

Sukhomlynsky News



New Year wishes

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

*This month's newsletter continues to present translations of stories from Sukhomlynsky's **Ethics Anthology**, a Russian language publication that appeared under the title **Krestomatiya po etike** in 1990. Over the course of the previous 100 issues of this newsletter, I have presented translations of most of the 500 or so stories contained in that 1990 publication.*

*A more complete collection of Sukhomlynsky's stories was published in the Ukrainian language in 2016 under the title **Ya pozpovim vam kazku...Filosofia dlia ditei** (I will tell you a story... Philosophy for children). That publication contains about 800 stories, including those that were published in the **Ethics Anthology**.*

*I have been assisted in translating the 300 extra stories contained in **Philosophy for Children** by Nataliya Bezslova. We are currently in the process of jointly editing our translations and hope to publish them in a book later this year.*

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

The rouble coin

Andreika's father gave him a rouble coin and said, 'On the way home from school, call in to the shop and buy some sugar and some butter.' Andreika put the coin in his jacket pocket and forgot about it. During the physical education lesson, he took off his jacket and threw it on the grass.

After school Andreika suddenly remembered that he had to go to the shops. He put his hand into his pocket and the rouble was not there. Andreika turned pale, and a feeling of dread came over him. He could not utter a word. The other children asked him, 'What's the matter, Andreika.'

The boy told them what had happened. His friends knew that his father was strict and would give him a hiding. 'Let's help Andreika,' said Tina. 'Whoever has some money can give it to Andreika. We should be able to collect a rouble!'

Everyone put their hands in their pockets. Some found ten kopecks, some fifteen, and some five. Only Stepan said, 'You have to look after money. He lost it, let him work out what to do about it. I won't give a single kopeck.' And he turned his back on everyone and walked home.

The children counted up the money they had collected and there were ninety-nine kopecks. They went to the shop all together and bought the sugar and butter. Andreika returned home very happy.

The next day nobody wanted to sit next to Stepan. He had to sit by himself. Stepan complained to his teacher, 'Why doesn't anyone want to sit next to me?'

'You'll have to ask your friends,' answered his teacher.

Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

The volleyball cup

The students at a school were good at playing volleyball. They came first in a district competition. They were awarded a cup—a beautiful metal vase inscribed with the words 'For sporting success'. The students were delighted. They argued about who would carry the cup home. Each of them wanted to hold the cup in their hands.

They placed the cup on a table in a small room, and they placed a poster on the wall with the words 'We play volleyball better than everyone else. This is our reward.' At every student gathering the students boasted that they were the best, and their names were printed in the school newspaper.

In the neighbouring villages the students began to invite them, saying, 'Come and play against us in a trial of strength.' But the victors did not want to travel anywhere. 'Why do we need to play against them?' they said. 'We already know we are the strongest team.'

A year passed. The victorious team went to the district competition and lost. They had to take their cup into the district office and hand it over to the new victors. The students argued about who would take the cup. Nobody wanted to make the trip.

Why was dad upset?

Pavlyk began a new exercise book because he had completely filled his old one. He decided, 'I will write so well that I receive full marks on every assignment.' Pavlyk's father was a truck driver who travelled great distances. He would not be home for a long time. When he returned, he would say, 'Let me have a look at your exercise book, so I can see how you are studying.' And by that time the exercise book would be full of excellent marks.

That was what Pavlyk wanted, but that was not how it turned out. On the first page he wrote badly, and the teacher did not give him any mark. She just wrote, 'You need to improve.' Pavlyk was upset. 'Surely I can make myself work better,' he thought to himself. And he did try much harder and received full marks for all his other work.

After a while, his exercise book was full and his father was due home the following day. Pavlyk thought, 'I am ashamed to show Dad that first page. What could I do so I will not feel so ashamed?' And Pavlyk had the idea of rearranging the pages in his exercise book so that the worst page would appear at the very end. His father would probably not read all the way to the last page.

Pavlyk's father arrived home. He turned the pages of his son's exercise book, carefully examining his work. On every page he had full marks. Joy shone in the father's eyes. The closer he came to the end of the book, the louder Pavlyk's heart beat. Then he reached the final page, and Pavlyk saw sorrow in his father's eyes. 'If this page had been at the beginning of the book, that would not have been so bad,' he said. 'But at the end... Why did you let yourself down my boy?'

