

# Man Dethroned: The Controlling Nature of a Personified Unconscious

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Sigmund Freud once noted that the common denominator of all great scientific revolutions is the dethroning of “man” as the centerpiece of the cosmos. The Copernican revolution saw a geocentric model of the universe replaced by a heliocentric view in which earth was just another celestial body. The Darwinian revolution portrayed the human race not as a shining example of God’s own image but rather as a highly evolved form of ape. Freud felt his own work belonged among the ranks of the great scientific revolutions because of his idea that the unconscious prevents people from ever having control of their own lives and ultimately makes the entire notion of “being in charge” an illusion[1]. Many modern scholars and researchers acknowledge that Freud’s discovery of the unconscious was his greatest contribution to the domain of human thought. The philosopher Jack Copeland notes that “nowadays, it is almost a commonplace amongst psychologists – whether or not they accept any other Freudian themes – that we are not consciously aware of all, or even most, of our mental processes.”[2] But the nature of the unconscious operation, the properties of the unconscious that allow it to take charge, have never been clear; they

have [always](#) been within the [realm](#) of metapsychology, in which things cannot be empirically proven or disproved. There has always existed the question of what it means for something to be “in control” of something else. A negative connotation of “control” exists in the image of a powerful [entity](#) actively controlling a weaker one, as in when a predator attacks its prey; a more positive view is that of the puppeteer bringing his puppet “to...

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...s Press, 2000), 77.

[4] Peter Brooks and Alex Woloch, eds., *Whose Freud?* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 48.

[5] Lesley Chamberlain, *The Secret Artist* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 78.

[6] *ibid*, 79.

[7] Peter Gay, ed., *The Freud Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 569-570.

[8] *ibid*, 236-328.

[9] Judy Jones and William Wilson, *An Incomplete Education* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 438.

[10] Jack Copeland, *Artificial Intelligence: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 34.

[11] Lesley Chamberlain, *The Secret Artist* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 142.

[12] V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1998), 156.

[13] Jack Copeland, *Artificial Intelligence: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 34.

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