

Sukhomlynsky News



Tell People about Sukhomlynsky

article by Simon Soloveichik

[continued from previous issue]

In October 1968 Sukhomlynsky sent a letter to the director of the Radianska Shkola publishing house, which began with the words: 'In connection with an incurable disease, and the inevitable cessation in the near future of my scholarly and educational work, I ask the Radianska Shkola publishing house to accept the gift of all my published works... Apart from that, after the cessation of my scholarly and educational work I ask you to accept the gift of all my completed manuscripts that are ready for publication...'

There follows a list of eighteen manuscripts containing five and a half thousand typed pages, 220 author's sheets [a unit of 40,000 ens]. But that does not include all his works. It will take a long time to sort through them all.

The letter ends: 'Until the cessation of my scholarly and educational work I request that you consider this letter confidential. Nobody must know of it other than you. That is very important.'

Yours sincerely, V. Sukhomlynsky.

18 October, 1968. Pavlysh.

Nobody must know... Nobody in the school, not one person, knew that Vasyl Oleksandrovych was terminally ill. 'You should know not only how to live rightly, but also how to die like a human being.' Those are his words.

'Cessation of activity', that is how such people refer to death.

Tell people about Sukhomlynsky!

[continued overleaf]



Tell people about Sukhomlynsky

Dear reader,

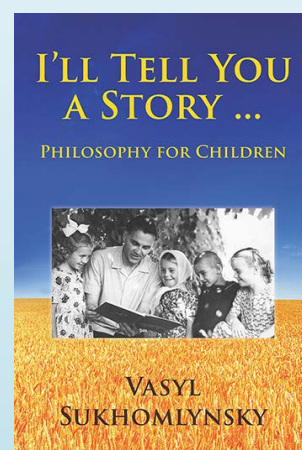
I hope you are well.

In this month's newsletter we are concluding our publication of an article by education journalist Simon Soloveichik.

We are also resuming our publication of stories from I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children. These stories have not appeared in the newsletter before.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



I'll Tell You a Story ...

Philosophy for Children

Over 800 stories

608 pages

Paperback: AU\$44.99

Hardback: AU\$54.99

In stock now at

[The Really Good Bookshop](#)

Tell People about Sukhomlynsky (continued)

Tell people about Sukhomlynsky. He was buried by the whole school, the whole village, and a huge number of other people who travelled to his funeral. The teachers had to decide whether to invite the little children whom Sukhomlynsky had prepared for school during all of the previous year. Would that be too traumatic for them? But he had written: 'When a child's heart encounters the death of someone they love, the experience of loss awakens not only a sense of joy in living and a thirst for life, but also a new vision of the world. A person discovers with amazement the true value of living, feeling and seeing, and savours the joy of existence and awareness. Only someone who has realised in their soul what it means to lose someone, can see in their own behaviour their relationship to others.'

They brought the children to the clubhouse.

One boy said, 'That is not our teacher... Our teacher always walked or sat, and that one is lying down... Our teacher promised he would take us out in a boat...'

I talked with these children who were now in grade one. That is how they remembered 'our teacher'. They remembered someone who took them into the forest, who lit campfires with them, who showed them how to read letters, who made up a story with them about a starling, and who promised to take them out in a boat...

So that the little ones would not be trampled by the crowd, they were surrounded by a ring of final year students and placed at the head of the procession. The route from the clubhouse to the cemetery was covered with dahlias and asters. The little boys and girls walked over the flowers, while their teacher followed behind.

The cemetery is not far from the school, only two minutes' walk. Sukhomlynsky did not leave his school, and now he will never leave it.

The street on which the school stands is named after Sukhomlynsky, as is the school itself.

I am writing these lines late at night in Pavlysh, in the most unpretentious school principal's office I have ever seen. Here, every day, he greeted the dawn. Here he wrote, 'It is possible to build a life without grief and suffering... It is possible to create amazing human happiness.'

An old, inexpensive bookshelf, a divan covered in papers (as it always was), a shabby yellow chair, which does not seem to fit in the room and is in the way. The Ukrainian government has decided there will be a Sukhomlynsky museum here. (At the nearest major train station, in Kremenchuk, there is a Makarenko museum. The geography of history can be strange.) This will be a museum. This bookshelf, desk and table, the simplest of objects, are taking on historical significance before my eyes. Tomorrow this will be a museum bookshelf and a museum desk, and this makes me feel slightly uneasy. It is not every day you see everyday life becoming a part of history...

