

Book Reviews

political ideology and the theoretical advances achieved by the Revolution, as well as with problems of morals, authority and finance.

The importance of Foucault's book is that in it he attempts to create a new method of historical analysis and a new framework for the investigation of the human sciences as a whole. With brilliant and original insights he emphasizes the rapid and total transformation of the epistemological basis of thought during the period under review, and the consequent changes in medical theory and practice. There is full documentation throughout, but it is a pity that perusal of the text is made difficult by obscurities of expression; there is a bibliography, pp. 201–209.

A significant development in the medical revolution at the turn of the eighteenth century was the whole reorganization of hospital services and in this regard some reference to Ackerknecht's work on the Paris hospital during the same period should have been made in this English version as it appeared since the French original was published. Foucault's book is a much deeper analysis but less easy to read. It nevertheless must be studied carefully by all those investigating eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medicine. The effort will be more than adequately repayed.

DANIEL GASMAN, *The scientific origins of national socialism. Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League*, London, Macdonald, 1971, 8vo., pp. xxxii, 208, illus., £4.

This has proved to be an important and controversial book. Its sub-title describes its contents better than the title; it is the author's thesis that Nazi ideology owed much more to science than has hitherto been admitted. It was Ernst Haeckel, with the Monist League that he founded, who, with the support of social Darwinism as propounded in his *Die Welträtsel* of 1899, produced a romantic vision of science which had a direct influence on Hitler himself. Science was, of course, distorted by the Nazis, and yet biology in particular played an important role in the origin and development of their cult. Until Professor Gasman's scholarly work appeared, it was usually thought that the reverse was the case and that fascism opposed science and most of modern culture. However, he drew upon material not previously examined and presented a convincing case that has not been seriously challenged.

His book is essential, therefore, for the understanding of modern Germany. But in addition it has also a general message derived from the events in Germany, where scientific, biological ideas were permitted to take on a mystical significance. This danger and its ghastly consequences should be widely recognized and a comparable situation hopefully avoided. It is the subtle, insidious growth and manipulation of scientific concepts that will interest the historian of science and medicine, and for a well-written, accurate and impeccably documented presentation of this type of malignancy Professor Gasman's book can be strongly recommended. Consideration of the influence of pseudo-science, and of the way in which Haeckel extracted from Darwinism the pieces that suited his own theories, which concerned his own advancement and that of his country and race, are salutary indeed. Thus the historian can also benefit from this book in matters concerning the socio-intellectual make-up of the scientist. Altogether this is a challenging and highly stimulating work on the history of scientific ideas.