

always had his critics. He once wrote to Joseph Chamberlain mentioning "Oxford notions of what a University ought to be", and these would certainly have to be taken into account if this portrait of Haldane were to be expanded into a monograph on continuity and change in British higher education. The very idea of 'system' offended some critics, and the German philosophical language in which it was often expressed (sometimes with dangerous political potential) offended more.

Given a systematic approach in a country where it is easy to spurn enthusiasts in education as well as logic, what obviously counted then, as now, was the quality of the people making the key decisions concerning its operations and planning. Haldane was fortunate that there were far-sighted civil servants in London who shared his vision, but what would have happened had his ideas on 'regionalisation'—Ashby and Anderson call them a gospel—been fully implemented? Those are ideas which are not yet dead, although they are often advanced by people without vision or Hegelian philosophy—politicians and others seeking to co-ordinate in order to make education cheaper or "more equal". It would have been interesting had Ashby and Anderson pursued this story a little further, for they do not return to it in their epilogue. Haldane envisaged a system of 'regional' universities—and this involved bringing new universities into existence—each with responsibilities outside higher education as well as in extramural studies.

He never doubted, however, that the universities should "preside benignly" over the regional sub-systems which he called "educational provinces". The "great kind of coordination" of which

he dreamed was not achieved, but if it had been pushed further would it have been under the aegis of the universities? Haldane did not envisage the local authorities as the providers of funds—though he insisted that they should have an initiating and maintaining role in the dynamics of development—but even without funding powers would they have been willing to allow universities "the powers necessary to enable them to organise education from top to toe in their own districts"? How many of them, given expansion of student numbers, would have shared Haldane's view that higher education was "an end in itself"? How many members of his own party shared this view at the time?

Many of the most valuable paragraphs in this book are concerned with aspects of British higher education which do not relate exclusively to Haldane but which have never been very carefully considered in historical perspective. Thus, the sections on the University Grants Committee dispose of some historical misunderstandings and there are new insights into Fisher's Education Act of 1918. What often stands out is the meanness of the Treasury; a few thousand pounds can be argued about inordinately. It is sad to hear Haldane making remarks like "the only effective way of getting the money is by private appeals to very rich men", but it is sadder still to note that, leaving the Treasury on one side, very few rich men indeed showed the slightest interest in responding.

Portrait of Haldane at Work on Education. By Eric Ashby and Mary Anderson. Pp. xvi+202. (Macmillan: London and Basingstoke, November 1974.) £5.95.

To cross linguistic barriers

After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation. By George Steiner. Pp. viii+507. (Oxford University Press: London, New York and Toronto, January 1975.) £8.00.

ONE strain in the extraordinary logical and philosophical ferment of the Thirties was I. A. Richards' thesis that literature itself had become a proper subject for scientific investigation in that general hypotheses about meaning and interpretation could be tested by the examination of texts. George Steiner's magnificent book should be seen as a survivor from that age of dinosaurs, still very much alive in our own time. To read the book one must actually be interested in literature; it is not enough to be schooled in any of the more recent attempts to handle language in a scientifically acceptable manner, such as Chomskyan linguistics or artificial intelligence.

In Steiner's view, the scientific approach to language has got into the hands of the bad guys, of people who have forgotten what language is actually like. To the extent to which he is right, the book should be compulsory reading for 'language scientists'. He draws attention to the fact that they are usually monolingual (he has been trilingual from an early age) and that little that they have to say is relevant to the real world of spoken and written language because they have a false picture in that they see language simply as a projection of whatever formalism they happen to subscribe to, a formalism that may be quite untrue to the language that comes out of their mouths, just as earlier theorists speculated about phlogiston while their lungs kept them alive by absorbing oxygen.

One might reply that criticism of a scientific activity by appeal to cultural information is absurd: Galileo's opposition, after all, had strong literary evidence for the movement of the Sun. But with language the case is different and, unlike Koestler, Steiner is taking on not established sciences, but would-be sciences like linguistics, philosophy and artificial intelligence; subjects on which Steiner is as much entitled to a hearing as the next man. In particular, he is arguing that anything claiming to be a theory of language must have something interesting to say about translation.

There are three obvious troubles with the way Steiner makes his case: his style of argument, the implausibility of his central thesis about the equivalence of translation and interpretation, and the omission of a large issue that scientists would like to see raised (and

THE brain is a mass of soft matter, in part of a white colour, and generally striated; in part of a grey or cineritious colour, having no fibrous appearance. It has grand divisions and subdivisions: and as the forms exist before the solid bone incloses the brain; and as the distinctions of parts are equally observable in animals whose brain is surrounded with fluid, they evidently are not accidental, but are a consequence of internal structure; or in other words they have a correspondence with distinctions in the uses of the parts of the brain.

On examining the grand divisions of the brain we are forced to admit that there are four brains. For the brain is divided longitudinally by a deep fissure; and the line of distinction can even be traced where the sides are united in substance. Whatever we observe

on one side has a corresponding part on the other; and an exact resemblance and symmetry is preserved in all the lateral divisions of the brain. And so, if we take the proof of anatomy, we must admit that as the nerves are double, and the organs of sense double, so is the brain double; and every sensation conveyed to the brain is conveyed to the two lateral parts; and the operations performed must be done in both lateral portions at the same moment.

I speak of the lateral divisions of the brain being distinct brains combined in function, in order the more strongly to mark the distinction betwixt the anterior and posterior grand divisions. Betwixt the lateral parts there is a strict resemblance in form and substance: each principal part is united by transverse tracts of medullary matter; and

The observations of Charles Bell. From *The Way In and The Way Out*. By Paul F. Cranefield. (Futura: New York, 1974.) \$25.00.