whose lengths vary with the amount of information available under each chapter heading and in this respect the book is well proportioned. One page on the radiology of the condition is entirely sufficient, as are two pages on its psychology. By contrast, some 46 pages are devoted to a detailed morphological study of the muscle and peripheral nerve. They cover the history, clinical features, a tentative classification based on the author's experience, morphology, electrophysiology, radiology, psychology, biochemistry, immunology, and so forth.

This book summarises very adequately and comprehensively the profusion of recent reports on the spinal muscular atrophies, and it has not suffered in translation. I consider it essential reading for all who are interested in this group of conditions.

J. P. BALLANTYNE

Nerve-Muscle Interaction By G. Vrbová, T. Gordon, and R. Jones. (Pp. 233; illustrated; £15.00.) Chapman and Hall: London. 1978.

This well-written book has arrived at a most opportune time. Nerve and muscle research is one of the most active aspects of the neurosciences, and the influence of nerve on muscle and vice versa is increasingly attracting the interest of research workers. There is a very considerable literature on this subject, and in this book the authors have summarised the current knowledge and hypotheses in this field. It deals with embryology of nerve and muscle, developmental anatomy and physiology of motor nerves, neuromuscular junctions, and muscle fibres. Later chapters deal with the effects of denervation on muscle, the mechanisms of reinnervation and plasticity in the neuromuscular system. This volume is not simply a catalogue of present knowledge. The authors continually question and offer hypotheses for various published observations. Our understanding of nerve-muscle interactions is heavily weighted on the side of the trophic influence of nerve on muscle and little is known of how or in what way muscle itself influences the motor nerve cell and its axon.

This book, I am sure, will have a wide interdisciplinary appeal in the neurosciences and can be unreservedly recommended.

J. P. BALLANTYNE

Dyslexia: An Appraisal of Current Knowledge Edited by Arthur L. Benton and David Pearl. (Pp. 544; £15.00.) Oxford University Press: New York. 1978.

The publishers say that this book "provides a comprehensive, interdisciplinary and rigorously critical evaluation of current knowledge about dyslexic disorders", but that alone need not deter potential readers. It contains a number of papers given at a research conference sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health in 1977. As such it is repetitive, contradictory, and of uneven quality. For those who are familiar with the background literature and the specialised terminology it provides a summary of today's conflicting theories and the data upon which they are based. There is a notable dissatisfaction with the definition of the term dyslexia and while most of the experts agree on its deficiencies, no generally acceptable alternative is proposed. Many of the widely held beliefs about the nature of dyslexia were the result of gifted intellectual deductions. These have not been borne out by research and while it is disconcerting to find that fundamental beliefs have been challenged, the very openness of the current approach offers new ways of thinking about the problem.

This is not a systematic account of reading difficulties with well argued conclusions but it is a stimulating and at the same time irritating summary of current ideas.

I. T. DRAPER

Advances in Anatomy, Embryology and Cell Biology. By D. G. Jones. (Pp. 69; illustrated; £9.00.) Springer-Verlag: Berlin, Heidelberg, New York. 1978.

This is an anatomical journal and, since it publishes commissioned review articles, the standard is extremely high. This issue is no exception and contains a summary of current knowledge of the presynaptic terminal, particularly the parasympathetic densities, the vesicle attachment sites, and the microtubular system. As is to be expected the articles are concerned mostly with morphology, but there are occasional references to other disciplines. Although this issue will be of interest to all neuroscientists it will be of particular value to the synaptologist.

S. GALBRAITH

Tuberculous Meningitis: A Handbook for Clinicians By Malcolm Parsons. (Pp. 55+21; £4.50.) Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1979.

This is a short account of the pathology, diagnosis, and treatment of tuberculous meningitis, with a useful review of drugs in the appendix. Clinical examination is briefly mentioned—too briefly to be of great help to the general physician and, perhaps more importantly, to his junior staff. Indeed, they would be better advised to consult some of the recent reviews of tuberculous meningitis cited by the author. The specialist may disagree with some of the author's views—for example, that both streptomycin and isoniazid should be given intrathecally—and would appreciate a more detailed review of the Oxford experience with PPD. In all, an uneven and unsatisfactory book, expensively priced at £4.50 for 55 octavo pages.

MYFANWY THOMAS

Colour Vision: An Historical Introduction By G. S. Wasserman. (Pp. 200; illustrated; £13.40.) John Wiley and Sons: New York. 1978.

The study of colour vision is an interdisciplinary one and many famous scientists and philosophers have contributed to it. It is, therefore, appointing that Professor Wasserman should have chosen for this review of those writings which support an idiosyncratic approach to the subject. The book fails as an intended introduction to the subject for nonspecialists because it denies several basic principles, including trichromacy. Although brightness enhancement and early microspectrophotometric research are given detailed treatment, important recent work and the contributions made by densitometry and selective bleaching are ignored. The characteristics of defective colour vision are correctly stated. Great length is devoted to component, opponent, and zone theories of colour vision but how these are now linked to produce a composite framework for understanding colour vision processes is not clearly described.

JENNIFER BIRCH

Atlas de Crisis Epilépticas By L. Olle Daurella and L. Oller Ferrer-Vidal. (Pp. 322; price not stated.) Geigis Divisió Farmacéutica: Barcelona. 1977.

