive for the education of flexible, living thought, thought that reflects the movement of nature itself', wrote A. P. Pinkevich. Just as a person cannot read without knowledge of the alphabet, intellectual education is impossible without intellectual development, without flexible, living thought.

How do we practically carry out intellectual education? We must never forget about the wealth of actual relationships about which Marx wrote. A person receives an intellectual education only when they are surrounded by an atmosphere of diverse intellectual interests and inclinations, when their intercourse with the people around them is characterised by investigative thought and enquiry. A concern for the intellectual richness of school life as a whole is the decisive precondition for a genuine intellectual education.

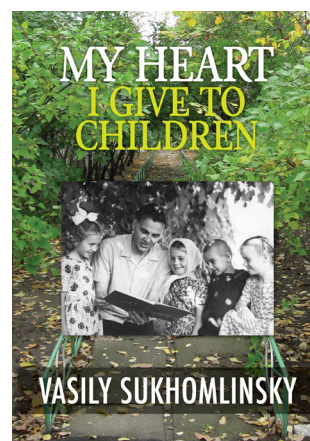
Every teacher needs to be a skilful, thoughtful educator of students' minds. Intellectual education takes place during the process of instruction only when the accumulation of knowledge—an increase in the volume of knowledge—is seen by the teacher not as the ultimate aim of the process of instruction, but only as one of the means

of developing cognitive and creative powers, of developing flexible, investigative thought. In the lessons of such a teacher the knowledge acquired by the pupils is used as an instrument with the help of which a pupil consciously takes new steps in discovering the world around them. The transfer of acquired methods of cognition to new objects then becomes a regular feature of the pupils' thinking activity: they continue in future to independently investigate the cause and effect relationships of new phenomena, processes and events. In this connection important elements in intellectual education become, for subjects in the natural science cycle—productive work, research and experimentation, and for humanities subjects—the independent study of life phenomena and literary sources, and attempts at creative writing.

Intellectual education is necessary for a person not only so they can apply knowledge in their work, but for the fullness of their spiritual life, so that they can appreciate the riches of culture and of art. We need to give people the happiness of appreciating things of cultural and aesthetic value. We should not view the curriculum only from the point of view of practical application of knowledge in work. In recent years some articles have expressed the view that school instruction and education has become too 'intellectual'. Some have even been reluctant to use the expression 'intellectual education'. This is, figuratively speaking, just foam on the wave of our ill-considered 'restructuring' that has unfortunately taken over national education as well. Intellectual education has always been and will always be one of the most important links in the education process.

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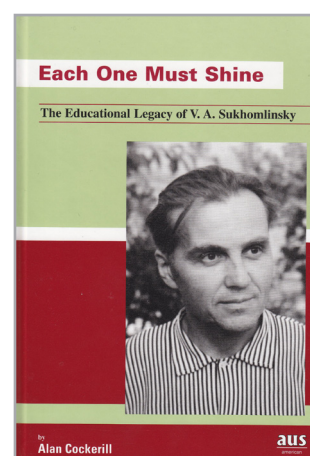
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Intellectual education and a philosophy of life

A philosophy of life is not just a system of views of the world that predominates in a given society, or the ideology of a given class, but also a subjective frame of mind that is manifested in thoughts, feelings, will and activity. A philosophy of life combines consciousness, views, convictions and activity....

... In our system of intellectual education there are work assignments whose principal aim is the formation of a philosophy of life. For example, when working on an experimental plot a pupil may demonstrate that soil is a particular medium for the activity of microorganisms. The demonstration of this truth is only the first step towards autonomous activity leading to the formation of a philosophy of life. The next step is the creation of a soil which will yield a rich harvest. It is in this work that there unfolds that wealth of actual relationships of which Marx wrote. The formation of a philosophy of life, of a personal attitude towards the phenomena of the surrounding world, touches all areas of a student's spiritual life: their thought, feelings, will and activity. During the early childhood years, the knowledge acquired is closely associated with subjective experience. This association, this unity of thought and subjective experience, is to a significant extent retained during the middle school and even the senior school years.

It is very important for the formation of a philosophy of life that thought processes are reflected in a student's practical activity. Experienced teachers do not assign a particular idea associated with a scientific philosophy of life to any particular section or sections of the curriculum. They strive to ensure that the idea is expressed many

times in the personal activities of the students. A materialist world view will only become a child's personal view when their thought is enlivened by emotion, when it is accompanied by a feeling of wonder, the joy of discovery. A personal attitude to a scientific world view, to materialism, is only possible when a child has a personal attitude towards work that expresses and reveals the essence of such a world view.

We give great significance to the investigative nature of intellectual work. As they observe, think, study and compare, children discover the truth, or see that in order to discover the truth they need to undertake new observations, reading and experimentation. For example, before studying the structure of the seeds of grains and legumes, our students germinate seeds, paying attention to the peculiarities of each variety, making initial observations of their common and specific characteristics. Before studying the internal combustion engine, each student disassembles and reassembles a miniature aviation compression engine and starts it, observing the dependence of its operation on its construction. The students have many questions. This search for answers in itself stimulates positive emotions that provide a psychological foundation for a child's personal attitude towards the truth.

