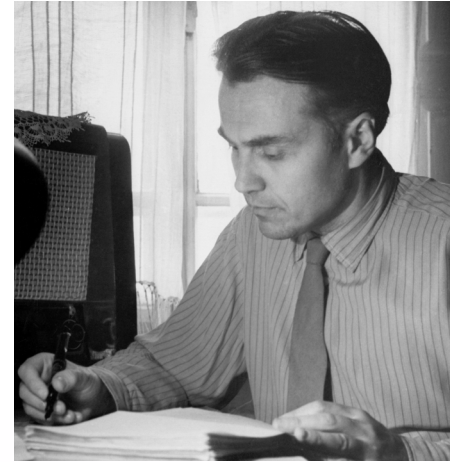


Sukhomlinsky News



Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

The apple and the dawn

Little Mishko often went to the orchard to visit his Grandpa Kornei. His grandfather treated him to delicious apples, pears and honey. But Mishko could not take his eyes off one enormous, white apple that glistened at the very top of a tall apple tree.

'Grandpa, can you please let me climb up that apple tree and pick that apple?'

'No,' answered his grandfather, 'That apple is for someone who comes to the orchard at dawn and does an hour's work, bringing water for the bees and pruning dead branches.'

Mishko made plans to come to the orchard at dawn so many times, but he could not overcome his laziness.

Finally, Mishko made a big effort, opened his eyes when it was still dark, threw off his pillow and ran off to his grandfather's orchard. Mishko brought water for the bees and pruned the dead branches.

The morning star appeared in the sky. Mishko went over to the tree with the precious apple, and the sight took his breath away. Now the enormous apple at the top of the tree was not white, but pink, the colour of the dawn sky.

'What are you waiting for? Now the apple is yours. Climb up and pick it,' said Mishko's grandfather.

'No grandpa... I would rather wait till tomorrow.'

'Why?'

'I want to see the dawn again.'

Valuing work

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

This month's stories from Sukhomlinsky's Ethics Anthology are from a section entitled 'Harmony in work, happiness and duty'.

The stories are aimed at instilling a sense of respect for work and a distaste for laziness.

Some of the stories also offer hints about how adults can instil a love of work in children.

I hope you find the stories meaningful.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



Stories from *An Ethics Anthology* (cont.)

The starling has returned

It was a quiet spring morning. The sun had not yet risen, but the sky in the east was turning pink. On the bare branch of a maple tree a starling began to sing loudly. He had just returned from a distant, warmer land. He had found his nesting box, perched next to it, and was joyfully announcing, 'I have returned! Spring has arrived!'

In his warm nest, a sparrow heard the starling singing. He was sleeping comfortably and did not want to get up early, but when he heard the starling, he became alarmed. He woke up his sparrow wife and said, 'The starling has returned! From now on we will have to get up earlier. Otherwise, it will be hard to find food. The starling always manages to get there first...'

His sparrow wife sighed and answered, 'Thank goodness the starling is back. He will wake you up, you lazybones.'

Necessity is the mother of learning

Little Alyonka is in grade one. Today she got up early, before sunrise. Her grandmother got up early too, to help her get ready for school. Alyonka's mother is not at home. She is working a night shift and has not yet returned from work.

Alyonka is in a hurry to get ready for school. Suddenly a hook comes off her skirt and it drops to the floor.

'Oh, Grandma, can you sew this hook on for me?' asks Alyonka. Her grandmother reaches for her glasses on the table, but accidentally knocks them, and they fall and break. Alyonka's grandmother picks up the broken glasses from the floor and shakes her head. 'I can't sew without my glasses,' she says. 'I cannot see properly...'

Alyonka cries. She remembers how her grandmother told her, 'You should learn to sew, Alyonka!' Alyonka had not wanted to learn. Now she says, 'Grandma, can you teach me how to sew?'

'Sit down, and I will teach you,' says her grandmother. 'Here is the needle, and here is the thread.' While Alyonka is threading the needle, her grandmother sits quietly. When Alyonka manages to thread it, her grandmother says, 'Necessity is the mother of learning...'

Black hands

Yura's grandmother is kneading some dough. The dough is white, light and fluffy.

'Can you please bake me a dove?' asks Yura.

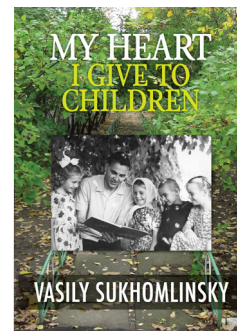
His grandmother's hands begin to mould a dove. The wings appear, fine and soft, and each feather is visible. But his grandmother's hands are black and wrinkled, with fine, dried out fingers. Yura cannot take his eyes off his grandmother's hands, as if seeing them for the first time.

