

Path in Psychology

Robert W. Rieber

Freud on Interpretation

The Ancient Magical Egyptian and
Jewish Traditions

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With Contributions by David Bakan



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Preface

This book constitutes an original analysis of Freud and his method of interpretation. It examines the inner workings of his thought processes and the rich mine of knowledge that led him toward his theories and therapies. In the beliefs of ancient Egypt, with its sexuality and ambiguous deities, and ancient Israel, with its biblical accounts of madness and feigned madness, are found surprising sources of inspiration for core Freudian concepts such as free association, dream interpretation, the psychosexual stages, the libido, and the unconscious. Psychoanalysis is seen in its early growth stages, and nurtured by philosophers, scientists, and fearless mind explorers. Here, Freud is boldly synthesizing loads of knowledge in an age when science and superstition were rarely separate. The book consists of the following major themes: (1) Overviews of the pre-Freudian history of psychology in the writings of Herbart, Morel, and Craft-Ebing; (2) explorations of Freud's interest in ancient Egyptian creation myths and a Kabbala, and their influences on his work; (3) discussions of the paradoxes inherent in the interpretation of the mind; (4) a unique history of the origins of the Rorschach test; (5) the consideration of the real meaning behind Freud's self-identification as a determinist; and (6) a list of Freud's library titles on ancient Egypt.

In broad brush strokes, this is the essence of the subject matter of this book. A slow and satisfying insight of this material began to generate in my mind in the 1980s. This version was clearly the outcome of many interests that had to be clarified and connected. It was my friendship and close association with the late David Bakan that led to the writing of this book. David and I spent many, many hours figuring out how to present material in book form before his death. Unfortunately, his death prevented him from editing of his section of the book, which I accomplished some years after he died. When I formally began to put this book together, I was absolutely certain of its ultimate structure. Nevertheless, the work of Eric Fromm, Abram Kardiner, and Gregory Bateson would turn out to be important foundations of much of my work. My personal friendships and associations with these people provided me with the opportunity to gain first-hand information and insights that were necessary to do the job. Many friends and colleagues have given me the benefits of their criticisms of my ideas and early drafts, and in many instances,

have offered helpful suggestions. I have given every criticism that has come my way the most earnest attention, many I accepted and made the appropriate changes. In some instances, I felt that at some points I was misunderstood, and attempted to revise my presentations to lessen the likelihood of similar misunderstandings by others. I wish to thank especially David Forrest for his contribution in this book, which clarifies the real meaning behind Freud's self-determination as a determinist.

New York, NY, USA

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Prologue

It has been said that a rock contains the form that it wants to become, but only a sculptor with a keen eye can discern it. So it is with the mind, the matter which to all appearances is shapeless and which in its function is largely mysterious even with the aid of modern imaging devices; only someone with the requisite wisdom, intuition, and perspicacity can penetrate the mind's labyrinth and in effect lift the lid off the Id. But even with all these estimable attributes, the interpreter can go astray, forging up paths that culminate in cul de sacs or embarking on roads that at first seem to yield promising results but then do not pan out. Some of the routes have become overgrown, some littered with the rusting carcasses of vehicles that died before they could reach their destination.

The principal essays that make up this book all tackle the checkered history of interpretation albeit relying on a variety of approaches. In the first part, we will explore the development of psychoanalysis; it is a history which, like any history, is itself subject to interpretation; if Freud is the father figure of this history, he had many rivals to the throne. What made the business of interpreting the mind such a messy, conflicted business was the problem posed by the nature of the mind itself. Was the mind equivalent to matter or was it something that might be separate from and even transcend matter? Obviously, efforts to answer this question did not begin suddenly in central Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Freud himself drew upon ancient beliefs and traditions to develop some of his most important therapeutic techniques. In the second part of this book, we will see how both the ancient Egyptian rituals and Jewish mysticism provided the inspiration – and sometimes the impetus – for the way in which Freud went about unraveling the unconsciousness. The third part, written by my late colleague David Bakan, views the subject of interpretation – as a method of unlocking the mind – from a multitude of perspectives, showing us why, for instance, an understanding of how a general thinks of an impending battle and how a physicist thinks of entropy in a closed and open system can shed light on the workings of the mind. Then we will take a peek into the private libraries of some of the most important interpreters of the mind to see what their bookplates – yes, their bookplates – have to say about their own minds. Many of these plates, by virtue of their graphics and their symbols, reveal a

good deal about the personalities of these intellectual elites, especially given the fact that nineteenth-century bookplates evolved to an extent from a popular pastime called shadow games. But then, what is the enterprise of mind interpretation if not a shadow game? Freud showed us that in dreams, there are no errors or discrepancies; everything matters, everything has meaning. What is true for dreams is true no less for bookplates.

