Book reviews

THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE, BIOMEDICAL PROGRESS AND HUMAN VALUES By R. M. Kunz and H. Fehr. (Pp. 456; illustrated.) Birkhäuser: Basel. 1972.

In 1971 F. Hoffman—La Roche & Co. Ltd., in Basel celebrated their 75th anniversary and as one part of this invited a group of very prominent persons to participate in a symposium, of which this volume constitutes the record of that meeting. However, this symposium differed in many aspects from the more usual of this type of meeting. Roche indicated a general outline after which the group met to formulate the programme.

Three main divisions were chosen: biomedical frontiers, the impact of biomedical progress on society and the individual, and, finally, 'the right to health'. Speakers were chosen and the papers they prepared were precirculated and are contained in the second half of the book. On the two and a half days of the meeting the authors of the papers added comments, and they were followed by general and very lively discussions, and this makes up the first half of the volume.

The speakers, on the whole very senior, included scientists, a few physicians (mainly of professorial rank), theologians, sociologists, anthropologists, lawyers, and geneticists from Europe and America. Each spoke in his own language and the papers and discussion are thus recorded in English, French, and German.

It was apparent that the sub-heading of the symposium was a more exact definition than the main title, as much that was said was of a philosophical nature; even the theologians did not venture into real and fundamental questions relating to the challenge of life. Nevertheless, there were some fascinating and most interesting comments. In regard to drugs Dr. Goldstein tells us that 4% of the population of the U.S. are alcoholics, while Dr. Hersch proclaims that man has no common moral standard, while Dr. Berry says that it is impossible to separate the functioning of the body from education and from economics. It is unfortunate that an Englishman did not correctly spell the name of one of the greatest living British neurologists.

Lord Zuckerman, one of the speakers, commented on his concept of the direction of research and it is interesting to record that he was easily outnumbered by those in opposition.

The volume is exceptionally well produced and will be of much interest to those of an academic and philosophic outlook.

J. N. CUMINGS

INTRODUCTION À LA NEUROPSYCHOLOGIE By Henri Hécaen. (Pp. 328; illustrated; price not stated.) Librairie Larousse: Paris. 1972.

The name of the author of this impressive paperback has long been a household word in neuropsychology. His contributions to the study of dysphasia and allied disorders have established for him an international reputation. The title of the book is rather misleading as it does not really constitute an introduction in the usual sense of the word. It is at the same time very much more and very much less. Instead of attempting to cover the field in a comprehensive but superficial manner Hécaen has highlighted three broad areas which have been dealt with in some depth. These are: disorders of speech, perception and gesture (or movement). The last is an inexact translation of the French 'geste' for which there is no true English equivalent. It describes the basic function which is disturbed in the apraxias. The reviewer, a psychiatrist, can only lament over the fact that Hécaen did not choose to venture beyond disorders caused by indentifiable brain disease. For instance, the distorted speech and perception of the schizophrenic receive only a passing reference. This is only a small failing which does detract from the sense of excitement which is engendered by the imaginative and informative way in which the subject is presented. If exposure to such books is to be seen as a side-effect of Britain's entry into the Common Market then all our workers in the neurosciences will rapidly become ardent supporters of the Treaty of Rome.

RAYMOND LEVY

SPECIFIC DYSLLEXIA By Sandhya Naidoo. (Pp. 165; £3.00.) Pitman: London. 1972.

Mrs. Naidoo's research report for the Invalid Children's Aid Association is entitled *Specific Dyslexia*, yet she concludes that several distinct aetiological factors may be implicated either singly or in combination in the genesis of this condition.

It is generally acknowledged that there is a small but important group of children who are of average intelligence yet unable to read or write with fluency.

It was recognized that their educational difficulties had been magnified by poor facilities for diagnosis and treatment and this prompted the establishment of the Word Blind Centre.