Yura's grandmother takes the dove out of the oven and sets it down in front of her grandson. It seems a shame to eat it. It is white and fluffy and looks like it will fly off at any moment.

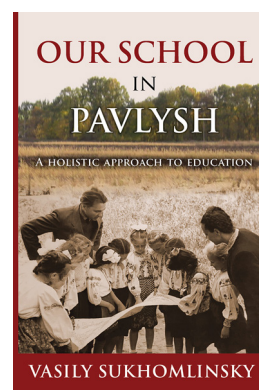
'Grandma,' asks Yura, 'Why is it that your hands are so black, but the dove is so white?'

'If I had white hands, there would be no dough and no dove,' said his grandmother quietly.

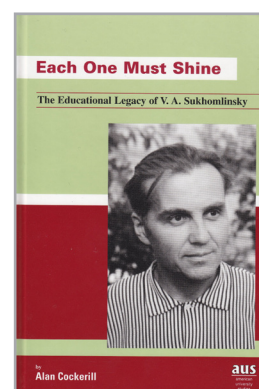
Yura gazed at the dove. Then he said, 'Can you give me the spade, grandma?'



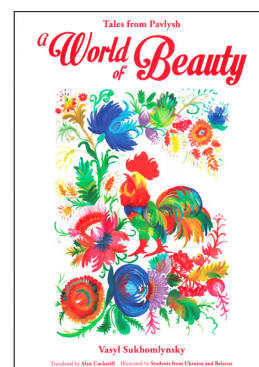
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'Whatever for?' asks his grandmother.
'I want to go into the garden and dig the soil.'
'Why do you need to dig it now?'
'So that my hands will be black.'
'All right, Yura. Here is the spade.'

Why does Stepan's mother praise Nikolai?

A mother had a son named Stepan. He graduated from school and became a tractor driver. His mother thought Stepan would help her in her old age, but he worked poorly in the tractor brigade. He did not want to get up early and he arrived late for work. People said that Stepan was a lazybones.

Another mother lived next door with a son named Nikolai. He was also a tractor driver, and everyone was full of praise for him. He was hard working and conscientious.

As soon as Stepan came home from work each day, his mother would give him his dinner and say, 'That Nikolai is a hard worker... He gets up before sunrise and hurries to the field...'

Stepan would sit by the table with his head bowed.

The next day his mother would say, 'Everyone says Nikolai is doing a good job. They say he ploughs the ground and sows seed better than anyone...'

Stepan would just sit there silently with his head bowed.

Every day Stepan's mother would say something good about Nikolai...

Why does Stepan's mother praise Nikolai?

What is Nina meant to do?

Nina's mother went to work in the fields very early, when seven-year-old Nina was still asleep. The mother needed to tell her daughter what work to do that day, but she did not want to wake her. So, she decided to show the little girl what to do from morning to evening. When Nina woke up, she understood perfectly.

Next to her bed she saw a pan of water and a rag. That meant, 'Wash the floors.' On a stool she saw a handful of grain and a stick. That meant, 'Feed the hens, and in the evening drive the brood-hen into the barn.' She saw a tomato stalk and a weed pulled out by the roots. That meant 'Weed the tomatoes.'

Nina really enjoyed her work that day.

It's a good thing the sun is shining

Yurko studied in grade two. On Sunday he woke early, and joyfully told his mother, 'Mum, today we are going to the forest!'

'It's raining,' answered his mother. 'It's pouring cats and dogs. You won't be going to the forest today.'

Yurko looked out the window. There were puddles

in the yard and grey clouds covered the sky. Yurko sat by the window and cried...

On Monday Yurko woke up early again. He opened the window and sunlight flooded the room. Yurko sat by the window and cried.

'Why are you crying today?' asked his mother in surprise.

'Today we have to bring a spade to school. We are going to be digging the experimental plot.'

Yurko's mother looked at her son and sighed. Then she quietly said, 'It's a good thing the sun is shining... If it had been raining today, how would I have learnt that my son is a lazybones?'

Grandma and Petrik

One warm spring day, a grandmother took her grandson to the forest. As they prepared to leave, she gave Petrik a basket of food to eat and a flask of water. Petrik was a lazy boy, and he soon tired of carrying the basket. Then his grandmother carried the basket of food for him.

In the forest they sat down by a bush to rest. Soon a little bird came flying to a tree nearby. She was carrying a hair in her beak. Petrik got up very quietly, so as not to frighten the bird, and in the tree he discovered a large nest made of hair.

The bird flew away and soon returned with another hair in its beak. Petrik's eyes opened wide with astonishment.

'Grandma,' he whispered, 'Has she really brought hairs one at a time and built such a big nest?'