The Origins and Groundwork of Psychoanalysis

By the mid-1880s, the term *unconscious*, which was previously associated with unawareness, took on a new meaning – it referred to a part of the mind beyond conscious awareness. But something so amorphous eluded attempts to pin it down in scientific terms. Undaunted, a number of scholars decided to try their hand at it, beginning with the nineteenth-century German philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart who argued that it was possible to measure mental activity – even unconscious activity. He went further, maintaining that it was possible to establish a scientific psychology that could be formulated in quantitative mathematical terms. While his attempt did not succeed, his theories exerted considerable influence over psychoanalytic thought for decades to come. If Herbart's theories have not received the attention they deserve, his conviction that mental states could be quantified has been borne out; contemporary psychological research would not be possible without the use of statistics and other mathematical tools. Needless to say, this quantitative approach was not one that Freud followed in his quest to comprehend the unconscious. That the unconscious might be a repository for all sorts of repressed sexual desires and impulses, while forming the basis for many of his seminal theories, was not quite as unprecedented as people often assume. In fact, his focus on sexuality occurred during a period when readers were grabbing up copies of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886/1969), a no-holds-barred examination of sexual perversities. They were also devouring the novels of Viennese writers who made liberal use of sexual themes in their plots. The Bohemian society of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was by no means made up of prudes.

Medical practitioners of the period were charting a similar path that these writers were following. Like the novelists, the doctors looked for the causes of disease in the brutal industrialized urban environment in which their patients lived and labored. Several groundbreaking anatomical and physiological discoveries allowed medical practitioners to believe that sickness could be not only understood but also controlled. Moreover, they believed that inheritable defects, infections, and tumors were causes of mental illness and vice versa, and that by diagnosing such manifestations of "sickness" as morbid vanity, mystical tendencies, religious enthusiasm, or even excessive originality, it was possible to identify signs of degeneration. Under this kind of sweeping categorization, even geniuses were suspect – they were seen as degenerate, emotional, and oversensitive (in contrast to the healthy, aggressive, insensitive dolt). The genius was "a sublime fool" in the words of Benedict Morel.

Many conservative medical writers seized upon this broad definition to label everyone and everything they did not approve of as “sick,” sparing them the necessity of taking into account the social, political, or environmental factors that might be implicated. Therapists of the day, not surprisingly, took their cue from such notions and resorted to techniques such as electric shocks and hypnosis to treat their patients.

The concept of the unconscious, advanced in the work of Joseph Breuer and Freud, notably in *Studies in Hysteria* (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1911), did not depart much from this conservative tradition. The unconscious was a Pandora’s box of traumatic memories, taboos, sexual desires, and shameful feelings that the individual refused to reveal because of fear of humiliation or condemnation. Freud, however, turned his attention to his patients’ sexual history and fantasies, with a view to understand how childhood traumas, buried in the unconscious, could lead to neurosis in adulthood. Tragedy, Freud believed, was inherent in the human condition, the consequence of an irresolvable conflict between man’s instinctual sexual nature and demands of civilization. If Freud had any answer (he had no solution), it was to adopt an attitude of what might be termed enlightened resignation.

