Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry, 1978, **41**, 387-388

Book reviews

Dysmorphies cranio-faciales. Les synostoses prematures (craniostenoses et faciostenoses) By J. Montaut and M. Stricker. (Pp. 300; illustrated; price not stated.) Masson: Paris. 1977.

The close relationship which exists between craniosynostosis and the congenital facial abnormalities is now widely recognised, and has, of necessity, thrown the neurosurgeon and the plastic surgeon together in an effort to deal adequately with these complicated and often tragic problems. The French have for many years led the world in the surgical management of such disorders, and it is appropriate that this very timely monograph should come from that country.

After a brief historical introduction and résumé of craniofacial embryology, the authors classify and describe the relationships between the various craniofacial dysostoses and the secondary complications which may occur. The latter part of the book is taken up with the physical and radiological investigations used in these patients and the various surgical manoeuvres to correct the deformities described, with the authors' individual contributions in this field.

As one would expect from the French school, the chapters on description and classification are excellent and these, together with the section on the neurological and intellectual complications occurring as a result of the abnormalities, are in many ways the most valuable. Surgeons involved in this field will have read of the authors' techniques in the specialist journals, and it is doubtful if the section on surgical treatment is of much practical value to the operating surgeon. In so far as it stresses the intimate relationship between the skull vault deformities and the facial deformities it will be of considerable help in persuading those neurosurgeons and paediatric surgeons who treat only the vault that in many patients this is dealing with only a part of the overall problem.

Because of its logical layout and full illustration this book is not difficult to read even for those with a minimal working knowledge of the French language. It can be recommended to all interested in the expanding field of craniofacial surgery. In view of its well-selected bibliography, it will be of particular value in the English speaking countries where much valuable basic and practical work in European language journals is not always readily available.

T. A. H. HIDE

The Purposive Brain By Ragnar Granit. (Pp. 244; illustrated; £8.75.) MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London. 1977.

In its arresting title, Professor Granit's new book proclaims his philosophy that teleological explanations, far from being disparaged, should be encouraged in biological research, for observations only become integrated when their purpose is apparent or supposed. Writing for the reader with some knowledge of biology but without specialised knowledge of neurophysiology, the author draws on his life's work on the physiology of vision and the control of motor activity to illustrate the general principles of the input and output systems of the brain, with the marvellous lability of response made possible by the encephalisation of functions done more peripherally in primitive animals, but unless the output be "goal-directed" the greater adaptability is of little significance. Granit's philosophy is emphasised in three statements: (1) from simultaneously available information the purposive brain selects what it finds biologically useful; (2) in this way it employs its billions of neurones to create unique cellular organs of high specificity combining information from various sources with action; (3) such organs are mobilised by injecting into them components that we describe in such psychological terms as motivation, interest, anger, demand, or accomplishment—in short, relevance for some biological purpose.

The general reader may find some of the factual material more difficult than the author appreciates (and misuse of "cue" where "clue" is intended causes temporary confusion) but the general message comes over clearly, and follows Sherrington and Eccles into the realms of higher cerebral functions and consciousness. Pity it is that the experimental insights of great physiologists are not applied to these problems at the height of their powers.

J. A. SIMPSON

Cerebral Vascular Disease Edited by J. S. Meyer, H. Lechner, and M. Reivich. (Pp. 28; illustrated; $54.50, Dfl. 133.00.) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam. 1977.

The appearance of the Proceedings of the Eighth Salzburg Conference is proof either of continuing interest in cerebrovascular disease or of eternal optimism on the part of the publishing business. The organisers of the 1976 conference have turned aside from the previous preoccupation with the pathogenesis of cerebrovascular disease and have boldly embarked on a new course: the role of the cerebral circulation in dementia. It is unfortunate, though perhaps inevitable, that the care and precision expended by numerous investigators on measurement of cerebral blood flow (CBF) has seldom been matched in the clinical examination of patients. Other recurring faults concern the selection of "normal controls" either for blood flow or intellectual function, and the comparability of repeated measurements in the same patient. It seems that the present CBF techniques may not be appropriate for detecting the rapid functional changes which occur during neurophysiological testing.

Nevertheless the distinction which emerges on both circulatory and pathological grounds between primary neuronal and secondary arteriopathic dementia (now curiously renamed "multi-infarct dementia") is of great importance when considering both the management of patients and the direction of future research.

The remainder of the conference deals with a great variety of cerebrovascular topics, some clinical and some methodological. The great European tradition of neuropathology appears to be in abeyance. The proceedings of the conference have been produced by a