'Yes, one hair at a time,' said his grandmother. 'That's a very hard working little bird.'

Petrik became thoughtful. A minute later he said, 'Grandma, can I carry the basket of food again? And I'll carry your coat. OK?'

Why is the bread stale today?

Sergei is in grade one. His father is a baker. For ten years Sergei's father has been working in the village bakery. He gets up very early, before sunrise, and goes to work. At midday they bring fresh bread to the shop. They bring it to the school dining room as well.

Today Sergei's father is sick. For the first time in ten years, he does not go to work. Sergei's mother sits by his father's bed.

'Sergei, tell the students that the bread will be stale today,' whispers his father.

At midday the students go to the school dining room. On the table are pieces of stale bread. The children ask, 'Why is the bread stale today?'

Sergei says, 'My dad is sick. He is the baker... Today the bread will be stale, and maybe tomorrow as well.'

The children take the pieces of bread and try not to drop a single crumb on the floor.

Stories

The floor will be clean...but what about your soul?

Mariika in grade one came home from school and noticed that all the floors were sparkling clean.

'It's just like in our classroom after school,' said Mariika.

'What do you mean "after school"?' asked her mother in surprise. 'What about during school?'

'We wash the floor after lessons. The inspection team comes after school and gives us a mark for cleanliness. Why wash the floor during lessons?'

'You have a strange way of doing things,' chuckled her mother.

Just then, someone knocked on the door. Mariika's mother went to greet them. Into the house walked their extremely elderly neighbour, Grandma Khristina. She was ninety-nine years old. She had seven sons, three daughters, forty grandchildren and a hundred and three great-grandchildren. Mariika's mother bowed low to the old lady, took her by the arm, and led her into the living room.

Mariika was horrified. It was raining outside, the old lady's shoes were muddy, and puddles of water appeared where she had walked through.

Grandma Khristina sat for a long time at the table, and Mariika's mother gave her tea. When the old lady had left, Mariika said, 'We would not have let someone into our classroom with such dirty shoes... The floor has to be kept clean...'

'The floor will be clean, dear... But what about your soul?' said her mother quietly.

The travelling ant

The ant hill is seething with life. Thousands of ants are busy about their work. Some are building little rooms in which they can shelter from bad weather. Others are bringing food to the ant hill: little bits of potato, beetroot, grain, seeds, and whatever they can find in the fields. Others are hunting for insects: beetles and flies.

Suddenly a travelling ant comes running to the ant hill. He has run away from his own ant hill because he doesn't want to work. 'I'll go to another ant hill,' he thought to himself, 'So they can feed me.'

The ants immediately recognise the foreigner. Every worker smells of something—grain, potato, beetroot, fly. But the travelling ant did not smell of anything.

'An ant who does no work!' shouted dozens of ants, and ran towards the tourist.

The travelling ant just managed to escape from the workers. He ran back to his own ant nest, but they also took him for a foreigner because his hands did not smell of work.

The lazybones and the sun

One hot summer's day, a lazybones walked into the forest. He lay down in a shady clearing and went to sleep on the soft grass. While he was sleeping, the sun travelled its long journey across the sky and reached its highest point. Sunshine flooded the clearing. The lazybones felt the sun heating his head and his legs. He could have moved into the shade, where the grass was still cool, but he was too lazy. He said to the sun, 'Sun, please move a little to one side. You're making me hot.'

The sun laughed. 'Do you really think it makes sense to ask the sun to move wherever a lazybones wants?'

The lazybones lost his temper and shouted, 'So you refuse to move?'

'I can't,' answered the sun.

'Is that so?' said the lazybones. 'In that case, I will lie here just to spite you.'

The little spade

A father was getting ready to go to the shop. 'Can I come with you, Dad?' asked his six-year-old son.

'All right, my boy,' agreed his father.

At the shop the father and son bought two big spoons and one small spoon. The big spoons were for the mother and father, and the small one for the son. Then they bought a spade, a strong, sharp spade. 'With a spade like that you can dig for ten years,' said the father.

The son saw a small spade on the shelf. 'Dad,' asked the son, 'Can you buy me a spade. I will dig the soil as well.'

The father bought the small spade for his son.

They returned home and sat down to have lunch. The mother and father ate with the big spoons, and the son ate with the small spoon. After lunch, the father took his spade and went to dig the vegetable patch. The son also took his little spade so he could help his father, but his father said, 'You can go and play with your spade in the sand...'

The son went and played with his spade in the sandpit, but he soon tired of it and put his spade under his bed.

The little spade is still lying under the son's bed even now. But the little spoon is kept next to the big spoons. Whenever they sit down to eat, the mother and father take the big spoons, and hand the small spoon to their son.