

## **Sukhomlinsky and Steiner: A Comparison**

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**ABSTRACT.** Vasily Sukhomlinsky (1918-1970) was the most widely read and influential Soviet educator of the post-war period. He rose to prominence during the 1950s and 1960s as a principal in a rural school who wrote authentically about his educational experience and reflected deeply on its significance. His influence continued to grow after his death, as many of his most significant works were published posthumously. He continues to be widely read throughout the former republics of the Soviet Union, and in China, where much of his work was published during the 1980s and 1990s. Although he does not refer to Rudolf Steiner in any of his works, and his philosophical background as an atheist and communist was very different to Steiner's, his holistic educational practices bear some striking similarities to those of Waldorf schools. He wrote extensively of the need to educate the heart and hands as well as the head, and demonstrated how this might be done. He was very concerned that children should be emotionally engaged in learning, and that learning should proceed from a sense of wonder. He gave a high priority to aesthetic and moral education, providing opportunities for his students to form close bonds with the natural environment that surrounded them, and fostering qualities such as empathy, curiosity and creativity. He emphasised the importance of physical work, and of practical activities through which students' knowledge and concern for others could find expression. These and other similarities are explored in this paper.

*Keywords:* Sukhomlinsky, Steiner, holistic education, Waldorf education

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** Wassili Suchomlinski (1918-1970) war der meist gelesene und einflussreichste sowjetische Pädagoge der Nachkriegszeit. Er gewann an Bedeutung während der 1950er und 1960er Jahre als Direktor einer ländlichen Schule, der auf authentische Weise über seine Erfahrungen als Pädagoge schrieb und tief über diese nachdachte. Auch nach seinem Tod wuchs sein Einfluss weiterhin, da viele seiner bedeutendsten Arbeiten posthum veröffentlicht wurden. Nach wie vor haben seine Werke in den ehemaligen Republiken der Sowjetunion sowie in China, wo viele seiner Werke während der 1980er und 1990er Jahre veröffentlicht wurden, einen großen Leserkreis. Obwohl er sich in keinem seiner Werke auf Rudolf Steiner bezieht und sein philosophischer Hintergrund als Atheist und Kommunist sich sehr von Steiners Hintergrund unterschied, weisen seine holistischen pädagogischen Praktiken frappierende Ähnlichkeiten mit denen der Waldorfschulen auf. Er schrieb umfangreich über die Notwendigkeit der Erziehung des Herzens und der Hände sowie des Kopfes; und er veranschaulichte, wie dies umgesetzt werden könnte. Er war sehr besorgt darum, dass Kinder sich seelisch mit dem Lernen beschäftigen und dass das Lernen aus dem Gefühl des Staunens hervorgehen sollte. Er räumte ästhetischer und moralischer Erziehung einen hohen Stellenwert ein und gab seinen Schülern die Möglichkeit, eine tiefe Bindung mit der sie umgebenden Natur einzugehen, und er förderte Qualitäten wie Empathie, Neugierde und Kreativität. Er betonte die Bedeutung körperlicher Arbeit und praktischer Aktivitäten anhand der das Wissen der Schüler sowie deren Fürsorge für Andere Ausdruck finden konnten. Diese und andere Aspekte werden in dieser Arbeit untersucht.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Sukhomlinsky, Steiner, ganzheitliche Pädagogik, Waldorfpädagogik

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and Vasily Sukhomlinsky (1918-1970) were both extremely influential educators, though Steiner's influence, at least up until the collapse of the Soviet Union, spread mainly westwards from Austria, and was felt mainly in countries supportive of private schooling, whereas Sukhomlinsky's influence spread mainly eastwards from Ukraine, and has been mainly felt in countries that have espoused communism. Steiner's influence has been manifested mainly in non-government schools, whereas Sukhomlinsky's has been manifested almost exclusively in schools that are controlled by the state. This article will attempt to show that although Steiner and Sukhomlinsky made reference to very different philosophical frameworks, their phenomenological approach to the study and practice of education, and their inner qualities, led them to adopt quite similar practical approaches. It may be true to say that, for both men, their direct experience and perception of life gave rise to their ideas. Their philosophical frameworks provided points of reference essential for dialogue with their contemporaries, but their world views were grounded in a deep perception of the reality that surrounded them. In interpreting communist ideals, Sukhomlinsky displayed a high degree of flexibility and creativity, citing the ideas of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Janusz Korczak and Sigmund Freud, as well as more orthodox authorities such as Pavlov and Makarenko. He also incorporated a strong element of Ukrainian folk culture, which in its turn had been heavily influenced by Christianity.