Of Freud’s close associates, we will consider two in particular: Alfred Adler and Karl Jung, both of whom went on to break with the master. Adler was a much more accessible – and popular – figure in Vienna than Freud. He also became known for his interest in children’s mental health (why wait until they became adults to figure out what had happened to them in childhood?) and even went so far as to establish child guidance clinics within the Vienna school system. He eventually came to regard the desire for self-esteem as the basic motivational principle in all human behavior, rejecting the theory of infantile sexuality and the related theory of sexual repression in adolescence, views that put him at odds with that of Freud’s. Freud never forgave Adler for his defection. Jung took issue with Freud on other grounds. For Jung, puberty was not a period of latency, as Freud maintained, but rather the time when sexuality began. Jung also disputed Freud’s libido theory; for one thing, he contended, it failed to explain the symptoms and pathology of dementia praecox (or schizophrenia). For another, he argued, the meaning of the concept should either be broadened or scrapped in favor of the concept of psychic energy. Neither did he accept Freud’s belief that neurosis results from the conflict between ego instincts and sexual instincts. Rather, Jung said, the conflict was the result of the failure of individual’s emotions to develop in pace with his or her physical and chronological development. Jung was the first psychoanalyst to recognize that people did not just repress hate, lust, and shameful feelings, they were equally capable of repressing positive and constructive aspects of their personality.

Psychoanalysis Comes to America

Even as Freud was developing his theory of libido and gathering an ardent, if often feuding, circle of disciples in Vienna, Adolf Meyer was busy developing his own theory of psychobiological reactions in the USA. Under the influence of Charles

Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, Meyer challenged the idea that mental processes could be separated into affect and ideas, and rejected the tendency of his time to model theories of human behavior, as Freud and other psychologists had attempted to do, based on studies of the nerve cell. In the pragmatic traditions of the New World, Meyer eschewed the search for the Absolute – Kant’s *ding an sieh*, or thing-in-itself – that haunted European psychologists. It was a mistake to distrust the patient’s own experience, Meyer contended, and there was little chance of diagnosing, much less treating a patient, if the therapist was fixated on reducing all phenomena to the “ultimate reality.” The patient’s illness and cure should be based on observation and experimentation, an approach that Meyer’s successors – at least in the USA – have continued to follow to this day.

From the Pharaohs to Freud: Psychoanalysis and the Magical Egyptian Tradition

Consider the fact that of all the art forms, Freud’s favorite was sculpture. Just as an astute observer can detect the sculpture that inheres in a jagged rock so, too, Freud was capable of perceiving in a patient’s words, dreams, fears, fantasies, impulses, and hidden desires the contours and topography of the unconscious mind. It turns out that rocks – literal as well as metaphorical – are critical to an understanding of Freud’s quest to unravel the unconscious. The rocks I refer to were those employed to construct the pyramids, obelisks, and statues that have been bequeathed to us as a legacy of ancient Egypt. If there ever was a civilization obsessed by death – or rather life after death – it was ancient Egypt. What is not well known even to students of the history of psychoanalysis is that Freud was strongly influenced by ancient Egypt, its cosmic mythology, its rituals, and its belief system. He liked to wander the ancient Egyptian galleries of museums and amassed an impressive collection of Egyptian antiquities. His library contained many books devoted to ancient Egypt (see Appendix A in Chap. 4). It might strike some readers as outlandish to trace such seminal Freudian concepts as his delineation of the oral, anal, and phallic phases of sexuality, penis envy, and incest to a culture so remote from his (and our) own. Yet the evidence suggests that ancient Egyptian beliefs shaped his psychoanalytical theories. Freud is inevitably associated with the Oedipal myth, but few people are aware that he was also inspired by such incestuous Egyptian deities as Shu (god of dryness) and Tefnut (goddess of humidity). In the concepts of Ba, defined variously as the soul or self, and of Ka, a spirit that served as its doppelganger in life and as a guardian of the individual in the afterworld, Freud found a fertile source for his own theories of personality. It is also possible to draw an illuminating connection between the Egyptian concept of chaos and Freud’s concept of the unconscious; the Egyptians called chaos Nun and regarded it as an undifferentiated mass that contained within it the seeds of all life. (Think of the rock and the form that the sculptor will create from it.) Even with the creation of the universe, chaos did not vanish, but rather turned into a refuge for dark forces that could reassert themselves

in the universe whenever circumstances allowed. Nun makes for a very convenient analog to the unconscious.

