

Some reviews of the 1978 edition of  
**The Computer Revolution in Philosophy:  
Philosophy Science and Models of Mind**  
<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/crp/>

Aaron Sloman  
<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~axs>

**Added to online version:** 4 Oct 2007; Updated: 15 Dec 2014; 28 Jul 2015  
**Moved to separate document:** 26 Dec 2015

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This document is

<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/crp/crp-reviews.html>

also available as

<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/crp/crp-reviews.pdf>

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## **Review by Douglas Hofstadter:**

BULLETIN (New Series) OF THE AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY

Volume 2, Number 2, March 1980 (Copyright 1980 American Mathematical Society)

*The computer revolution in philosophy: Philosophy, science and models of mind*

by Aaron Sloman, Harvester Studies in Cognitive Science Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N. J., 1978, xvi + 304 pp., cloth, \$22.50.

Reviewed by Douglas R. Hofstadter

<http://www.ams.org/bull/1980-02-02/S0273-0979-1980-14752-7/S0273-0979-1980-14752-7.pdf>

NOTE: Previously the following link worked, but now fetches a different document:

<http://www.ams.org/bull/1980-02-02/S0273-0979-1980-14750-3/S0273-0979-1980-14750-3.pdf>

My thanks to Steve Witham for pointing out the error.

## **Comment**

(Hofstadter's review rightly criticises some of the unnecessarily aggressive tone and throw-away remarks, but also gives a thorough assessment of the main ideas of the book.

However, like many researchers in AI (and probably most in philosophy, including Stephen Stich, [in the review referenced below](#)), Hofstadter regards the philosophy of science in the first part of this book, e.g. [Chapter 2](#), as relatively uninteresting, whereas I still think (in 2015) that understanding those issues is central to understanding how human minds work as they learn more about the world and themselves. Some of my recent work is still trying to get to grips with those issues in the context of a theory of varieties of learning and development in biological and artificial systems, e.g. in connection with the EU funded [CoSy robotic project \(2004-8\)](#), followed by the EU funded [CogX project \(2008-12\)](#), but most importantly by the (unfunded) Turing-inspired Meta-Morphogenesis project begun late 2011:

<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/misc/meta-morphogenesis.html>.

## Review by Stephen Stich

**NOTE added: 15 Dec 2014 (Also referenced at end of Chapter 2)**

A review of this book was published by Steven P. Stich, in 1981  
*The Computer Revolution in Philosophy: Philosophy, Science and Models of Mind*, by Aaron Sloman. Reviewed by Stephen P. Stich in  
*The Philosophical Review*,  
Vol. 90, No. 2 (Apr., 1981), pp. 300-307

That review has now been made available, with the author's permission, here:

<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/crp/stich-review-crp.html>

Part of the review criticised the notion of 'Explaining possibilities' as one of the aims of science and my use of Artificial Intelligence as an example, Chapter 2.

A partial response to the review by Stich (and implicitly also a response to Hofstadter) is now available in this discussion of explanations of possibilities based on "construction kits":

<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/misc/explaining-possibility.html>

(That is still work in progress.)

## Other reviews of this book:

**Added: 4 Jun 2017**

- Review by Martin Ringle:  
*The Computer Revolution in Philosophy: Philosophy, Science, and Models of Mind*.  
by Martin Ringle, in *Nous*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1982  
A. P. A. Western Division Meetings (Mar., 1982), pp. 170-174 Published by: Wiley  
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2215430>
- (Others to be added...)

## Other references to this book:

Comments on the historical significance of this book can be found in [the introduction](#) to Luciano Floridi's textbook "[Philosophy of information](#)" available on Blackwell's site:

[http://media.wiley.com/product\\_ancillary/91/06312291/DOWNLOAD/introduction.zip](http://media.wiley.com/product_ancillary/91/06312291/DOWNLOAD/introduction.zip)

Several of the reviews published in response to the original book are now available online, e.g. [Donald Mackay's review](#) in the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* Vol 30 No 3 (1979), which castigated me for not reviewing previous relevant work by Craik, Wiener and McCulloch. An excellent survey of their work and others is now available in [Margaret Boden's](#) two volume *Mind as Machine: A History of Cognitive Science* published by [Oxford University Press](#) 29th June 2006 (see also <http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/misc/boden-mindasmachine.html>)

Perhaps the earliest published reference to this book is this paper by two neuroscientists, which refers to some of the ideas in Chapter 6, which had been circulated earlier:

Shallice, T., & Evans, M. E. (1978). The involvement of the frontal lobes in cognitive estimation. *Cortex*, 14, 294-303, available at:

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~evansem/shallice-evans.doc>

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