

Reply to Jordan

Andrew McPherson and Charles D Raab

Jordan warns of Babel but claims that different 'truths' cannot be arbitrated. He cannot intend this self-contradictory position. Nor does he maintain it when he prefers his account of the Scottish myth to ours. Again, he says, rightly, that we show 'how networks can operate by subconsciously selecting participants with particular values'. Thus Jordan concedes that there can be logical grounds for preferring a particular account of others' views and behaviour. Were there not, Babel would multiply and we would indeed 'wring our hands' over reality.

Description is practical politics. Does 'vocational education' describe a liberating or an enslaving curriculum? The Labour Party has never decided. Description is also academic politics. Can the reality of educational governance be adequately expressed by the vocabulary of one academic discipline? One must look to other social sciences as well, and also to educational practice. Is this 'self-indulgent'? No, but it risks self interest. Hence our concern with the safeguards of theory, method, and evidence.

Jordan writes that 'pluralism and corporatism have not been constructed as clearly specified and easily applied theories. It is tempting to see them as alternatives but unwise'. We say the same (pp. xii, 12, 22, 473, 482). We discuss big ideas, not big names. A pervasive theme of the book is the effect of educational expansion on power-dependencies in government. This is more than a 'nod' in Rhodes' direction (see p.472). Jordan's own work equates the concepts of 'subgovernment' and 'policy community'. The latter is a second pervasive theme, *pace* Jordan. We do indeed conclude that educational governance since 1945 fits no theory tidily. But how could a reader conclude the same before we presented the story (ninetenths of the book)? Is Jordan really content to write for a reader who 'simply wants to know who exercised power'? Simply indeed! Incidentally, Jordan's preferred account of myth is ours too. We explicitly rejected the view, wrongly attributed to us, that myth is merely false belief (see pp.407, 498- 501).