A case can even be made that the therapeutic process itself, at least as conceived by Freud, owes at least some debt to third millennium Egypt. In Exodus, for instance, Moses refers to Egyptian priests as “wise men, sorcerers, and magicians” – characterizations, fairly or not, that have been attributed to analysts. The technique of free association, while introduced and refined by Freud, might well have been inspired by the ancient Egyptians for whom words were imbued with great power and names were extensions of identity. A person’s name was thought to hold magical significance; it was an integral part of his identity, a source of power – and a potential route into his innermost being, a route followed by Freud and his disciples several millennia later in their exploration of the unconscious.

If anything, Freud’s fascination with Jewish history and mysticism was even more pronounced. Although evidence is insufficient to support the Biblical story of the Jewish sojourn in Egypt, the literal truth (as opposed to a larger, mythical, or mystical truth) is not the issue. In any case, the findings of archeologists suggest that there was considerable cultural and economic interchange between the ancient Jews and Egyptians. The two peoples also shared some key concepts. For instance, the Hebrew word for madness – *meshugga* – is derived from the Egyptian word referring to imbecility or stupefaction. The etymological affinity of the words not only indicates a shared conception of insanity, but also the recognition that insanity could be feigned. The recognition of different states of mind represents a significant cultural leap; the realization that some states can be mimicked for deceptive purposes is more revolutionary (or evolutionary) still. (The similarities only go so far, though; the fixation on the afterworld of the ancient Egyptians was not one shared by the ancient Israelis for whom the afterworld was, more or less, an afterthought, far less important than the way life was lived on earth.) The conflation of the two cultures is most dramatically demonstrated in the person of Moses, the subject of one of Freud’s most major works, *Moses and Monotheism*. For Freud, Moses was every bit of an Egyptian as he was a Jew, perhaps more so, and several critics contended that by focusing on Moses’ purported Egyptian roots, Freud was in effect hijacking him from the Jews. There is some speculation that Freud was anxious to cover up the Jewish origins of psychoanalysis as a way of protecting the nascent discipline from being mocked or derided by anti-Semites whose influence at the time was not to be underestimated.

Freud was also drawn to the Kabbala, the monumental mystical exegesis, predicated on the belief that every word, letter, and number found in the Old Testament has a secret or hidden meaning; that is to say, the Bible also constitutes a kind of code. The same technique used to explicate the Kabbala – what one scholar called “skipping and jumping” – offers an approach that comes very close to that of free association, another experiment of Freud’s intended to find a route inward – into the unconscious and chaos.

For all the tools that Freud might have borrowed from these ancient civilizations to construct his own theories and employ in his analysis, Freud was playing a dangerous game, according to David Bakan, a leading scholar of Jewish mysticism and

psychoanalysis. To penetrate the unconscious, uncover its secrets, and expose to the conscious mind a person's repressed sexual longings and fantasies, Bakan argued, the analyst was required to gain a mastery over the dark forces he would find there. That means that the analyst must make an alliance of convenience with these forces – a pact with the Devil, in other words. Historians have been debating who got the better of the bargain ever since.

On Interpretation of the Mind

In Bakan's view, interpretation is "the process whereby we make our way from what is given to us to what we take to be so." Meaning, he believes, can be discovered by the process of interpretation. That which is to be interpreted is not "without form and void." This definition applies to dreams, too. Yet the meaning of the dream is not just what it says. The meaning is not in the manifest content of the dream, even though the dream characteristically comes in the form of a "story." Rather, the dream is a "profound expression of the mind of the dreamer; that it arises from wishes which have been otherwise unexpressed and are seeking expression..." The unconscious points not only to something – in the mind, but "also to the existence of a huge realm of being which we do not know about (e.g., black holes and death.)"

Interpreting riddles is not just a job for an analyst. "The scientific enterprise is better appreciated as puzzle solving or interpreting riddles," Bakan points out, taking issue with the British empirical argument that there "is nothing in the intellect except that which comes through the senses" – an approach he believes that led us into a form of passivity.