Apart from the war years, when Sukhomlinsky served in the Soviet army, was severely wounded, and subsequently worked for two years as a school principal in the Urals, Sukhomlinsky spent his whole life in a rural community in central Ukraine, in the area surrounding the small rural town of Onufriivka. From 1948 until his death in 1970 he was principal of a combined primary and secondary school with an enrolment of approximately 500 students in the village of Pavlysh. His geographic isolation, and the lengthy duration of his highly focused pedagogical practice, go some way towards explaining the high degree of innovation and creativity he displayed. He was of an artistic temperament, creative by nature, and had enormous strength of purpose. His wife wrote of him:

What was most fundamental in Vasily Aleksandrovich's character... what enabled him to accomplish so much in a comparatively short period of time? Firstly, an unusual love of hard work. He worked forgetful of self. In the last decade of his life he did not take a break in the normal sense. There were no days off, holidays, annual leave—he devoted them to creative work. He hastened to live, in the highest sense of the word. He strove to do as much as possible, to pass on the fruits of his experience, his ideas to others. The second feature of his character was an inner concentration of his energies. He was strong in spirit, and strong-willed. Outwardly gentle, slow, at times shy, especially in the company of unfamiliar people, there dwelt in him so much vital energy that its power permitted him to accomplish the seemingly impossible. (Ivanchikova, 1984, pp. 24-25. Translated in Cockerill, 1999. P. 7.)

During the years immediately following the Second World War, Sukhomlinsky was head of the Onufriivka district education office, and responsible for overseeing the reestablishment of schools in that area. In 1948 he requested that he be appointed principal of one of those schools, in the village of Pavlysh. As his work there began to bear fruit, he was encouraged to document his practice, and wrote a Candidate thesis (roughly equivalent to a Ph.D.) on the role of the principal in leading educational practice in a school. He also began to write articles and books based on his experience and that of his staff. When Sukhomlinsky died in 1970, just short of his fifty-second birthday, he had written over 30 books and 500 articles. From 1966 onwards, he wrote his most mature works, based on a lifetime of educational practice, and it is these works, many of which were published posthumously, that have secured his reputation. His influence continued to grow after his death, with new generations of educators being inspired by his work, and translations taking his books around the world, though mostly to countries that espoused communism. His influence has been particularly strong in China, where many of his major works were translated during the 1980s and 1990s, and where many educators have attempted to implement his ideas.

There are a number of similarities between in the educational approaches advocated by Sukhomlinsky and those practiced in Waldorf schools. Among them we might list the following:

1. A view of education as a holistic endeavour that should involve not only the head, but also the heart and the hands.

2. A view of the teacher as a mentor, and the need for schools to nurture the development of their staff as well as their students. This was combined with a strong sense of collegial responsibility for every child.
3. The need to study every student's life in detail in order to understand them and support their development. The regular practice of examining individual students at staff seminars, in a similar fashion to the child studies that take place at meetings of the college of teachers in Steiner schools, and the maintenance of close contact with students' families.
4. A recognition that, especially in the primary school, children should be engaged at an emotional level, through stories, imaginative play, artistic creativity and physical activities, and that learning should be inspired by a sense of wonder.
5. A strong connection with nature and a strong emphasis on aesthetic development.
6. The linking of early literacy with oral language development and with drawing.

Each of the above themes will now be explored and illustrated with quotations from Sukhomlinsky's work

## Holism

All of Sukhomlinsky's writing is permeated with an orientation towards the education of the whole child, and a concern that education in the home and at school should produce truly humane beings. In *My Heart I Give to Children* he writes:

Study should not be reduced to the constant accumulation of knowledge, to training only the memory, to stupefying, mind-numbing, unnecessary cramming, which is harmful both to a child's health and to their intellectual development. I set myself the aim of making study part of a rich spiritual life, a part that facilitated children's development and the enrichment of their minds. Not cramming, but a vigorous intellectual life flowing into a world of play, stories, beauty, music, fantasy and creativity—that is what I wanted for my pupils. I wanted the children to be travellers, explorers and creators in that world: to observe, to think, to reason, to experience the joy of work and to take pride in what they created; to create beauty and joy for other people, and to find happiness in that act of creativity; to admire the beauty in nature, music and art, and to enrich their spiritual lives with that beauty; to take to heart other people's grief and joy, and to care about what happens to them at a deeply personal level—that was my ideal of education. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, pp. 119-120.)

