

tedious and polemical book is based on the intellectually worthless promise of a Rosetta stone to unlock the mysteries of human intellect, language, and action." The same statement applies remarkably well to *Rethinking Cognitive Theory*, Coulter's sequel to his 1979 book. The sequel is put forward as an attack on dominant trends in cognitive science, yet it discusses almost none of the most important work in that area; it professes to offer alternative approaches to cognitive theory in line with Wittgenstein's philosophy and ethnomethodological perspectives, yet some of these alternative approaches are already alive and well in the field of cognitive psychology (although unacknowledged by Coulter), and the value of others is lost in the obscurity of the exposition.

What seems particularly disappointing is that many of the criticisms of work in cognitive psychology and related disciplines that Coulter brings forward are fair, yet if anything, the book provides fuel for those who disagree with the justness of the criticisms. Coulter's failure to discuss the relevant literature, even when it is fundamentally relevant to his criticisms, leaves his whole attack on current cognitive theories suspect. He complains about the use of unnatural stimuli (lists of unrelated words, series of numbers) in empirical investigations of memory, and he points out that theorists of human memory would do well to keep in mind the observations of everyday memory phenomena, especially in social situations; he makes these points without discussing the contributions of Neisser (e.g., 1978, 1982), who has repeatedly brought to the field's attention the weaknesses of traditional laboratory studies of psychology and the advantages of richer and more ecologically valid investigations of memory phenomena. Similarly, Coulter criticizes cognitive theorists for assuming that the "pre-linguistic" individual (an infant) could possibly have adultlike concepts, yet he makes no mention of the exciting literature in perceptual development and early language acquisition that has tackled this question directly.

More generally, Coulter attacks the assumptions "of 'computational' cognitivism" (p. 6) without ever discussing the many alternative viewpoints within cognitive theorizing. For example, the major influence that the work of Shepard and his colleagues on mental transformations has had on cognitive psychology

(see Kubovy, 1983, for a recent discussion of that influence) is left unmentioned in Coulter's book. Indeed, Shepard's name is not to be found in the bibliography; nor is Craik's, Posner's, Rosch's, Simon's, Treisman's, or Tversky's, to mention just a few of the major theoreticians in cognitive psychology—scholars who would be discussed in even an introductory text on cognition (e.g., Glass, Holyoak, & Santa, 1979). Perhaps such omissions are understandable given that the author is a sociologist, not a psychologist. However, most of the theories of cognition that are attacked in the book have been contributed by psychologists, so the omissions are in fact quite a problem, especially since many of the criticisms are not valid for much of the work within cognitive psychology. Even when making criticisms that are valid for a greater percentage of psychological research, Coulter does not discuss the extensive writings of critics within the discipline (e.g., J. J. Gibson's works are never mentioned).

It is conceivable that there are contributions in *Rethinking Cognitive Theory* that are not apparent to a psychologist. For instance, perhaps some of Coulter's arguments add to the endeavors of philosophers of mind. However, the book does not make a clear and/or compelling case for how insights from philosophy of mind or ethnomethodology contribute to cognitive psychology. As mentioned, this problem seems to be a result of two main shortcomings: First, the issues discussed are not made relevant to psychologists because so many of the intellectual and methodological advances within psychology are ignored. Second, the style of writing used in the book puts the reader in the difficult position of having to try to figure out what is really meant, filtering through much that is indeed "tedious and polemical." Although current perspectives in philosophy of mind and ethnomethodology might have something to contribute to psychology, I do not recommend this book for psychologists.

References

- Glass, A. L., Holyoak, K. J., & Santa, J. L. (1979). *Cognition*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Kubovy, M. (1983). Mental imagery majestically transforming cognitive psychology [Review of *Mental images and their transformations*]. *Contemporary Psychology*, 28, 661-663.
- Lachman, R., & Lachman, J. L. (1980). One Rosetta stone and numerous

Think Again

Jeff Coulter
Rethinking Cognitive Theory
 New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
 190 pp. \$22.50

Review by
 Jennifer J. Freyd

Jeff Coulter is associate professor of sociology at Boston University. He is author of Approaches to Insanity: A Philosophical and Sociological Study. ■ Jennifer J. Freyd is assistant professor of psychology at Cornell University. She is coauthor with J. Baron and J. Stewart of the chapter "Individual Differences in General Abilities Useful in Solving Problems" in R. Nickerson's Attention and Performance VIII.

In their review of Jeff Coulter's previous book (*The Social Construction of Mind*, Rowman & Littlefield, 1979), Lachman and Lachman (1980) open with: "This

illusions [Review of *The social construction of mind: Studies in ethnomethodology and linguistic philosophy*]. *Contemporary Psychology*, 25, 407-408.

Neisser, U. (1978). Memory: What are the important questions? In M. M. Gruneberg, P. E. Morris, & R. N. Sykes (Eds.), *Practical aspects of memory* (pp. 3-24). London: Academic Press.

Neisser, U. (1982). *Memory observed*. San Francisco: Freeman.

