

munities can be empowered with the possibility of healing old wounds because each is heard and treated respectfully.

Take just one example among many. In a recorded interview between Fox and Uschi Sperling, a German woman who came to the United States for training, Sperling spoke of growing up in Nazi Germany, where suppression or repression was necessary to protect oneself. One needed to be silent about what one heard, saw, and felt because people thought, “if you didn’t talk, it would go away” (p. 136). Among many powerful ideas in that short piece is a reminder that such experiences are therapeutic because shame is diminished. “Shame,” she said, “is bigger than fear. And when shame disappears, then you are free. And you do not forget it, but you do not feel the shame about what you went through and where you came from” (p. 144).

Gradually in the interview, we learn that Sperling’s stepfather was a Nazi officer who fled after the war to escape imprisonment. Then we learn that she recently met a biological sister, and she also discovered that her biological father, an engineer, designed rockets for Werner von Braun, working next to a concentration camp. “When it’s a story about Nazis in the family, it has to be about human beings, not stereotypes. The most terrible thing for us in my generation is to realize that the fathers whom we knew and loved and who were good in some ways also took part in evil. And they are one person” (p. 150).

Sperling reminds us that we all have two sides, that this is not just a Nazi theme. It is important to show the two sides because “the basic idea of playback is an aesthetic one, that beauty can hold the most difficult truth and make it possible for us to see. That’s what art can do. Stories live in our memories and our hearts” (p. 151). One can only imagine how it felt for this German woman to tell Fox, a Jew, about her memories, long buried in shame and pain. Of their discussion, Fox wrote, “Merely to dialogue about emerging from silence was a challenge that took all our strength.” And we, too, can learn and be strengthened from reading this fine book.

ELEANOR C. IRWIN
Pittsburgh, PA

How We See God and Why It Matters: A Multicultural View Through Children’s Drawings and Stories, by Robert J. Landy. 2001. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

The title of this book immediately impressed me, because I agree with it, especially the first part. As I have discussed in the fourth and latest edition of

Foundations of Psychodrama. I think that our image of God—whether viewed as a harsh judge, a capricious king, or the unending source of creativity and spontaneity arising within the soul of every being—affects the way we feel about ourselves, others, the world, and how we should behave.

In his book, Robert Landy relates in part his own spiritual journey, similar to that of Peter Pitzele (1992) in *Our Father's Wells*. In part, Landy uses some qualitative research, asking children in many different regions and countries to draw a picture of God and tell a story about the picture. During the interviews, drama and role playing were indirectly involved because the interviewer asked each child the following questions:

If you were God in this picture, what are you saying?

Are you speaking to anybody or anything?

Whom are you speaking to?

After hearing the child's reply, the interviewer responded, "I am now going to play God and speak the words you just spoke. You will be the person or thing God is speaking to. Please answer in any way you want. Tell me who you are (as the person God is speaking to). What is your name? Can you make up a title for the picture? What is the picture called? Is there anything else you want to say about the picture or about the role play?" (pp. 5–6).

Landy thus deepens the ordinary interviewing techniques by adding a measure of dramatic interaction, which brings forth some depth and involvement that might not happen if it were just a matter of giving answers to an adult. Landy adds dramatic tension to the imagined encounters by directing the interviewer to ask, if there are no antagonistic, bad, or malevolent characters in the picture, "Does God have any enemies, anyone who wants to fight God? If so, can you name them and tell me something about them? If you'd like, add the enemies to your picture." The interviewer then invited the child to tell more about various unclear symbols in the picture. At the close of the session, the interviewer asked, "Do you believe in God?" and then elicited more detail from the child about that answer.

I found this program for interviewing most thought provoking. In one sense, it is naive, simple, and appropriate for the author's task. In another sense, when I imagine this interview technique being applied to adults or older teenagers, I believe it would cut through many layers of rationalization and touch the underlying mythic paradigm. In that regard, it is almost like dream work or the analytical psychology technique of active imagination.

Landy used this approach as a supplementary research activity during his many international travels, as a teacher of drama therapy. He also had a number of friends and colleagues use the approach to interview children in areas where he could not travel. The children, ranging from age 6 through 11, were

from many religious backgrounds and countries, and their stories make up the bulk of the book. As a thread through the book, the author wove his experiences with his own children and his own reflections on the evolution of his own spirituality.

Nearing the end of the book, Landy presents his results, not in a statistical fashion but rather more as a means to discern the themes brought out. Those revealed contradictions and pairs of opposites: God is present and absent, human and superhuman, like us and very different from us, masculine and feminine, calm and agitated, and so forth. His conclusion (pp. 205–206) reminds me of a question an interviewer once asked Carl Jung: “What do you know about God?” Jung answered, “I don’t know anything about God. I only know about what people think about God.”

The author is still on his own spiritual pilgrimage and has not come to closure. This inquiry has served as a catalyst for him and also as a way of expressing his own still open-ended vision. At a deeper level, I discern an emerging theme that may or may not have been conscious in the author’s mind: As the world continues to move through transportation and communications technologies toward more multiculturalism and integration, new and more inclusive mythic forms are emerging that begin to capture a more inclusive approach to theology. They hint at a less easily articulated meta-narrative about a spirituality beyond any particular religion, an activity of developing or deepening the sense of connection or relationship with the Greater Wholeness of Being, however this is named.

The book contributes to our growing attention to the spiritual life of children. It might also be viewed as part of a growing literature that is exploring the frontiers of spiritual search in general. My only reservation is that I tend to see children’s beliefs as deeply colored by their own developmental immaturity mixed with their tendencies to take in only the most easily understood and caricatured lessons from their parents and teachers. Therefore, I would be more intrigued with how mature adults might answer Landy’s questions, which would prompt me to wonder whether and how new approaches to theology might be helpful in the world.

REFERENCES

- Blatner, A. (2000). *Foundations of psychodrama* (4th ed.). New York: Springer.
Pitzele, P. (1992). *Our father’s wells: A personal encounter with the myths of Genesis*. San Francisco: Harper.

ADAM BLATNER, MD
Georgetown, Texas