

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 identifiable 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.