The interpretative enterprise, Bakan says, entails three tasks – those of the detective, inventor, and warrior. The detective interprets various clues to ascertain the detailed nature of the historical episode which is intrinsically unknowable directly; the inventor interprets the natural order in identifying potentialities and constraints for the design of some object which has not even existed in the world; and the warrior seeks to detect intentions, will, and resources of opponents, allies, superiors, and subordinates, identifying his own potentialities and constraints as preparation for defeating his enemy. All three roles require intellectual effort to overcome resistance in pursuing the path of interpretation.

As Bakan says, we find ourselves inside a context created by a riddle maker. The role of the interpreter is to step outside the context to solve the riddle. But how can this trick be done? The riddle maker uses codes and obscure languages to conceal his meaning in much the way that dreams are encoded to conceal their meaning. Hieroglyphics, Bakan says, offered just this kind of riddle, at least until the Rosetta Stone allowed linguists to make sense of them. The riddle posed by hieroglyphics revolved around the question as to whether one can crack a language or code without something that functions like a dictionary (the answer is no). "The various examples of cracking of hieroglyphics and the like all attest to the possibility of being able to determine the third world features, such as free information, from

bound information even when the language is not available.” That is, it is possible for intelligent human beings facing bound information – that is bound in the tissue of the brain or the movements of the mouth, tongue, and lungs or in electrical impulses in the telephone – as opposed to when it is free as it exists in the mind – to detect both the code and the information in an encoded form.

Language is primarily a third world phenomenon, Bakan contends. The concept of the third world originated with the philosopher Karl Popper (1972) who proposed three worlds – first, the world of physical objects or physical states; second, the world of states of consciousness or mental states or behavioral dispositions; and third, the world of objective contents of thought, especially of scientific and poetic thoughts and works of art. It is in the third world that Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is found (although it can be manifested in the first world when, for instance, it is performed by a symphony orchestra) and it is in the third world that Hamlet is to be found.

This leads to a discussion of the third world of creativity as exemplified in fiction, why we can talk about the motivation for Hamlet’s hesitancy, even though those motives are not specified by Shakespeare. In spite of a historical Hamlet who presumably inspired the playwright, there is no reason to think that Hamlet is anything else but a fictional creation. Nonetheless, it is by no means an empty or wasted enterprise to consider his state of mind and why he acts impulsively at one point and dithers at another. Freud, for example, believed that Hamlet had an Oedipal complex. In other words, Freud was interpreting Hamlet’s unconsciousness in spite of the fact that Shakespeare’s Hamlet is purely imaginary.

Bakan segues to a discussion about the way in which the behavior of a collective – a group or society – is not “derivable from the facts associated with individuals composing the group.” He cites Durkheim (“collective tendencies have an existence of their own”), but he might as well be referring to the behavior of markets (which cannot be deduced from the decision of any given investor). There are certain phenomena associated with aggregates that are not associated with each member of the aggregate.

Bakan next turns to the theme of possibility in the context of warfare, pointing out that no general can successfully carry out a military operation without taking into account the possibilities (or scenarios) that may ensue. The general needs to figure out the potential actions the enemy may take as well as the constraints placed on the enemy. By the same token, he also needs to consider his own force’s potential strengths and weaknesses. “In no way can the warrior afford the luxury of a relentless physicalist position, the position that allows that there is no reality except material reality.” That is to say, the warrior must carry out his tactical considerations in the third world.

Bakan turns his attention to abstractions – the forms that exist irrespective of human minds, even though our minds apprehend them. Take the circle. The ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle – pi – predated human life on earth. This leads him to the consideration of two principal questions: does the circle’s character exist independently of the existence of human beings and is there some a priori correspondence between human mentation and the world of mathematical reality?

