both sides of the Atlantic this is an onerous task.

Some recent books have abandoned the traditional systematic approach and attempted a symptom based classification, for example, taking dizziness, pain in the leg, spastic paresis or blackouts as the starting point, then considering at length the various major diseases falling under these headings. The resulting texts are often inchoate. This book first considers neurological symptoms and signs in relationship to anatomy, including the use and abuse of modern investigations. The second section deals with the common symptom complexes and the third describes more systematically specific pathological processes, their presentation and management. The penultimate chapter concerns the neurology of systemic disease, the last surveys functional and psychiatric disorders.

The authors were successively first assistants in Newcastle, so that a robust practical but scientific trend is not surprising, and is indeed just what is needed by the trainee. In just under 500 pages of two column print, the text covers the panoply of neurological medicine very well indeed. The writing is generally crisp and reflects clinical grasp and facility of a high order. It is a pity that we are left to guess the authorship of each chapter, though the distinctive marks of Bates on MS, Cartledge on coma and Chadwick on epilepsy are not difficult to discern. The exposition and explanations are detailed and up to date throughout the text. The figures are of outstanding clarity, and numerous tables, lists and classifications will greatly ease the acquisition of facts by the student.

This is an excellent text which I would warmly recommend not only to the post-graduates and generalists for whom it is intended, but also to the brighter undergraduate in his final year who seeks a slightly fuller but explicit account of nervous diseases than will be found in the standard student textbooks. Criticisms are few and of a minor order. There are a number of typographical errors; the section on pain and headache is disproportionately brief; migraine and HIV infections are each apportioned only 3 pages, but syringomyelia receives the same coverage. The final section on psychiatry is apt and helpful, but perhaps too brief to do justice to the clinician's dilemma which necessitates the separation of the organic from the non-organic and, the philosophical futility of trying to do so.

There are many contemporary rival texts, but the practical clinical approach, the freshness of a text written by those at the peaks of their careers and the wealth of informative tabulated and illustrated material deserve to make this top of the list for young physicians and neurologists. I hope it runs to many editions.

JMS PEARCE

Current Neurology Vol. 9. Edited by S H APPEL. (Pp 287; Price: £56.50). Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers. UK Distributor London, Wolfe Medical, 1989.

The almost exponential increase in the world neurological literature makes it essential for the practising neurologist to rely on surveys to keep in touch with the latest advances in the biological processes underlying neurological disease. There are now several such volumes but for a decade Current

Neurology, edited by Stanley Appel has kept up a high standard. In all the essays in this volume the scientific advances are set in a useful context of either interpreting physical signs, explaining clinical features or providing the basis for new treatment. The chapter on epilepsy reviews the classification of epileptic syndromes before giving a clinical review with particular attention to myoclonic seizures, but one has a slightly déjà vu feeling that perhaps the time for continuing reclassification of epilepsy may now be coming to an end.

In the chapter on cerebrovascular disease the factors which are likely to influence the morbidity are analysed with the question of whether heparin therapy has a protective effect against thrombotic occlusion which is based on the incidence of occlusion when therapy was abruptly discontinued. There is a discussion of some uncommon sources of cardiac embolism including the so-called "paradoxical" embolism with a patent foramen ovale and a discussion of the occurrence of mitral valve prolapse affecting up to fifty percent of otherwise normal women. Also examined is the place of nimodipine, a potent calcium antagonist which is now undergoing clinical trials, in the hope of reducing infarct size and also of trials of agents that block N Methyl-D-Aspartate antagonists which can potentially inhibit the entry of calcium in the cells and so reduce the likelihood or extent of infarction. Nimodipine is also under therapeutic trial in relation to the reduction of spasm in subarachnoid haemorrhage.

In the chapter on multiple sclerosis, attention is drawn to recent twin studies and also to the recent evidence that suppressor T-lymphocytes which decline just before or at the time of a clinical attack. This aspect of the complicated immunological defect points to some abnormality of the HLA immune response genes which has led to the suggestion of a "MS susceptibility gene" in the HLA-D region. The lack of any proof of benefits from immuno-suppressive therapy for MS or such new treatments as interferon and plasmapheresis is also fully discussed. The chapter on Alzheimer's disease gives a full discussion of the problems of linking the amyloid deposition in senile plaques with the similar changes which occur in Down's syndrome (trisomy 21). The gene defect causing familial Alzheimer's disease has also been located to the chromosome 21 but the formal analysis shows that the amyloid gene is a considerable distance away from the gene defect causing familial Alzheimer's disease. The antibodies raised against proponents of the neurofibrillary tangle including those to the microtubular associated protein tau and to ubiquitin have not yet resolved the cause of Alzheimer's disease.

Other chapters include excellent reviews of transmitters, paraneoplastic syndromes. Perhaps a few more illustrations would help the reader but taken overall this is a volume which all busy practising neurologists will wish to read to keep themselves up to date.

SIR ROGER BANNISTER

Basic Surgical Techniques. 3rd Edition. By R M Kirk. (Pp 287; Price: £9.95) Churchill Livingstone 1989.

The Third Edition of Basic Surgical Techniques by R M Kirk is something of a surgical

gem. The author makes the valid point that the acquisition of basic surgical techniques are a prerequisite for all surgeons, irrespective of their eventual speciality, and then through clear and straightforward writing highlights these basic techniques. From the first chapter "Handling Yourself" to the final one "Handling Infection", the book is full of good sound surgical philosophy not only for the fledgling surgeon but also for the established one.

Each chapter is laid out in a clear, concise fashion the author describing in great detail a variety of techniques required in any surgical practice. Fortunately the line diagrams are good and compliment the text well.

In the Preface the author states "the philosophy I wish to convey throughout this book makes it unsuitable for multi-authorship" and having read the book I heartily concur with this statement. I am sure that with multiple authors much of the personal touches incorporated in the writing would have been lost and this particular factor is a necessary part of the technique of surgery. I would strongly recommend this extremely readable book on Basic Surgical Techniques to any aspiring surgeon.

G NEIL-DWYER

Issues in Psychobiology. By CHARLES R LEGG. (Pp 224; Price: £12.95). Andover: Routledge, Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1989.

Psychobiology is a fashionable word these days, used to describe almost any study relating psychological to biological processes. The author describes it as covering "everything from the evolution of mating systems in the toad to the functions of subregions of the human cerebral cortex", but in this book it is actually even wider as the author also includes descriptions of the nervous system at the neuronal and microscopic level. Blithely admitting that any short account of such a wide field must be selective, Legg chooses to concentrate on what interests him most, namely the physiology and neurology of the brain.

The book is thus a mixture of what elsewhere is called physiological psychology or neuropsychology, with occasional forays into theoretical biology such as computational vision. There are chapters on the brain systems involved in behavioural regulation (motivation, emotion, plasticity) and others on the cerebral basis of cognition (perception, memory, consciousness). The discussion of these topics is both discursive and very selective. The account of visual processes, for example, includes descriptions of neuronal visual field processes, the multiple pathways of the different visual systems and computational models of vision. But it constitutes almost the entire chapter on perception, with the other senses barely mentioned, on the rather cavalier (and dubious) argument that "we haven't the sort of clear ideas about how they might work that we have about the visual system."

There is no mention of biochemical systems (in the discussion of memory for example), nor of motor systems and the cerebral basis of action, and little reference to speech and language. The chapter on motivation concentrates almost exclusively on hunger and thirst, although the author admits that it is by no means clear that the mechanisms he