Sukhomlinsky frequently took his students on long walks through the surrounding countryside, using these excursions to develop strength and resilience, to stimulate curiosity and thought, to develop an appreciation for natural beauty, and to engage with members of the community, particularly the elderly. On these excursions the children sometimes came across injured wildlife, which they cared for in an 'animal hospital' at the school. The children were taught how the music of nature had inspired composers to create beautiful music, and created their own music on pipes they fashioned from the branches of elder trees. They took notebooks and pencils on their excursions, and drew pictures of natural beauty, adding captions that led to the development of literacy.

For Sukhomlinsky, morality was the core of a holistic educational approach, and empathy was the core of morality:

A genuine human being is unthinkable without kindly feelings. Education, in essence, begins with the development of personal sensitivity—the ability to respond with heart, thoughts and feelings to everything which happens in the world around us. Personal sensitivity provides a general background for harmonious development, against which any human quality—intelligence, industry, talent—acquires its true meaning, finds its most vibrant expression. (Sukhomlinsky, 1980, p. 25, translated in Cockerill, 1999, pp. 33-34.)

Mazzone suggests that Steiner had a similar view:

Steiner suggested that a good man is one who can empathize with others because 'Upon this all true morality depends and without morality no true social order among earthly humanity can be maintained.' (Mazzone, 2010, p. 115. Mazzone's citation is from Rudolf Steiner, in a lecture Truth Beauty and Goodness. Dornach (Steiner, 1986)

For Sukhomlinsky, kindly feeling and aspirations to help others should be given an outlet through good works. Sukhomlinsky's students did not just admire flowers, they grew them and presented them to their mothers. They planted fruit trees for their elders and presented them with the fruit. They grew wheat, harvested it, milled it and made bread from it. They fitted a cave with a stove and built a small house. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a.) Steiner educators adopt similar practices, ensuring their students are grounded in the real world, and feel confident in their ability to make a contribution to society.

## The Teacher as a Mentor

For Sukhomlinsky, a teacher, especially in the primary school, was not just an instructor, but a mentor. He wrote:

The teacher must be as close and dear as a mother. A young pupil's faith in the teacher, the mutual trust between educator and educated, the ideal of humanity, which children see exemplified in their teachers—these are elementary, but at the same time complex and profound educational principles. The teacher who grasps these becomes a genuine spiritual mentor. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, pp. 9-10.)

We can easily imagine a Steiner educator expressing similar sentiments. These are high expectations to place on a teacher, and a school should support the personal growth of its teachers and help them to meet such a challenge. Sukhomlinsky wrote:

Education in the broad sense is the constant spiritual enrichment and renewal both of those who are educated and of those who educate... (Sukhomlinsky, 1980, p. 53. Translated in Cockerill, 1999, p. 36.)

Sukhomlinsky tried not to overburden teachers with frequent meetings, but to confine staff meetings to once per week, and to give teachers sufficient free time for their own reading, study and growth. Staff meetings were generally devoted to discussions of individual students and to substantive educational issues, rather than to 'administrivia'. Sukhomlinsky tried to foster a sense of collective responsibility and collegiality among his staff:

We strive to combine management of the school by the principal with collegiality in the discussion and resolution of important matters concerning the instructional and educational work.

The effectiveness of collegiality depends on holding common views on those matters of principle which determine the direction and essence of education. This common ground regarding educational views and convictions permits our teachers to make collective decisions—at school council meetings—on practical issues concerning the life and work of the school (the school council meets seven or eight times a year). (Sukhomlinsky, 1980, p. 69. Translated in Cockerill, 1999, pp. 130-131.)