Bakan doubles back to Freud again (not that Freud is ever far from his thoughts), pointing out that for Freud, the dream is to be understood in terms of processes involved in its formation – what Freud called “dream work.” “The whole scientific enterprise, insofar as the scientific enterprise seeks to identify causes, is an enterprise which would interpret what is given in terms of the processes involved in the creation of the given.” And where better can this process be put to the test than the Bible? “What we find in Freud is a very special kind of recognition, even if it may have been an unconscious recognition, that the modes, developed over history for the interpretation of the Bible, could be usefully transferred to the interpretation of human experience and behavior.” He notes that the methods of Biblical exegesis have always been in a certain sense psychological. Just as every letter in the Bible is critically important – even errors that might have crept into the text are meaningful – so, too, every element of the dream is crucial, even something that might at first blush appear trivial. The history of the Bible presents two phenomena that have reinforced each other – the inordinate care with which the Bible has been copied over the centuries and the inordinately huge body of interpretation associated with the text. Bakan describes four types of interpretation – the literal meaning, the implied meaning, the homiletical, and the secret. The latter two forms were considered the most dangerous. The *Gematria*, for instance, is based on the assumption that the text is written in a code which, if cracked, will reveal the hidden meaning. (The *Gematria* is defined as Hebraic numerology.) In the Hellenistic world, the *Gematria* was often used by dream interpreters. The holy names Abraxas and Mithras, because the Greek assigned numerical value to each letter, could be translated as 365, the number of days in the year. The given is the word in the text, but the assumption is that something else which is the case has generated the code, and the code allows us to operate backward – from the given back to that which is the case. This method of interpretation is especially profitable when it comes to the Kabbala, the mystical Jewish text which offers an account of creation. According to the Jewish mystical tradition, the Torah existed before the creation of the universe and, indeed, was used as a kind of blueprint by God in its creation. In other words, the Torah is equated with an abstract form like the circle, predating the existence of human beings. “One of the deepest characteristics of the mystical tradition throughout the ages is it allowed a conception of the universe which is in some way something like a human being in that it conceives of the world as both *living* and *mentating*.”

Bakan tackles Haeckelianism in the second part of his paper. (The German biologist and physician Ernst Haeckel developed the controversial recapitulation theory that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,” claiming that an individual organism’s biological development summarized that of its species.) Haeckelianism, Bakan writes, does not confer any reality on knowledge per se. “Reality is understood as only the material *in* it and the movement of material.” This view holds that knowledge of the world can be obtained only on the basis of “a totally relaxed materialism, materialism which is so relaxed that it is no longer materialism.” The roots of this notion can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Democritus – that all things are composed of and explicable in terms of very small units of matter or atoms which occupy and

interact within space. It was a doctrine that was taken up again by Gassendi and subsequently by Thomas Hobbes and Decartes and by the eighteenth-century writer La Mettrie. La Mettrie's famous book "*L'Homme machine*" says it all.

This doctrine, Bakan writes, exerted a great influence on the development of chemistry – specifically the explanation of the phenomena associated with heat where the molecule was taken as the basic unit of matter. (The development of molecular theory of heat begins in 1738 with Daniel Bernoulli who demonstrated the application of Boyle's law – the product of pressure and volume of a gas remains constant under a condition of constant temperature.) What Bakan calls "the methodological masterstroke" was the focusing of attention to the aggregate of molecules' movement in space – that is, applying the same technique that the warrior needs in waging battle: the consideration of possibilities. How molecules in an aggregate will behave allowed researchers to consider energy in the context of open and closed systems. The concept of entropy derives from the observation that heat can only be used to obtain work when there is a difference between temperatures in two parts of the system if it is closed. If it becomes too hot, no work is obtained. The same holds true if it is too cold. There is no energy in the system: no energy no work. This is a condition which we would say is high in entropy. This is where statistics comes in. Statistics, Bakan writes, "entails the study of aggregates where the aggregates represent events that actually have taken place, or conditions that actually have existed." On the contrary, probability deals with aggregates that exist in another kind of actuality – which puts us in effect back in the third world.

The third world is characterized by two important features – objectivity and thinkability. By objectivity, Popper means that like the circle, human existence is not required for its existence. However, in Bakan's embellishment, whatever form the objective takes, it must be capable of being apprehended by human beings. If we cannot think about it, then it does not belong in the third world. The elaboration of these concepts that Bakan presents may prove difficult for readers who lack a background in physics, logic, and communication theory. Let it be said that by the time that Bakan has taken us for a wild ride through terrain mapped by Leo Szilard, flirted with Maxwell's demon, considered the implications of a perpetual motion machine, informed us why the Second Law of Thermodynamics is not as threatened by entropy as we might expect, distinguished between messages and message sets, and delineated the parallels between entropy and information, Haeckel's relaxed materialism does not come out in very good shape.