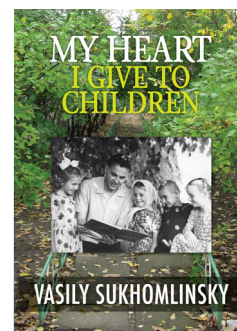
I don't want to say something if I don't mean it

When Slava was in grade three, he became a Pioneer. How proud he was to put on that red scarf! One day Slava came to school very early. He sat on a bench under a tall black poplar. He looked up at the crown of the tree and was surprised: the sun had not yet risen, but its red light was already illuminating the leaves up there. 'Is it really possible to see

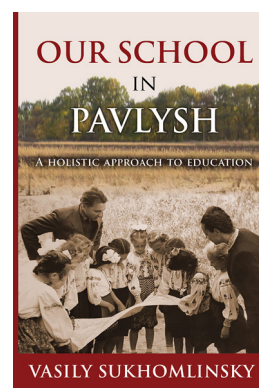


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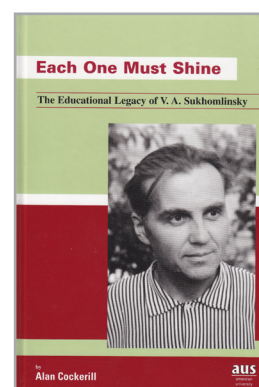
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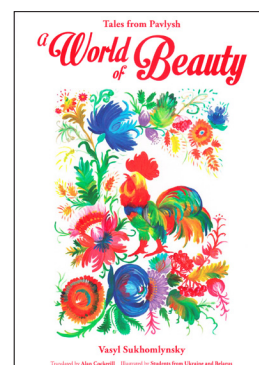
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the sunrise from the top of the tree?' he thought.

He put his books down on the bench and quickly climbed up the majestic black poplar. From the top of the tree, he could see a narrow crescent of light—the edge of the sun's disc. Slava saw how the disc gradually grew in size, and the sun's rays began to play on the branches lower down.

As he climbed down the tree, Slava accidentally broke a branch. And because of that they called a Pioneer meeting. They demanded that Slava give his Pioneer word that he would never climb the tree again. Slava remained silent and would not give his word. 'Why don't you say anything?' asked the Pioneer leader.

'How can I give my word?' asked Slava, with tears in his eyes. 'What if I can't help it? What if I want to see the sun rise and I climb up the tree again? I don't want to say something if I don't mean it.'

A summer storm

On one of their days off, a whole family went for a walk in the forest: the father, the mother, grade five student Tolya and four-year-old Sasha. They really enjoyed being surrounded by the beauty of the forest. The parents showed their children a clearing where lilies of the valley were growing. Next to the clearing a dog rose bush was growing. It had just produced its first flower—pink and sweet-smelling. The whole family sat in the shade of the dog rose bush. The father read from an interesting book.

Suddenly they heard a clap of thunder. The first heavy drops of rain fell, and then it poured cats and dogs. The father gave his coat to the mother, and she was not afraid of the rain. The mother gave her coat to Tolya, and he was not afraid of the rain. Tolya gave his coat to Sasha, and he was not afraid of the rain. Sasha asked, 'Mum, why did you all do that? Why did dad put his coat on you, then you put your coat on Tolya and Tolya put his coat on me? Why didn't you all just put your own coats on?'

'Because we should always defend someone who is weaker,' answered his mother.

'And why aren't I defending anyone?' asked Sasha. 'Does that mean that I am the weakest?'

'If you are not defending anyone, you are weak,' answered his mother with a smile.

'But I don't want to be the weakest!' said Sasha with determination.

And he walked over to the dog rose bush, stretched out his coat, and protected its pink flower. The rain had already torn off two petals, and the flower was drooping, weak and defenceless.

'I'm not the weakest now, am I mum?' asked Sasha.

'No, now you are strong and brave,' answered his mother.

The chair with the broken leg

This happened in a small eight-year school. Half an hour before classes began each day, a monitor would come to each classroom. They wiped dust off the desks, washed the blackboards and watered the plants.

One day the monitor in grade eight went to move the teacher's chair and one of its legs fell off. 'Why the heck did this have to happen to me?' thought the boy. 'I'll take the chair to grade seven and swap it for the chair there.' He quietly opened the door to grade seven, placed the chair with the broken leg by the teacher's desk, and took the good chair. The grade seven monitor was watering some flowers and did not notice that someone had come into the classroom...

But when the grade seven monitor went to straighten the chair, its leg fell off, and he thought, 'I'll swap it for the chair in grade six.' He quietly opened the door into grade six, put the chair with the broken leg by the desk, and took the good chair. The grade six monitor did not notice anything, as he was washing the blackboard. But then he touched the chair and the leg fell off again...

