From the Editor

Stephen Keith Sagarin

In the absence of knowledge or data, we tend to rank others as less honest than they actually are, as a well-known study of taxpayers by Michael Wenzel demonstrates.[1] People behave better than we acknowledge, however, and evidence can change our perceptions. In a recent radio essay, Craig Newmark, founder of Craigslist.com, addresses what he has learned from his cooperative website:

> Years of customer service have changed the way I think about people. . . . Now I believe that people are overwhelmingly trustworthy and deeply OK. I don't want to sound sanctimonious or syrupy, but for the past seven years, I've been doing full-time customer service for Craigslist, interacting with thousands of people. I see that most people share a similar moral compass: They play fair, they give each other a break, and they generally get along. I see that pretty much everyone operates by that Golden - Rule thing.[2]

We are all pretty good, then, and we live in a world concerned with goodness. (We know that this was not always the case. Medieval Europeans and many American Indian tribes, for example, were concerned less with goodness than with bravery, courage, and honor.)

Goodness, in its modern form, however, is sometimes taken to be simply the absence of rascally behavior—if you refuse to play fair, to give others a break, to get along, or to follow the Golden Rule, then you're not good, on this view. Is this sufficient for a consideration of morality and moral education? Owen Barfield believes not. In a series of lectures entitled *History, Guilt & Habit*, he describes the "modern sin of literalness,"[3] our shared mental habit of mistaking an image—a concept, a mental picture, or our perception of some object in the world around us—for a reality. Without Barfield's insight, that our mental habits imprison us, then the loftiest ideas—say, Rudolf Steiner's concept of "ethical individualism"—become simply new idols that we substitute for our older, now suspect, idols. Ethical individualism refers not simply to generic good behavior, of which we are all capable and at which Craig Newmark believes we are pretty good, but to an individually transformed habit of thinking that can, in freedom and creativity, solve the moral dilemmas we face living in the modern world. In this sense, ethical individualism and moral imagination are one.

In this issue of the *Research Bulletin* we take moral education as its theme. The centerpiece of the issue is Ernst-Michael Kranich's article on moral development, describing how the very growth and development of our physical bodies make possible our simultaneous growth and development as moral beings. Implications for teachers abound. An analogy occurred to me as I read Kranich's work over and over, part of the editorial process: Plants show in their physical forms how they are affected by the world around them. Climate, soil, wind, and water all contribute to their health and growth or disease and stunted development. We can "read" in the form of a plant its life in the world. Children are not so easy. Outwardly, their forms do not change much whether or not we nourish them soul-spiritually. They are resilient. They maintain their ten fingers and ten toes. But, given the details of Kranich's work, we must believe that internally they are plant-like, that what we do to or for them affects them deeply, even if the results remain invisible.

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1. Wenzel, M. "Misperceptions of social norms about tax compliance (2): A field experiment." http://dspace.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/41626
2. Newmark, C. "That Golden Rule Thing" on "This I Believe," All Things Considered, NPR Radio, April 16, 2007. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9567979
3. Barfield, O. *History, Guilt & Habit*, San Rafael, CA: The Barfield Press, 1979/2007.

Similarly, Magda Lissau, in an extract from her new book,[4] shows how virtues—as described by Plato, for instance—are expressions of or expressed in our physical bodies. Here is a genuine holism, a unity of matter and spirit. (Which educators, by the way, do not claim to educate a whole child? The crux of the matter is the view of wholeness; we should ask, "Wholeness of what?") In addressing physical growth and development, we encourage the growth and development of virtue; in addressing virtue, we promote healthy physical growth and development.

Another article central to this issue is Christine Hether's synopsis of her dissertation research on moral reasoning and high school students. She found that Waldorf high school seniors outscored seniors from other schools, to a significant degree, on a standard test of moral reasoning. In the latter part of her article she explores possible reasons for this difference, what it is about Waldorf education that may increase students' moral reasoning abilities. Granted, moral reasoning is not moral behavior. Dictators may score highly on a test of moral reasoning and then behave in inhuman ways. But given a choice as parents and teachers, we would clearly rather have students score well on such a test and believe that such scores generally correlate with ethical behavior.

Christopher Clouder eloquently argues for the "inviolate" right of young children to their childhood. Consumer culture threatens to rob children of their childhood, and even the experts on childrearing vacillate between authoritarianism and permissiveness. How can we find a balance that will allow children their childhood, which will allow them to give us the gifts of love that only children can give?

In excerpts from a longer paper, Trevor Mepham examines the role of the authority of elementary school teachers in Waldorf schools in the increasingly pluralistic, relativistic world we inhabit. When the very idea of authority is treated with suspicion, how can teachers find a proper relationship to their students?

In a recently translated excerpt from a newly published book, Rudolf Steiner describes the mood that links children's initial engagement with the sense-world, into which they are born, to the gradual dawning of their inner life. He characterizes this mood as religious, a mood of reverent approach, if teachers wish to educate well and to lead children healthfully and morally through their early development into their later development.

Our "Fellows" weigh in on moral education, too. Philip Incao demonstrates how a shift in our thinking is necessary to accomplish real education and true healing. Short of a change in thinking—like the one described by Barfield above—our efforts will result in mere tinkering, and their unintended consequences may be little better, and possibly worse, than the problems we aim to address. Michael Mancini describes a project around the Dalai Lama's visit to Hawai'i that involved school children in community building and the arts. Patrice Maynard discusses three techniques that teachers may use to promote the development of morality in students. Eugene Schwartz, in a review of Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink*, invites Waldorf teachers to reclaim the path to intuition that is increasingly becoming a reliable standard for knowing in our uncertain world (while it may be in danger in our Waldorf schools, in which authority and expertise are increasingly ceded to experts from outside the school). Arthur Zajonc discusses morality as moving over the past centuries from external standards to internal knowing, a path that binds morality and responsibility within each of us.

If there is one agent that binds these various articles and reviews, it is wholeness. Reduce or fragment childhood or education, and the possibilities of moral development leak out or evaporate. Strive for understandings and approaches that increasingly honor and comprehend the whole—physical, emotional, spiritual—and moral education and moral development become realities.

4. Lissau, M. *Octave*, Ghent, NY: AWSNA Publications, 2007.