

Book Reviews

Language and Speech Disorders, a Neurophysiological Approach. E. M. R. Critchley, 1987. CNS Publishers, London (204; £17.50).

In writing a monograph about language and speech disorders for the clinically minded reader, Dr Critchley is to be congratulated for undertaking what no other British Neurologist has attempted in the past two decades. The book highlights some of the major difficulties with such a venture; the study of normal and pathological speech production has become highly specialised with an enormous proliferation of related publications in the neurological, neuropsychological and neurophysiological literature. Dr Critchley approaches this rich diversity by largely ignoring it and there are very few references to work published in the last five years.

The book will provide a solid basis for the enquiring student, particularly medical student, to enter the fascinating world of speech and its disorders. Generally, the chapters dealing with lower functions and the control of the speech apparatus are better than those dealing with the higher level processes involved in the breakdown of language. There are no illustrations and the discussions on localisation presuppose considerable neuroanatomical knowledge or the coincidental use of an anatomical atlas. The best chapter is on speech in Parkinson's Disease and there is no doubt that Dr Critchley is more comfortable within a paradigm which might be considered as conventionally neurological.

This is a quirky but enjoyable book. It is very much Dr Critchley's view of language and speech disorder and perhaps none the worse for that. There is nothing really comparable; most contemporary books on aphasia are multi-author, with contributions coming from various disciplines. The reader is often left with the difficult task of trying to relate different paradigms. By going it alone, Dr Critchley can be unusually consistent and he is a good enough writer to make the account enjoyable.

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