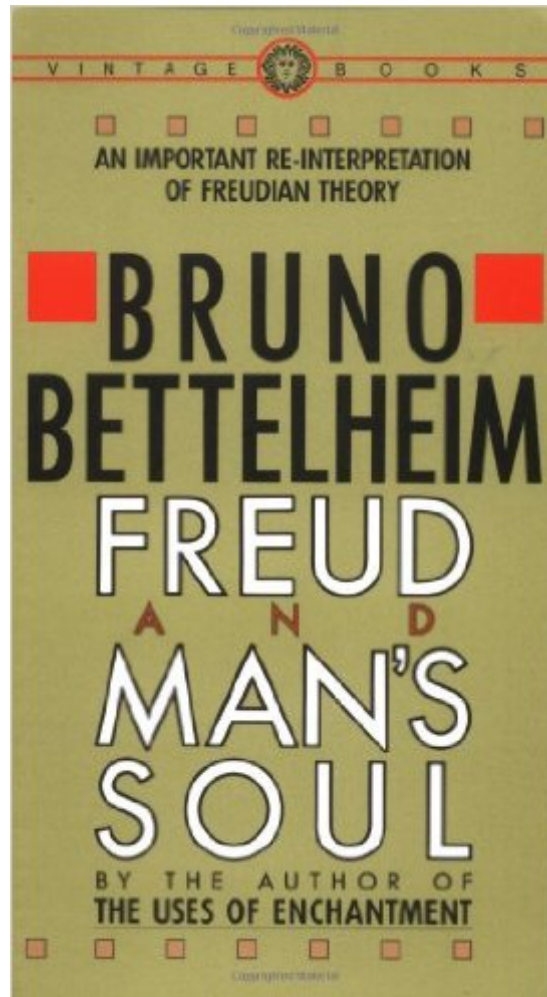


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Freud And Man's Soul: An Important Re-Interpretation Of Freudian Theory



Synopsis

Argues that mistranslation has distorted Freud's work in English and led students to see a system intended to cooperate flexibly with individual needs as a set of rigid rules to be applied by external authority.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Freud and Man's Soul*, Bettelheim discusses example after example of mistranslations of Freud's most important concepts, mistranslations that have served to cast psychoanalysis as an objective, exclusively clinical and quantitative science. Instead, Bettelheim argues with examples that Freud was profoundly motivated by his humanism, and strongly and explicitly opposed to a merely behavioral science of psychoanalysis. He argues that in fact the persistent and profound mistranslations of Freud by his American translators can be traced in part to the unconscious desire to avoid taking any of this profound science of the soul to heart. Bettelheim thus has saved Freud's legacy from the trash can of sterile behavioral theories of clinically-minded American psychoanalysis. Among Bettelheim's more helpful discussions is in his objection to the "Ego-Id-Superego" trinity, as it is translated into English. The use of the Latin forms is not only unnecessary, as Freud was using common German pronouns, but an obstacle to understanding what Freud meant most to convey: these are parts of us, of me, and not just abstract concepts describing others. Bettelheim offers the alternative "Me-It-Over(or Upper)Me" as consistent with Freud's intent, which was in part to involve our souls, our affections, in understanding ourselves. Reading Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* suggested to me that there was much more to

Freud's thought than popular culture suggests; Bettelheim has made some sense of the pervasive distortion, and how we might undermine it. Now if only someone will re-translate everything Freud wrote...

I have read many of Freud's works for years and only recently believed that I gained significant understanding. This came initially from reading Richard Wollheim's book *Sigmund Freud*. Then with both new perspective and renewed interest, I checked this book out from the library. The first thing one notices when reading it is how articulately it is written, and the ease of understanding by which Bettelheim's prose is understood. The clarity and simplicity is wonderful and adds further support for, and credibility to, his claims. There is no question of his passion to express his explicit concerns regarding the mistranslation of Freud's corpus. However, further benefits are his explanations of the various myths Freud drew on, how Freud constructed his vocabulary, and how Freud was motivated by love and concern for others in an eternal sense. This is a wonderful book that anyone with even the slightest interest in Freud would do well in reading. I wish I had read it first. However, now it is a valuable resource as Bettelheim's understanding of Freud is so thorough, elegant, poignant, and full of respect for this great man and thinker.

The review by D. Smitherman is dead accurate. I would add only that Bettelheim touches on how American physicians and clinicians "inserted" (to use Bettelheim's term) notions of psychoanalysis to be used as a tool for social conformity. Freud thought American culture sick and narcissistic, and didn't believe that social conformity or adaptation was an appropriate use of psychoanalysis. He also didn't believe in any requirement that professionals should be sole practitioners of psychoanalysis. In fact, he wished for an army of trained lay-people to do this work of the soul. As a consumer/survivor, that was all a revelation to me, and redemptive of Freud.

Bettelheim, despite some of his other problems (with autism for example), writes exquisitely on Freud. He refines the translations of Freud's work so eloquently that I actually understand it! Everything the other reviewers said PLUS... the Oedipus Complex for example, is not an obscure every boy wants to delete his father thing. Read the book and see... it has more to do with the day a son surpasses his father, and what that does to the triad of Dad, Mom, son. The American psychiatric community perverted Freud. I cannot believe the watered down, mistranslated, haha way I was taught "Freudian psychology". Bettelheim reinterprets Freud through better translation AND correlation to his time and place in history. This book left me agast. I have never encountered such

a profound redirection of a tenet so basic to my understanding of anything. Barbara

This book might have been subtitled, "Retranslating Freud," because that's just what the author does with some of Freud's key terms. I was gratified to see that "cathexis" could actually be rendered "charge" or "investment": much more consistent with how Freud uses the term. Freud was certainly a reductionist, but mistranslations of his work make him seem absolutely bloodless. This is one of the best books on Freud I've ever read.

This quick read provided a much-needed modification to the way I had learned to view Freud up to this point. Written by someone who walked in Freud's shoes, both culturally and educationally, Bettelheim applies the lens of the appropriate time and culture in which Freud composed his theories and works to the general ideas behind them, shedding much new light on the inaccurate translations of Freud's works into English, which we are all asked to read in school. If you have read Freud, or if you have to for school, trust me--read this important, controversial work. Of immense value to the psychoanalyst, therapist, or anyone studying Freud, especially the contemporary psychology student who has been fed the dry, westernized treatment of Freud. This book will change everything, trust me.

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