

Book Reviews

JOHN FARLEY, *The spontaneous generation controversy. From Descartes to Oparin*, Baltimore, Md., and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. xiv, 225, £10.25.

One of the most significant controversies in the history of biology is that dealing with the theories of the origin of life. Do all organisms arise from organisms or can life be generated spontaneously? These questions have been asked for centuries. Involving, as they do, religious and metaphysical beliefs, the resultant arguments have been heated and prolonged. Professor Farley disputes the usual idea that the debate in England, France, and Germany declined from the seventeenth century onwards, and he contends with forceful argument and data that it waxed and waned in relationship to relevant current biological theories, and to the philosophical, religious, and, more recently, the political climate. Pasteur's death knell is the traditional end of the controversy, but Farley claims that in fact the work of the biochemist Oparin in the 1930s was responsible.

His book is an important contribution to the history of biology, microbiology, medicine, parasitology, virology, and biochemistry and will, therefore, be in wide demand.

JUNE GOODFIELD, *Playing God. Genetic engineering and the manipulation of life*, London, Hutchinson, 1977, 8vo, pp. xv, 218, £5.95.

Genetic engineering began in 1970 with the discovery of the first restriction enzyme, which enabled scientists to manipulate DNA at will and initiated the debate on recombinant DNA. The ethical overtones have brought this out of its intensely specialized and technical background, and public demand for more information, interpretations, and opinions will be provided by Dr. Goodfield's superb analysis of the subject. There are deeper issues too, such as society's increasing suspicion of science and technology, so that this book is of much wider appeal than only to the biologist and the historian of biology or medicine. It has a message to all scientists, as well as to the layman.

ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO, *Essays in ancient and modern historiography*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977, 8vo, pp. [x], 387, £12.00.

Professor Momigliano is one of the most universal scholars of the present day, and the twenty-one essays in this book, all of which have appeared elsewhere and each of which is in English, demonstrate his remarkable span of learning. He is equally at home with the ancient civilizations as he is with nineteenth-century historians. Inevitably the majority of these essays deal with topics in his area of special interest, Graeco-Roman Antiquity.

This anthology is but a small sample from a multi-volumed edition of Momigliano's writings now being published in Italy, but all historians will derive benefit from perusing them carefully. Those on more general historiography and historians will be of greater appeal, but also in the specialized articles the master's techniques and remarkable scholarship, always set at just the right key, are an inspiration and education to the scholar as well as to the student.