

computer-programme and flow-diagram models, and utter neglect of the brain as the organ of memory. The latter is the more surprising since the author quotes at least one study (Warrington and Shallice, 1969) which clearly relates a memory deficit to a circumscribed cerebral lesion, and is evidently aware of the work of Milner on patients with cortical excisions: yet he states 'convinced though I am of the desirability and necessity of synthesizing biological and behavioural data, there is no real progress to report in this book'.

This oversight enables the author to maintain a view of memory which is not only idiosyncratic but quite simply at variance with the evidence from clinical studies. 'I would like to suggest,' he says, 'that memory is not divided into separate sensory, short-term and long-term stores. Instead, it is continuous.' Yet it is precisely the distinction between sensory modalities, and between short-term and long-term memory, that is exemplified by the effects of cerebral lesions and that must inform any valid theory of human memory.

JOHN MCFIE.

REFERENCE

- WARRINGTON, E. K. & SHALLICE, T. (1969) The selective impairment of auditory verbal short-term memory. *Brain*, 92, 885-96.

ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

The Courage to Fail—A Social View of Organ Transplants and Dialysis. By R. C. Fox and J. P. SWAZEY. University of Chicago Press. 1974. Pp. 395. Price £6.50.

The Courage to Fail is a study of organ transplants and dialysis by a sociologist and a biologist-historian of science. The methods used include a review of the literature, a content analysis of reports in the mass media, participant observation at most of America's major transplantation and dialysis centres, detailed interviews with patients and their families, internists, surgeons, immunologists, psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, laboratory technicians and bio-engineers, and attendance at medical team conferences, observation of transplant surgery and of hospital and home dialysis. Two transplant centres were studied in detail over a twelve-month period. If a sociological viewpoint seems an inappropriate one, the authors soon demonstrate the complexity of the issues involved. 'The option of organ transplantation is set down in a matrix of interacting persons—the prospective recipient, candidate donors, the members of their families, the physicians and his professional colleagues—who together constitute a small but intricate social system.' Sceptics will soon be convinced by the brief case-studies presented in the first chapter. Further complications are ethical

considerations of choice between kidney transplant and long-term dialysis; intervention in rare conditions; research needs; and the fact that kidney donation by a live donor involves operating on a healthy person ('We haven't lost a donor yet'). There are financial problems (under the American system) as to whether the family can afford long-term dialysis compared with the 'cheaper' transplant, while wider economic issues concern scarce resources (compatible organs) and who should benefit from them. To bring some order into this complexity the authors have recourse to three sociological concepts: Mauss's description of the 'gift' function; Lewin's concept of the 'gatekeeper', and Parsons' discussion of 'uncertainty'. This is a difficult book to classify. Although it has some pretensions to be a serious sociological study, attempts to apply sociological concepts at the beginning of the book are soon abandoned. It is doubtful whether the description of 'the gift', 'the gatekeeper', 'uncertainty' and the 'ideal type' of the heart surgeon are more than convenient metaphors. It is significant that the rare lapses into jargon which occur in a very readable book are in the Conclusion where an attempt is made to give the themes sociological respectability. ('It is implied that, animated by these values, the more extensive institutionalization of collectivity oriented, participant-collaborator relations could transform the society, moving it into a new, more advanced evolutionary stage that is "beyond modern"' (page 332).) The elaborate methodology mentioned in the preface sits uneasily with the fairly frequent recourse to journalistic extracts. Although individual chapters are excellent on the aspect they are dealing with, they give the impression of having been written separately—possibly a reflection of dual authorship. The book is probably best regarded, in the authors' own words, as a 'carefully documented, fair-minded and nuanced account that would be edifying and useful'. It succeeds very well in opening up new perspectives in the social, psychological, moral and economic implications of what may sometimes be regarded simply as specialist surgery and it should be a useful reminder of fundamental issues to those who may become blinkered by technological progress.

S.-J. KNOX.

DRUG ADDICTION

WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence: 20th Report. WHO Tech. Rep. Ser. 551. 1974. Pp. 89. No price.

It is a pleasure to comment on this WHO Technical Report; which contains very few platitudes and might serve as a basis for inculcating instant wisdom to those authorities, national and international, most in need