The investigative nature of intellectual work is important not only when students are dealing with observable aspects of subjects and phenomena. When engaged in the process of thought students apply all the generalisations (conclusions, laws, formula etc.) they have learnt about objects and phenomena. For example, the scientific concept of power is explained at a physics lesson. The teacher asks the students to think about the features of work

carried out by machines and by animals. The object of thought is not only what can be immediately observed, but also a generalised conclusion about the capacity to carry out a greater or lesser amount of work during a unit of time. This conclusion is formed in the students' consciousness as a result of living experience. On the basis of this conclusion, they investigate phenomena that they have not observed directly.

Any experiment, any laboratory or practical work, has the aim not only of revealing a cause and effect relationship, a link, but also of prompting students to exercise their minds and wills, as they attempt to take at least a small step on the path of harnessing natural forces. To grow a tree when thousands of the same tree are already growing in your locality is just to see the world as it already is. But to grow grapes in the north, or to cultivate two crops of wheat, means not only to understand nature, but to harness its forces in new ways. In conducting such experiments people understand reality more deeply, but they also come to know themselves, and gain the conviction that they are not mere toys at the mercy of the blind forces of nature. Experimentation and work, during which an idea becomes a personal conviction: this is the very essence of a student's wealth of actual relationships. Every student during their years at our school carries out several work assignments in which they harness the forces of nature (for example, growing two grain crops, accelerating the maturation of the plants with special fertilisers; developing a frost tolerant variety of wheat through plant selection; transforming several dozen square metres of barren soil into a fertile medium; increasing the percentage of sugar in sugar beet etc.).

Stories

Ivan's house is burning

Peter and Stepan were working in the field. Suddenly they noticed that there was a fire in the village. It seemed to them that the fire was burning where they lived.

'That is probably our houses burning,' said Peter. 'Let's go home straight away,' said Stepan, and harnessed their horses to their cart.

Peter and Stepan drove their horses as hard as they could.

'Whose house is burning?'

'Ivan's house is burning.'

Peter sighed with relief, stopped the horses and said, 'We don't need to go any further. Shall we turn the horses around and return to the field?'

'Why should we turn back?' asked Stepan in surprise.

'It's not our houses burning,' reasoned Peter. 'Why should we give up our time. We've got work to do in the field.'

Stepan looked at Peter in disbelief.

'Were you really only rushing to save your own house?'

Peter was silent. Stepan left him with the horses and ran to help put out the fire. Peter sat in the cart and did not know what to do, to follow Stepan or to ride to the field.

Just think about it. Can anyone be considered a good person if they only run to put out a fire when it is their own house that is burning?

Because I am a human being

It was getting dark. Two travellers were walking along the road: a father and his seven-year-old son. In the middle of the road lay a stone. The father did not notice the stone and tripped, hurting his foot. He was in pain. Groaning, he walked around the stone, taking his son's hand, and kept going.

The next day the father and son came back along the same road. The father again did not notice the stone, and again tripped and hurt his foot.

On the third day father and son took the same road again. When they were still some way from the stone, the father said to his son, 'Be careful, son. We must walk around the stone.'

They reached the spot where the father had tripped and hurt his foot. The father and son slowed down, but the stone was no longer there. By the side of the road sat a grey-haired old man. 'Grandpa,' said the boy, 'You didn't see a stone here?'

'I moved it off the road.'

'Did you also trip and hurt your foot?'

'No, I didn't trip and hurt my foot.'

'Then why did you move the stone?'

'Because I'm a human being.'

The boy stopped in thought.

'Dad,' he asked, 'Aren't you a human being?'

Today I became a Pioneer*

A mother was expecting her son to come home from school happy and excited. Today was a special day for him. Little Peter had become a Pioneer.*

Peter arrived home from school. He was wearing a red scarf. But in his eyes she saw not joy, but sadness and concern.

'Why are you sad, Peter?' asked his mother. 'What is bothering you?'

Peter told her: 'I've just seen something I'm scared to even talk about, mum. I was coming home, and I saw a truck pull into Uncle Nikita's place. Dad was driving, and the truck was full of maize... He's unloading it now... He was meant to take it from the depot to the railway station. Why did he take it to Uncle Nikita?'

The mother listened with bated breath. When Peter had finished telling her about it, she asked: 'You haven't told anyone about this?'

'No-one... What should I do, mum?'

His mother was silent.

'Tell me!' said Peter, agitated. 'I've just become a Pioneer, and Pioneers are meant to be honest and truthful!'

'You have to be quiet about it, son,' said the mother quietly. 'If people find out, they'll put dad in jail!'

'I can't be quiet about it!' said Peter and burst into tears. 'I'll go to dad and tell him...'

'Yes, go to dad and tell him,' advised his mother. 'Tell him to take the maize to the railway station. If he doesn't take it, he'll have to go to court!'

Peter, very upset, ran to Uncle Nikita's place. His father was just throwing the last cobs off the truck.

'Dad,' said Peter, 'Take the maize to the station. This is stealing. Dad, take it! Do you think mum and I will be happy if they put you in jail?'

The father looked silently at his son. He looked at him as if he had never seen him before.

He did not say a word, but he stopped throwing the cobs off the truck. He started throwing them from the ground back into the truck. Peter helped him.

When there was not a single cob left on the ground, the father drove to the railway station. Peter walked home.

[* A Pioneer was a bit like a Boy Scout. - translator]