Taking a deep breath, Bakan circles back to a consideration of the process of interpretation, which is where he began. Interpretation, he observes, is a psychological process, a process which resides in Popper's second world – that is, a place characterized by "states of consciousness, or mental states, or perhaps dispositions to act," in Popper's words. Interpretation is dead serious business, Bakan reminds us; it is key to survival. All social, political, and economic interactions can only be understood (and misunderstood) by interpretation. For people who believe that the Bible should only be read literally, Bakan points out, interpretation was shunned, a bright line drawn between the first and second worlds. In some circles, interpretation has certainly gotten a bad name. But not for Bakan: "Let us say," he writes,

“that interpretation is that conscious process whereby one infers the determinative features of the third world of the actual from the examination of the actual” – that is to say, the first “actual” world. Put another way, Bakan says, interpretation is the opposite of generation. The aim of the process of interpretation is to rediscover the processes involved in generation.

Never one to be daunted by tackling any subject if it has a bearing on the subject of interpretation – after all, this paper has room for Sun Tzu, Newton, Mao, Darwin, La Place, and Descartes – Bakan reaches into the world of economics (a world in dire need of interpretation) to further his argument, even calling upon the great British economist John Maynard Keynes in support of his position. Going further afield, Bakan devotes the latter part of his paper to the universe, taking as a starting point the ancient maxim of the Gnostics: What is above is below. Or in Bakan’s construction, “Let us allow that which we have been maintaining, that human being is a being which expresses some of the most important characteristics of the universe at large; and what we might learn about the nature of being human might be more general than human being.” The universe, he contends, is a mental universe, as suggested by mathematics (whose existence is not contingent on human existence) but not limited to mathematics. “Human mentation is then a realization of the abiding mental character of the universe.” With that declaration, Bakan takes his readers into the realm of the metaphysical, although he is obliged to admit that the assumption “that *whatever* exists is thinkable” – a feature of Popper’s third world – has not always been received with “universal assent in the history of thought.” The universe, he says, is not only mental, but is also vital (though he takes pains to distinguish vital from animalist). “What Aristotle called final cause is inextricably interwoven in all phenomena of mentation, if not both mentation and vitality.” Bakan casts a skeptical eye at Darwin, eschewing the notion of blind chance as the sole explanation of evolution; indeed, he maintains that by leading to a more adaptive population, evolution has led to the development of the human capacity to learn. “Darwinism simply fails with respect to deepening our understanding of the nature of human mentation in both its existence and its complexity,” he argues. Even as the so-called experts in science “piously repeat their denials of final causality in connection with human behavior, the final causes play out their roles as the major determinants of what transpires in the world.” Considerable energy and resources are devoted to changing or adjusting the goals and values of people. Economics requires an understanding of final causes; the price associated with any commercial transaction is determined by final causes operating in both buyer and seller. Similarly, no system of justice could function without understanding of final causes (read motives). Otherwise no legal distinction between first-degree murder and manslaughter would be possible. Power itself, Bakan states, is a final cause. Yet at the same time, he acknowledges that such phenomena as biological or physical laws, much less economic laws, cannot be said to have existed before organic life – and in the case of economics, human life – emerged on earth. Mathematics would seem to be different; the relationship between a circle’s circumference and diameter as embodied in pi needs no human understanding or existence to be true. Creation is the key; the creation of human life was made possible only by

creation of the universe and the subsequent creation of organic life; yet humans are capable of creating something novel (e.g., Hamlet, Beethoven's Ninth, and an electric motor). Creativity in the universe led inevitably to the creation of creative human beings. The universe is at once the receiver from actuality – that is, it is constantly in flux due to the phenomena it was responsible for setting in motion – and also the creator of that actuality. Human beings are the agents of actuality while also creations of the actuality of the universe. So, is there room for God in this scheme? Bakan brings in Freud again for a final bow. "Freud was sensitive to the play in which human beings draw from their own substance in their notions and images of God." That substance is, of course, their unconscious, which both feeds the third world and is the repository for the kindling that keeps the ideas in the third world burning. To interpret the mind then is to interpret the whole universe.