The dawn is breaking.

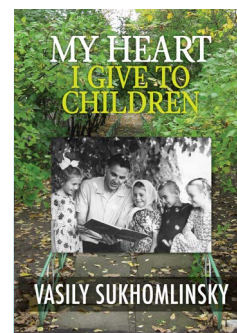
Tell people about Sukhomlynsky, to the best of your ability! If we only tell people about Sukhomlynsky, about his school and his ideas, they are sure to find a way to people's hearts.



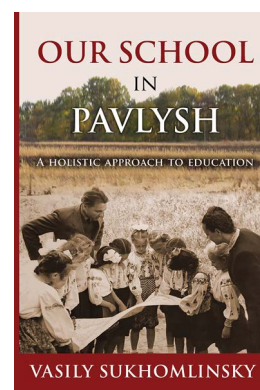
**REALLY GOOD
BOOK SHOP**

<https://www.thereallygoodbookshop.com.au/>

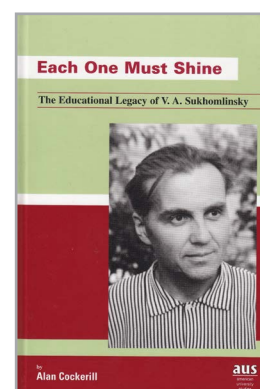
Pricing from
The Really Good Book Shop



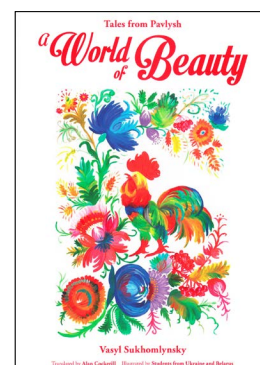
AU\$24.95 (special price)



AU\$34.95



AU\$34.95 (original hardback)



AU\$14.95 (original edition)

Stories from *I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children*

Learning to be human

A mother gave her son a set of flash cards with all the letters of the Ukrainian alphabet from 'A' to 'Ya'. She read the letters to him and said, 'Learn the letters, son. When you have learnt the alphabet, you can learn to read. When you can read, you can learn to be a human being. When you start learning to be a human being, you will get cleverer every day.'

The son began to learn his letters. But it so happened that he took a fancy to the letter 'Ya' more than all the others. He kept reading it over and over, and in Ukrainian the letter 'Ya' means 'I'.

His mother said, 'Read the other letters. 'Ya' is the last letter in the alphabet.'

But her son did not want to read the other letters. He kept saying, 'Ya, Ya, Ya,' to his mother, as if 'I' was the best word in the world.

'What gives us light and warmth?' asked his mother. 'I do, I do!' answered her son.

'What gives life to the parched earth?' asked his mother. 'I do, I do!' repeated her son.

His mother was really worried. Someone who only loves and admires himself cannot become even the smallest leaf on the vast tree that is the human race.

How could she save her son?

At night, when her son was asleep, she took the flashcard with the letter 'Ya' and hid it. Her son woke up and tried to remember the name of his favourite letter, but he had forgotten it.

The son again began to learn the letters of the alphabet: A, Be, Ve, Ge, all the way to the end ... When he had learnt all the other letters, he remembered 'Ya', but by now it seemed small and shy.

'What gives us light and warmth?' asked the mother, once her son had learnt the alphabet and learnt to read.

'The sun,' answered her son.

'What gives life to the parched earth?'

'The rain,' answered the son.

'Now you can learn to be a human being,' said the mother.

The sleeping book

A large and interesting book stood on a bookshelf, among books about faraway lands and wild animals. It told of a mighty warrior. The letters in the book blazed like red-hot iron. The book had a wonderful property: as soon as its blazing, fiery words touched a human heart, a spark was lit in

that heart. And the person whose heart beat with that fiery spark became mighty and invincible.

But the years passed without anyone reading that book. Each week the owner of the book took it from its shelf, carefully wiped the dust from its cover, and placed it back on the shelf. The book kept expecting that somebody would read it, but nobody even opened it.

Often guests came to see the owner of the books, who liked to show them off saying, 'Look what beautiful covers my books have.'