Sukhomlinsky himself took on a class of six-year-old preschool children as their mentor, and continued to work with them over a period of eleven years, until they graduated from the high school. Like Steiner educators, who ideally stay with the same class for seven years, he took a long term view of the education process. He thought the first year with the children was particularly important in allowing him to get to know the children:

The year preceding formal study was necessary for me to get to know each child well, to study in depth the individual characteristics of their perception, thought and intellectual work. Before imparting knowledge we have to teach children how to think, how to apprehend, how to observe. We must also have a thorough knowledge of the health of each student: without that it is impossible to teach properly.

Intellectual education is not the same thing as acquiring knowledge. Although it is impossible without formal schooling, just as a green leaf is impossible without the sun's rays, the education of the intellect is not identical with formal schooling any more than a green leaf is identical with the sun. The teacher is dealing with thinking matter, and the capacity of the nervous system to apprehend and gain knowledge of the surrounding world depends to a great extent on the health of the child. This dependency is very subtle and difficult to grasp. The study of children's inner, spiritual world, and especially of their thinking, is one of a teacher's most important tasks. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 16.)

As principal, Sukhomlinsky regarded himself as responsible for the welfare of every child in the school. Because of the critical importance of the preschool year in preparing children for study, he always took on a mentoring role with that group of children, in addition to any other responsibilities he had.

## Knowing each student

Sukhomlinsky recognised that every child is unique, and thought that the most important quality a teacher could have was to the ability to enter into the inner world of each child. He wrote:

In front of you are forty youngsters—at first glance they seem very similar to each other even in their external features, but by the third, fourth or fifth day, after several walks to forest and field, you become convinced that each child is a world in themselves, unique and never to be repeated. If this world reveals itself to you, if you sense the individuality within each child, if the joys and sorrows of each child find a response in your heart, in your thoughts, cares and concerns—then you may confidently choose as your profession the noble work of a teacher and you will find in it the joy of creativity. For creativity in our work... is first and foremost the process of coming to know, of discovering a human being, of experiencing wonder at the many facets and inexhaustibility of human nature. (Sukhomlinsky, 1979, p. 451. Translated in Cockerill, 1999, p.11.)

Part of knowing each student was knowing the family that they came from. Sukhomlinsky worked at the same school for twenty-two years, and knew each family well. By the time he was writing his most mature works, he was educating the children of his former students. He frequently visited children's homes and discussed the welfare of students with their parents. He and his staff also held twice monthly seminars on parenting for all the parents at his school. He thought that links between the school and the home were extremely important, and strove to ensure that children brought joy home from school.

In Steiner schools, one of the avenues for understanding individual children's needs is when the class teacher presents an individual child study at a meeting of the college of teachers, after which the college collectively pool their knowledge and insights into the child in question. A similar practice was adopted at staff seminars held twice per month at Sukhomlinsky's school:

Twice a month on Mondays we hold a ... psychological seminar devoted exclusively to the child. There is nothing more necessary, useful or interesting than talking about children.

The first part of our pedagogical Monday is an account by one of the educators of the spiritual life of their group, about their shared values and resources, about their collective aspirations, joys, disappointments and experiences. Then the educator dwells on one or two students, giving a description of their personality, actions and behaviour, making sure to base their account on actual instances. Other teachers who have some relationship with the child, or have had dealings with them, then contribute their experience and opinions. It soon becomes clear what we do not yet know about the child, what we have neglected or failed to notice. Then as a group we discuss what the teacher who already has a mentoring role with that student should do, and who else from among the teachers could assist, and how that should be done. This is all done in order to enrich the spiritual life of the child, to develop their moral values and interests, to reveal the goodness in the child, that golden vein that with time, and the appropriate encouragement, will determine the dignity and wealth of their personality. (Sukhomlinsky, 1980, p. 52. Translated for this article.)

In this way the staff at the school took collective responsibility for the welfare of every child.

