

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

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Think Again

Jeff Coulter
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 190 pp. \$22.50

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