Book reviews

The authors must have worked very hard to prepare this atlas which includes a series of colour photographs taken from a videotape during a variety of seizures together with the EEG possibly recorded simultaneously. At times, in addition to the EEG, an electro-oculogram records the movements of the eyeballs during an attack. When necessary a surface electromyogram and an electrocardiogram are recorded as well.

The authors not only mention that they are "great friends of Professor Henri Gastaut" from Marseilles but follow his ideas very closely and are very keen on his classification of seizures. The illustrations of the EEG events are well selected even if the celestial colour of the inking gives a less satisfactory contrast than black and white. Following the *Epilepsy Dictionary*, the presentation is didactic for each group of seizures describing (1) the clinical aspects of the attack (with motor, sensory, somatosensory, "vegetative" symptoms and mixed forms, (2) the EEG features during the attacks, (3) the EEG features between attacks, (4) the anatomical evidence, (5) the aetiology, and (6) the age of the patient. Such a scheme is clear at first but, later on, the clinical and EEG aspects become predominant, and the rest is no longer mentioned. This is understandable as the anatomical evidence is usually lacking and the aetiology is generally unknown.

Here and there, odd drawings are included to convince the reader of the mechanisms which are supposed to underlie the sequence of events during an attack or some of the patient's subjective impressions. What fun to illustrate with red stars and blue arrows some aspects described by the patients during "elementary visual attacks" and the colours are very striking and beautifully printed. Pity that on page 88 the sketch of salami and smoked ham is only in black and white!

Some of the drawings, such as the impression of micropsia, macropsia, or diplopia, are useful. A variety of sketches (some in colour) depict the visual hallucinations during an epileptic seizure or the musical aspects of auditory hallucination. The authors left out the drawings on "vegetative hallucinations" probably because they call their patient's attack "orgasmolesia."

The EEG features are presented throughout with an amplification appropriate to the size of the signals and a paper-speed of 15 mm per second. It is surprising that no artefacts appear during a variety of seizures while the EEGs are recorded through pad electrodes or "tripodes." I was unable to find any specification of the time constant employed or the high frequency cut. Towards the end of the text (page 307) there is the description of "anarchic epileptic attacks" which are said to constitute a variety of "unilateral attacks" but which occur during the first month of life. The concept of anarchy is obviously different in Spain from other countries and the reasons why these attacks are classified as anarchic is that the rhythmic discharges "vary in distribution from one region to another."

Only one page (313) is devoted to "unclassified epileptic attacks" (12% out of their 3000 patients with epilepsy in Barcelona). On this aspect the authors differ from Gastaut's figures of 23.5% of unclassified seizures. The desire for classifying seizures is widespread on both sides of the Atlantic and few people seem to be aware of the futility of such an exercise. The bibliography is very selective (three pages) and two pages are devoted to the many papers of Dr L. Oller-Daurella. A brief index is helpful to identify examples of each "class" of seizures. The publishers should be congratulated on the presentation of this substantial atlas which weighs kg 1.760.

G. PAMPIGLIONE

Epilepsy and You By Frank O. Volle and Patricia A. Heron. (Pp. 70; price not stated.) Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, Illinois. 1978.

Although this book is written by two American psychologists for American readers most of what it has to say is applicable internationally. It is designed to help people with epilepsy to cope effectively with their problems and, generally speaking, it succeeds in this aim.

Unfortunately, the first chapters dealing with the medical aspects of epilepsy leave something to be desired. For example, there is a lack of clear distinction between epilepsy and epileptic seizures and between auras and pre-ictal

phases. Furthermore, undue weight is given to the EEG as a diagnostic instrument, and the description of temporal lobe epilepsy is somewhat misleading.

The main portion of this book comprises six chapters dealing with such topics as doctor-patient relationships, the taking of medication, family and social relationships, employment, self-help, and future expectations. These matters are covered very adequately and contain much useful advice. The rules about taking medication are sound and clearly expressed with the aid of brief illustrative case histories. The authors very rightly stress the importance of what people with epilepsy think of themselves, as opposed to what other people think about epilepsy, when the problems of social adjustment have to be faced. The advice given to families is excellent, and the authors do well in emphasising the importance of adequate preparation before meeting a prospective employer. In matters of self-help commonsense rules are recommended, although the case histories quoted concern rather exceptional individuals. The long-term implications of epilepsy are discussed very briefly, and a guide to relevant American organisations is given in the penultimate chapter. The final chapter embodies a list of recommended additional reading material. Those books which are written specially for lay readers will be helpful but the recommended scientific books will probably make rather heavy reading for most, and the list of books of drugs seems a little out of date.

MAURICE PARSONAGE

Behavioural Treatment of Obsessional States By H. R. Beech and M. Vaughan. (Pp. 189; price not stated.) John Wiley and Sons: Chichester. 1978.

It has been said that although the behaviourists have successfully stolen the psychoanalysts' clothes they are no more able to wear them. The major exception to this statement lies in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive neurosis where the formerly gloomy prognosis has been significantly improved by behavioural means. This development stems from Meyer's suggestion in 1966 that if an obsessional patient could be prevented from carrying out his avoidance rituals his anxiety would eventually diminish and he would