## Emotional Engagement

Steiner educators consider that during the primary school years children will learn best if engaged emotionally, at the level of the heart. This view rests on an Anthroposophical understanding of the threefold development of a human being. Sukhomlinsky also considered that emotional engagement was crucial during the primary years, though he explained this in terms of the operation of the brain:

During childhood, thought processes should be connected as closely as possible with bright, living, concrete objects in the surrounding world. In the beginning, do not expect children to think about cause and effect

relationships. Let them simply inspect an object and discover something new about it. A boy saw an enraged bull in a mass of trees wrapped in the evening dusk. This is not simply the play of a child's imagination, but an artistic, poetic way of thinking. In the same trees other children see something different, unique to themselves—they invest the image with the individual characteristics of their own perception, imagination and thought. Each child not only perceives, but draws, creates and constructs. A child's perception of the world is a unique form of artistic creation. The image perceived and, at the same time, created by the child is charged with striking emotional colouring. Children experience an elemental joy when they perceive an object from the surrounding world and add something to it from their imagination. The emotional richness of perception provides the spiritual energy for children's creativity. I am deeply convinced that without emotional stimulation the normal development of a child's brain cells is impossible. There are physiological processes taking place in a child's brain that are connected with emotion. During moments of enthusiasm and intense stimulation, additional nutrition is supplied to the cells of the cerebral cortex. At such times the brain cells consume a lot of energy, but they simultaneously receive a lot from the organism. After observing the intellectual work of children in the primary classes for many years, I came to the conclusion that at times of great emotional stimulation, children's thoughts become particularly clear and more intensive memorisation takes place.

These observations threw new light on the process of educating children. The thinking processes of children in the primary classes are inseparable from their feelings and emotions. The process of instruction, and especially children's perception of the surrounding world, should be charged with emotion. The laws of development of a child's thought processes demand this. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, pp. 50-51.)

Sukhomlinsky elaborates on this explanation later in the same work:

Observation of the children's intellectual work convinced me more and more that the emotional impulses flowing from the sub-cortex to the cortex (feelings of joyful excitement, wonder and amazement) have the effect of arousing the sleeping cells of the cortex and triggering their activity. Experience showed that a central focus for the intellectual education of little children must be the development of a thirst for knowledge—curiosity, inquisitiveness. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 150.)

One way of engaging children emotionally is through stories. Sukhomlinsky was very creative in making up his own stories for children. He did this spontaneously, creating oral stories in response to situations that arose during his teaching practice. He also wrote many stories down. Over 1000 of his stories have been published, many in a recent Ukrainian language publication that combines his stories with reflections on the ethical upbringing of children. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016b.) Sukhomlinsky not only made up stories himself; he encouraged his students to do so:

A thousand times I have been convinced that when they populate the world with fantastic images and when they create these images, children discover not only beauty, but truth. Without stories, without the play of imagination, a child cannot live. Without stories the surrounding world is just a beautiful picture painted on a canvas. Stories bring that picture to life. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 35.)

Sukhomlinsky thought stories were absolutely essential to a child's life, and to their moral development:

...if children did not have fairytales, if they did not experience the battle between good and evil, if they did not feel the human notions of truth, honour and beauty reflected in those stories, their world would be cramped and uncomfortable. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 80.)

Sukhomlinsky always sought to combine emotional engagement with engagement of the will through physical work. This also assisted the development of the intellect:

Apart from journeys into nature and games, there is great scope for developing a child's intellectual and physical abilities in physical work. It is impossible to imagine a full and happy childhood without the joyful, excited feelings inspired by work activities. Experience has convinced me that, for a small child, physical work is not only a way of acquiring certain skills and habits, not only a form of moral education, but also a boundless, amazingly rich environment for thought. This environment awakens moral, intellectual and aesthetic feelings, without which it is impossible to explore the world or to study. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 150.)

## Connection with Nature and Aesthetic Development

One of the strongest threads running through all of Sukhomlinsky's work is a sense of the beauty and richness of nature, and the utilisation of nature in support of multiple aspects of the education process, including intellectual and aesthetic development:

The nature of children's brains dictates that their minds should be educated at the wellsprings of thought—amongst visual images and mainly in natural settings, so that thought can switch from a visual image to the processing of information about that image. If children are isolated from nature, if all that a child is exposed to from the first days of school is words, the brain cells are quickly exhausted and cannot cope with the work set by the teacher. These cells need to be allowed to develop, to get stronger, to gather energy. Here we find an explanation for a phenomenon that many teachers encounter in primary classes: children are sitting quietly, looking you in the eyes, apparently listening attentively, but not understanding a single word, because the teacher talks and talks, because they have to understand rules, to solve problems, to follow examples. Without living images there is too much abstraction and generalisation, and the brain gets tired ... That is why children fall behind. That is why it is necessary to develop children's thinking, to increase their mental capacity in the midst of nature—this is dictated by the natural laws governing a child's development. That is why every excursion into nature is a lesson in thought, a lesson in developing the mind. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, pp. 36-37.)