One Rosetta stone and numerous
Lachman, R. & Lachman, J. L. (1980).
Psychology 28, 661-662.
and their transformation]. *Contemporary
Psychology* 28, 661-662.
Psychology [Review of Mental Images
magically transforming cognitive
Kubovy, M. (1983). *Mental imagery*
Addison-Wesley.
(1979). *Cognitive Reading*. MA:
Class, A. L., Holyoak, K. J., & Sant, J. L.
References

book for psychologists. I do not recommend this
to psychology. I do not recommend this
ogy might have something to contribute
philosophy of mind and ethnomethod-
ical." Although current perspectives in
much that is indeed "fedorous and polem-
what is really meant, filtering through
position of having to try to figure out
book puts the reader in the difficult
Second, the style of writing used in the
advances within psychology are ignored.
of the intellectual and methodological
want to psychologists because so many
the issues discussed are not made rele-
result of two main shortcomings: First,
mentioned, this problem seems to be a
contribute to cognitive psychology. As
ology of mind or ethnomethodology
being case for how insights from phi-
book does not make a clear and/or com-
of philosophers of mind. However, the
Coulter's arguments add to the endeavor
ologist. For instance, perhaps some of
ory that are not apparent to a psychol-
tributions in *Reframing Cognitive The-*
It is conceivable that there are con-
are never mentioned).

the discipline (e.g., J. J. Gibson's works
the extensive writings of critics within
logical research, Coulter does not discuss
valid for a greater percentage of psycho-
Even when making criticisms that are
of the work within cognitive psychology.
of the critics are not valid for much
quite a problem, especially since many
chologists, so the omissions are in fact
the book have been contributed by psy-
psychologist. However, most of the the-
that the author is a sociologist, not a
such omissions.

One Rosetta stone and numerous
Lachman, R. & Lachman, J. L. (1980).
Psychology 28, 661-662.
and their transformation]. *Contemporary
Psychology* 28, 661-662.
Psychology [Review of Mental Images
magically transforming cognitive
Kubovy, M. (1983). *Mental imagery*
Addison-Wesley.
(1979). *Cognitive Reading*. MA:
Class, A. L., Holyoak, K. J., & Sant, J. L.
References

book for psychologists. I do not recommend this
to psychology. I do not recommend this
ogy might have something to contribute
philosophy of mind and ethnomethod-
ical." Although current perspectives in
much that is indeed "fedorous and polem-
what is really meant, filtering through
position of having to try to figure out
book puts the reader in the difficult
advances within psychology are ignored.
of the intellectual and methodological
want to psychologists because so many
the issues discussed are not made rele-
result of two main shortcomings: First,
mentioned, this problem seems to be a
contribute to cognitive psychology. As
ology of mind or ethnomethodology
being case for how insights from phi-
book does not make a clear and/or com-
of philosophers of mind. However, the
Coulter's arguments add to the endeavor
ologist. For instance, perhaps some of
ory that are not apparent to a psychol-
tributions in *Reframing Cognitive The-*
It is conceivable that there are con-
are never mentioned).

the discipline (e.g., J. J. Gibson's works
the extensive writings of critics within
logical research, Coulter does not discuss
valid for a greater percentage of psycho-
Even when making criticisms that are
of the work within cognitive psychology.
of the critics are not valid for much
quite a problem, especially since many
chologists, so the omissions are in fact
the book have been contributed by psy-
psychologist. However, most of the the-
that the author is a sociologist, not a
such omissions.

Attention and Performance VIII
Solving Problems" in R. Nickerson's
Advances in General Ability: Useful in
Stern of the chapter "Individual Differences
is coauthor with J. Baron and J.
psychology at Cornell University.
Jennifer J. Freyd is assistant professor
Physiological and Sociological Study.
author of *Approaches to Insanity: A
sociology at Boston University. He is
Jeff Coulter is associate professor of*

[Jennifer J. Freyd
Reviews by

199 pp. \$22.50
New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
Reframing Cognitive Theory
Jeff Coulter

Think Again

in their review of Jeff Coulter's previous
book (*The Social Construction of Mind*,
Bowman & Littlefield, 1979), Lachman
and Lachman (1980) open with: "This
major influence that the work of Shepard
and his colleagues on mental transfor-
the many alternative viewpoints within
assumptions" of "computational" cogni-
More generally, Coulter attacks the
led this question directly.

state in perceptual development and
makes no mention of the exciting liter-
possibly have adultlike concepts, yet he
linguistic" individual (an infant) could
theorists for assuming that the "pre-
similarly, Coulter criticizes cognitive
investigations of memory phenomena.
of better and more ecologically valid
studies of psychology and the advantages
the weaknesses of traditional laboratory
tendedly brought to the field's attention
Neisser (e.g., 1978, 1982), who has re-
without discussing the contributions of
in social situations, he makes these points
everyday memory phenomena, especially
to keep in mind the observations of
crits of human memory would do well
of memory, and he points out that the-
of numbers) in empirical investigations
stimuli (sets of unrelated words, series
He complains about the use of unnatural
on current cognitive theories aspect.
to his criticisms, leaves his whole attack
even when it is fundamentally relevant
we to discuss the relevant literature,
justice of the criticisms. Coulter's fail-
fuel for those who disagree with the
fair, yet if anything, the book provides
plines that Coulter brings forward are
cognitive psychology and related disci-
is that many of the criticisms of work in
What seems particularly disappointing
opacity of the exposition.

and the value of others is lost in the
(although unacknowledged by Coulter),
well in the field of cognitive psychology
perspectives, yet some of these alterna-
philosophy and ethnomethodological
native theory in line with Wittgenstein's
to offer alternative approaches to cog-
important work in that area; it professes
yet it discusses almost none of the ma-
dominant trends in cognitive science
sequel is put forward as an attack on
Coulter's sequel to his 1979 book.
well to Reframing Cognitive Theory.
The same statement applies remarkably
human intellect, language, and action."
Rosetta stone to unlock the mysteries of
the intellectually worthless promise of a
tious and polemical book is based on