The very existence of specific dyslexia was the subject of widespread controversy among neurologists, psychologists, and teachers. Every shade of opinion was held. Part of the original remit given to the research workers was the investigation of the nature and causes of this disability. Remedial teaching was made available whenever it was required or was geographically feasible.

The subjects of this study formed a small, self-selecting group. Matching them boy for boy with 'normal' children provided only small numbers for statistical analysis.

The comments on the dyslexic child's particular handicaps are highly relevant, yet the contrasts with the peer group are less convincing. Community studies or school children have shown for example that left handedness is no more common among dyslexic children than in the general population.

Specific Dyslexia provides an excellent account of the work at the Word Blind Centre and is a tribute to the imaginative and dedicated people who worked there.

I. T. DRAPER

CEREBRAL BLOOD FLOW AND INTRACRANIAL PRESSURE
Edited by C. Fieschi. (Pp. 238; illustrated; £17.60.) Karger: Basel. 1972.

This well-produced, handsome book records the papers given at the Fifth International Symposium on Cerebral Blood Flow held in Rome and Siena in October, 1971. It contains 110 papers and 14 pages of the discussion which formed the final session of the meeting. As with previous conferences the range is wide with section headings including autoregulation, chemical and neurogenic control, focal ischaemia, carotid surgery, subarachnoid haemorrhage, cerebrovascular disease, and intracranial tumour (odd bed-fellows in one section), head injury and experimental raised intracranial pressure. This does not suggest any overall theme although the organizers make several claims for a theme, but each one is different. In the foreword the claim is that attention is focused on head injury and intracranial pressure. In small type on the title page there is a sub-title 'Cerebral blood flow regulation, acid-base and energy metabolism in acute brain injuries' while the main title is 'Cerebral blood flow and intracranial pressure'. This is quite deceptive because less than 10% of the papers are on this topic, and this volume should not be confused with the report of the International Conference on Intracranial Pressure which was held in Hanover in 1972. Many leaders in this

field, who were themselves participants, considered that the Rome-Siena conference came too soon after the London meeting the previous year for there to be a considerable body of new work to report. As might be expected there certainly were some thinly disguised repeats of previously good presentations. Nevertheless, the book is a must for those in the field, even though most worthwhile work briefly reported here is likely to emerge in fuller form elsewhere. The rather terse style demanded by limitations of length of text, together with the restriction on the number of illustrations, may make it difficult for the uninitiated to grasp the full meaning of all the communications. The essentially ephemeral nature of this kind of preliminary exchange of information between experts is ideally suited to the kind of inexpensive paperback which was produced soon after the London meeting. To put such material between hard covers at the price of £17 is somewhat pretentious and inappropriate.

BRYAN JENNETT

ABRÉGÉ DE NEUROLOGIE By J. Cambier and M. Masson. (Pp. 575; 171 figures; 37F.) Masson: Paris. 1972.

This synopsis of neurology for undergraduates is remarkably good. It achieves an excellent compromise between simplification and comprehensiveness and is illustrated by very good line drawings. The fortunate readers of this book should acquire a genuine understanding of modern neurology. The arrangement of the book is good and the well-selected references are international.

J. A. SIMPSON

SLEEP RESEARCH: A critical review By Frank R. Freeman. (Pp. 205; illustrated; \$14.15.) Thomas: Springfield, Ill. 1972.

Here is a small, costly book about sleep. It is clearly written, though not always accurately. Despite the title, the author summarizes rather than critically reviews knowledge. He is strongest on studies of unit activity in animal brains and good on the relation between epileptic EEG activity and sleep, but weak on biological rhythms, dreaming and human sleep. He says repeatedly that the delay between sleep onset and the first REM sleep period is about two hours, when actually it is one hour.

It is misleading to say that the sleep attack of the narcolepsy/cataplexy patient is an episode of REM sleep. Often it is, but equally as often it is not at the time of a first recording and repeated recordings are then needed to demonstrate whether the patient will sometimes reveal this pathognomonic feature. To state that among hypnotics only barbiturates have a