Excursions into nature under the supervision of a teacher help to awaken a sense of wonder and curiosity, as well as admiration for beauty. It was in natural settings that Sukhomlinsky introduced children to drawing, music, the composition of stories and poetry. It was in the midst of nature that the children learnt to read and write. On aesthetic development he writes:

In aesthetic education in general, and musical education in particular, the psychological objectives of the teacher who is acquainting children with the world of the beautiful are important. For me the main objective was to educate a capacity to relate emotionally to beauty and to instil a thirst for impressions of an aesthetic nature. In my view, the main aim of our whole system of education was to teach people to live in the world of the beautiful, so that they could not live without beauty, so that the beauty of the world created an inner beauty. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 72.)

Sukhomlinsky thought that a connection with the world of nature was essential to childhood:

...our pedagogy forgets that for a good half of their years of study in school, students remain children. Teachers are so busy cramming facts, generalisations and conclusions into children's heads, that we sometimes do not give children the opportunity to visit the wellsprings of thought and living language. We bind the wings of their dreams, imagination and creativity. From a living, active being, the child is frequently turned into a memorising machine. No, it should not be like that. We should not separate children from the world with a brick wall. We should not deprive them of a spiritual life. To live full spiritual lives children need to live in a world of play, stories, music, imagination and creativity. Without that they are dried flowers. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, pp. 77-78.)

As well as finding time for frequent excursions into nature during the school terms, Sukhomlinsky organised summer camps at the end of each school year, in the midst of nature. By the time his students finished primary school they were all in the prime of health, and had all been successful in their studies. Sukhomlinsky closes his best known work, *My Heart I Give to Children*, with a quotation from the American poet Walt Whitman:

*Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.*  
(Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 344. The quotation is from Whitman's 'Song of the Open Road'.)

## The Teaching of Literacy

For Sukhomlinsky, the teaching of early literacy is closely linked with oral language development and with drawing. The theme of emotional engagement also runs through his writing about the teaching of literacy:

I strove to ensure that for a child a word was not merely the designation of an object or phenomenon, but carried within it an emotional colouring—its own fragrance, its own subtle shades. It was important... that the beauty of the word, and the beauty of that little part of the world which the word reflected, should awaken interest towards those drawings which convey the music of the sounds of human speech, towards letters. Until a child senses the fragrance of a word, until he sees its subtle shades, one should not begin instruction in literacy, and if a teacher does, he condemns the child to hard labour. (The child will in the end overcome the difficulty, but at what cost!) (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 84)

Writing grew out of drawing, and drawing was a part of a child's spiritual life. The following passage also illustrates the way in which Sukhomlinsky's intuitive response to children outweighed any formal training he had received in education.

I had read a lot about the methodology of conducting a drawing lesson, but now I had living children in front of me. I saw that a child's drawing—the process of drawing—is part of a child's spiritual life. Children do not simply transfer something from the surrounding world to the page. They live in that world and enter into it as creators of beauty, taking pleasure in that beauty. Consider Vanya, completely absorbed in his work. He is drawing a bee hive. Next to the hive is a tree with huge flowers. Above a flower is a bee, almost as big as the hive. The boy's cheeks are flushed and his eyes shine with the fire of inspiration, and this brings great joy to his teacher. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 61.)

Later in the same work Sukhomlinsky reaffirms the connection of literacy teaching with drawing:

The process of learning to read and write will be facilitated if literacy is presented to the children as a bright, engaging part of life that is full of living images, sounds and melodies. Things that children have to memorise must be interesting in the first place. Instruction in literacy should be closely connected with drawing. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016a, p. 61.)

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to demonstrate that there are thematic similarities between the educational legacies of Steiner and Sukhomlinsky, and to suggest that Steiner educators may gain a fresh perspective on their work by reading Sukhomlinsky's books, particularly those written during the final years of his life. It is hoped that Steiner educators will find inspiration, confirmation, and food for thought in reading works such as the recently translated *My Heart I Give to Children*. The author welcomes responses to this article, and would like to enter into dialogue with Steiner educators.



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