The grade six monitor took the broken chair to grade five, the grade five monitor took it to grade four, the grade four monitor took it to grade three, the grade three monitor took it to grade two, and the grade two monitor took it to grade one.

The grade one monitor touched the chair and the leg fell off. The little boy stood next to the chair and cried. The teacher entered the classroom and saw the boy standing there and crying.

'Why are you crying, Yurko?' asked the teacher.

'Because... I accidentally broke the chair...'

'What good, honest children we have,' thought the teacher.



The apple tree is coming back to life

Myshko in grade one was running through the school yard when he accidentally broke a young apple tree.

'Myshko broke the apple tree! Myshko broke the apple tree!' shouted the children, and they ran to the teacher and told her all about it.

'Why don't you look where you are running?' asked the teacher reproachfully. 'What will we do now? The apple tree is dead. We'll just leave its broken stem there.'

Myshko became quiet and thoughtful. He would come to school each day, long before lessons began, and look at the row of young green apple trees. The broken tree still stood there, dried out and misshapen. It was hard for Myshko to look at it.

One day the teacher took the whole class into the school orchard. 'Children,' she said, 'Let's count how many apple trees, pear trees and cherry trees we have in our young orchard.' Myshko walked along the row of apple trees. He knew very well that there were thirteen living apple trees and one dead one. It was painful for him to look at the dried out stem. He walked up to the dead apple tree and nearly screamed—a green branch was growing from the dry stem.

'The apple tree is coming back to life!' he told his teacher with excitement. The teacher came over to the dried out little tree.

'Yes, the apple tree is coming back to life,' she said with joy. 'This can be your apple tree, all right Myshko?'

'Great!' said Myshko, and his eyes shone. He ran towards the well.

'Where are you going?' asked his teacher.

'I'm going to water my apple tree,' he shouted.

What was Dima chuckling at?

One Sunday, eight friends—all students at a boarding school—went for a trip out of town. They came to a place where a hill towered above the Dnipro River, with a steep descent to the water below.

The boys climbed up the hill. They took off their uniform caps, placed them under a tall pine tree, and sat on the grass, where Dima Sokolenko began to read aloud from an interesting book.

Suddenly a whirlwind swirled over the hill. The boys raised their heads in surprise. The wind was so strong it broke a branch from the pine tree and lifted one of the caps into the air. The cap flew down the slope and out over the Dnipro. The grey whirlwind was visible for moment on the riverbank, but the cap had disappeared.

The boys had just been issued with new uniforms the day before, and none had yet labelled their caps. Now one of the eight caps had been carried away by the wind, while the other seven lay higgledy-piggledy under the pine tree. As soon as the wind died down, the boys rushed for the caps. Seven boys sprinted towards the pine tree, and each ran as fast as they could, because they knew there would be one cap missing.

When the boys returned to where they had been sitting, they were surprised to see Dima Sokolenko still sitting and reading as if nothing had happened. He had not jumped up when everyone rushed for the caps.

The seven boys in their new caps approached Dima. They all wanted to ask him something, but when they saw him chuckling, they bowed their heads and lowered their eyes. They were ashamed. And it is good that they were.

The rissole that felt like a stone

This happened during the very difficult year that followed the war. Grade three was going on an excursion into the forest. The teacher, Maria Nikolaevna, asked everyone to assemble at the school. Everyone arrived before sunrise.

Each student had a little packet of food—a piece of bread, an onion, a boiled potato—and some children even had some lard. The children unpacked all their food, wrapped it up in a large piece of paper, and packed it into a haversack. The children had decided that collectively they were all one family, so why should each child keep their food to themselves.

Lenya also contributed his bread, some potatoes, and a pinch of salt to the communal haversack. But he kept a small packet containing a rissole in his pocket. His mother had wrapped it in paper and said, 'Eat it when no-one is looking.'

In the forest the children played, read a book, and told stories by a campfire. Then they spread out all their food on a large tablecloth and sat down to eat. Lenya was sitting next to Maya, a thin, blonde-haired girl. Her father had been killed on the frontline on the last day of the war. Everyone had a small piece of lard. Maya cut her piece of lard in two and gave half to Lenya. The rissole in the boy's pocket now felt like a stone.

When the children had finished eating, Maria Nikolaevna said, 'Children, collect all the paper and burn it.' When all the paper had been collected and placed in a pile, Lenya secretly threw his packet containing the rissole into the pile of rubbish.