The Bookplates and the Rorschach Test

As a sign of ownership, bookplates can be traced back to the inscriptions in books in Europe in the Middle Ages at a time when libraries were becoming more commonplace. The earliest known examples of printed bookplates were German and date from the fifteenth century. As they became more fashionable and more lavishly designed, they spread to other countries. Bookplates even attracted important artists; Albrecht Durer, for instance, engraved six such plates in the early sixteenth century. The development of bookplates was also influenced by the so-called shadow books that were popular in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. These shadow books were composed of silhouettes. People could cut out their own shapes and paste them in. Flipping through the pages of these books became a kind of parlor game. Although the origin of the famous Rorschach inkblot tests has been disputed, there is reason to believe that they might have evolved from shadow books; what began as an entertainment was transformed into a technique used by generations of therapists and analysts to assess their subjects' perceptions and states of mind. In the inkblot tests, what mattered more than the content were the specific details that evoked a response in the subjects and the *determinants* – the elements that triggered the response. Bookplates shared some of these characteristics, sometimes revealing more about the personalities of the owners of the books than the owners might have realized or preferred. After all, bookplates were not only decorative, but could also serve as a means of self-promotion. Embellished with heraldic symbols and mythical imagery, bookplates could proclaim to the browser that the book's owner was someone of substance. The bookplate can reveal an individual's interests, temperament, accomplishments, and ambitions. Often overlooked, historical bookplates can offer some unexpected insight about the personalities of some of the most interesting figures of the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries – psychoanalysts and philosophers no less than politicians and generals. In the final part of our book, we will examine a representative sampling of some of these bookplates and see what they can tell us about the owners of the books which they adorned.

Consider, for example, the bookplate Freud used for books in his private library. It is a reproduction of the embossed image on the famous bronze medallion created by Karl Maria Schwardtner and presented to Freud on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. In addition to Freud's portrait, it also depicts Oedipus encountering the sphinx along with a quotation from Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*: "who divined the famed riddle and was a man most mighty." No doubt Freud saw himself as the diviner, the man who by solving the riddle – interpreting the unconscious – became a man most mighty. And who is to say he was mistaken?

Freud and Determinism

In a kind of coda to the book, we return to Freud, in this case to ask why if Freud was a determinist, as he insisted he was, it makes any sense to think about the interpretation of the mind at all. If our actions are mechanistically determined, if there is no free will, then why bother with trying to figure out someone's motives or intentions – his "first causes." But as David Bakan points out in this brief and compelling essay, what Freud means by determinism and what such philosophers as Democritus and La Place and behaviorists mean by determinism are two different things. "The word 'determinism' has characteristically meant materialistic determinism," he notes. But that is not what Freud was referring to when he used the term. The distinction can be found in the definition of normal. Under ordinary circumstances, Freud believed, an individual does have volitional control. But someone who suffers from neurosis, who is not able to "identify unconscious final causes" – that is, his motives or intentions – lacks that volitional control. In that respect, it can be said that his or her conduct is deterministic. If Freud saw no possibility of distinguishing neurosis from normality, Bakan says, there would be no purpose in psychoanalysis. "Freud is not a determinist in the sense that he would deny the normal existence of voluntary control," Bakan writes. "He is rather the physician who takes on the task of finding a remedy when the person loses that normal volitional control." This leads Bakan to undertake a critique of behaviorism in both its strong and weak forms. The strong form says that mentation does not exist; the weak form concedes its existence but asserts that it cannot be scientifically examined. In both cases, mentation cannot have any determinative influence on conduct. Mentation becomes a shadowy presence with no more substance than the cutouts in a shadow book. It goes without saying that Bakan believes that this is a false argument. Yes, mental and physical phenomena are different, but there is no doubt that they are interconnected. "Becoming aware, say, of having suffered financial loss may be psychological, and blood pressure may be physical," he observes, but a direct connection can frequently be drawn between the former and the latter. Once again Bakan goes where most academics fear to tread by bringing up a subject generally eschewed by academics and analysts alike: metaphysics. He is prepared to address metaphysics even while acknowledging that the "term has been used in the culture of psychologists as a pejorative, equivalent to words like 'nonsense' or 'garbage' or the word