The fiery letters began to grow dim. The burning words faded. The mighty warrior of whom the book told fell asleep. Now the book on the shelf was no longer a fiery book, but a sleeping book.

Two pages of a book

A large and beautiful book lay on the table. It was a book about the Great and the Wise. The title page was especially beautiful. The name of the book was written on that page in golden letters. Underneath the title was a picture of a marble statue of the Great and the Wise, inscribed with his name. Below that was a drawing of the sun.

The title page was very proud of itself. 'All the other pages are nothing compared with me,' it said. 'All the beauty is on my page. People only read this book because the first page is so beautiful.'

The last page in the book heard this boasting and said, 'Let people read the book and be the judges of what is good in it.'

People who make bread and machines came and read the book and said, 'The title page is beautiful, but the book has nothing of value in it.' And they stopped opening the book.

The final page said, 'A book about the Great and the Wise should be a wise book. Let nobody be deceived by the title page.'



Nobody's flower

It was a special day at school. All the students had come to prepare their classrooms for lessons. The next day would be the first day of the school year. Near the well were ten new pots. In each pot was a flower. These were for the classrooms. Ten pot plants for ten classrooms. Next to the ten new pot plants was another little pot, old and faded. A weak little flower had been planted in it.

The students took the new pot plants to their classrooms. They put them on the teachers' desks. It made the classrooms feel cosy, as if the students were at home with their mother.

The old pot remained by the well. Who needed a weak little plant, with just a few leaves?

Little Vira in grade one felt sorry for the little flower. She felt sorry for the faded old pot as well. She took the little pot plant to her classroom, placed it on the windowsill, and watered it.

The teacher asked the children, 'Whose flower is that?'

'It's nobody's,' answered the children. 'It was left by the well. Vira took it and brought it here.'

'It's my flower,' said Vira. 'How can a flower be nobody's?'

The stone on the boundary

Once upon a time there were two men. Each one had his own field. They tilled the soil and sowed grain. Each one worked their field from morning to night.

And then a stone turned up from somewhere, not very big, but not small either—about the size of a dog's head. One of the men was ploughing his field when he came across the stone. He threw it into his neighbour's field. His neighbour was harvesting grain. He saw the stone and thought, 'Where did that come from? I'll throw it into my neighbour's field.' And he threw it back.

In this way the stone was thrown back and forth from one field to the other for many years. The two men were a bit annoyed with each other when they found the stone in their field, but they soon forgot about it and remained good friends.

But then it occurred to them to place the stone on their boundary. They put it on the boundary and became irreconcilable enemies. They stole each other's sheaves of grain during the night and hated each other.

One of the men died, then the other. They died as enemies. Their children became the new

owners of the land. They met at the boundary and decided to get rid of the stone and throw it into a swamp. They took the stone away and ploughed the land along their boundary. Instead of two fields there was now one big field, where the children of the two enemies worked together. They worked together and became friends. And the stone now lies somewhere in a swamp.

Seven knives

In a kitchen there were seven knives in a dresser—seven big, sharp knives for chopping up cabbage. One morning, six cooks came to work in the kitchen. Each one chose a knife, and all through their shift the women cut up cabbage. When they finished their work, they put the knives back in the dresser and went home.

The knife who had done nothing all day asked, 'What is that you smell of? Something very tasty.'

'Cabbage,' proudly answered the knives who had worked all day.

The next day the six cooks came to work early in the morning, and each one took their knife—the one they had worked with the day before. The knife that had lain idle all through the first day was surprised. 'Why doesn't anybody take me? Aren't I as good as the other knives? What is this cabbage, anyway?'

That evening he bitterly questioned the other knives, who were tired from their work, but very proud of having carried out their duty.

'Why doesn't anybody take me? Don't people care what knife they work with? I am sharper than all of you.'

The days and weeks passed, and every day the six workers took the same six knives from the dresser, while the seventh knife lay there with nothing to do, sharp and shiny, but idle.

One evening he asked his neighbour, 'How do the workers recognise their knives?' And his neighbour told him some amazing things. It turned out that each worker called a knife 'my knife' after they had worked with it for just one day. And then they did not want to take any other knife.

'Why is that?' asked the idle knife.

'Because without a human hand a knife is not yet a knife, but just a piece of metal. Each human being leaves the imprint of their hand on us.'

The idle knife could not understand that. His sharp blade lay there glistening indifferently.