rationalist-relativist debate which is now in full swing in academic circles, he stands firmly on the side of Popper and Gellner and sees the only way to break the threat to objective knowledge which comes from such thinkers as Winch, D.Z. Phillips and Wittgenstein (in some of his phases) is to place all one's eggs in the basket of the method and findings of the hard sciences. This is at the heart of his concept of rationality which he sees as man's capacity to apply reason to selected tasks. Such an idea of course goes back to Max Weber.

Jarvie, who seems to have more faith in anthropology than current anthropologists have, holds that the two fundamental tasks of the discipline are to make sense of societies and to compare societies. The first calls for the application of scientific canons by which universal truths can be discovered and which transcends the accounts and concepts of particular societies. The other implies more than just describing the religious, and more particularly moral systems of various societies. In the last analysis it means making an evaluation and ranking the various systems.. Humanist ethics cries against cruelty and injustice which according to the western mind can so often be found in pre-literate societies. So, out of the window flies the ideal of a value-free social science. Jarvie goes on to relate the two tasks of anthropology and tries to show with not a great deal of logic that the rational unity of mankind has to be wed to the moral unity of mankind. Science on its own premises is to be allied to moral absolutism (humanism). This is much the same position which Durkheim took about a hundred years ago.

Those who are concerned with the continuing challenge which is centred on the sociology of knowledge, where often the data that is employed comes from anthropological sources and which may give rise to epistomological and moral relativism, will find this a vigorous book. One regrets that the work of the most compelling advocates of relativism, Barry Barnes and David Bloor, receives no airing whatsoever. Such is dogmatic rationalism?

W.S.F. PICKERING

OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: ENGLAND AND GERMANY by John Rogerson. *SPCK* London 1984. Pp xiv + 320. £15.00.

'Forschungsgeschichte' (that is, the study of the history of scholarship) would seem to be attracting more attention of late and this is good news indeed! Some will say that an Old Testament scholar like John Rogerson should 'stick to his job', narrowly defined as the study of ancient texts. However, this would be a short-sighted view; in biblical studies, as in all other walks of life, it is vital that we should know where we have come from if we are to have a perceptive sense of the way forward.

As well as helping us move forward with an enhanced sense of historical perspective, cautious work of this kind can hopefully also enable us to avoid the folly of looking condescendingly upon the efforts of earlier generations of scholars; Rogerson reviews a number of the earlier histories of Old Testament criticism, some of which, in a rather triumphalistic manner, judged as though from on high those who have been proved 'wrong' by subsequent developments. Whilst it is the case that we may perhaps speak of certain findings of biblical criticism as now 'assured', this book is a salutary warning against simplistic models of one-way progress in biblical studies. As Kuhn and others have shown with regard to the enterprise of scientific research, we have to do not with an accumulation of accepted objective facts contributing to an ever upwards march towards 'Truth', but rather with a succession of 'paradigm shifts': progress in research is often a rather haphazard business, a complex social phenomenon in which cultural, philosophical and even political factors all have their place.

The present work is a long and detailed study of two important questions: How did the critical method (in Old Testament study) arise in Germany in the nineteenth century, and

how was its reception into England affected by the theological and philosophical climate? Rogerson deals first with critical study of the Old Testament in Germany between 1800 and 1860, giving particular emphasis to the role of W M.L. de Wette but demonstrating also how this early flowering of the critical method came to be suppressed by more conservative forces. Rogerson then goes on to review Old Testament criticism in England between 1800 and 1880, tracing contacts between Germany and England and comparing the intellectual climates of the two countries. The final section of the book traces German scholarship from 1860 to the classic contribution of Julius Wellhausen and the eventual reception of his findings in England.

This is no dry chronicle. Rogerson is particularly fascinating in his demonstration of the importance of the philosophical contexts in which Old Testament criticism was conducted in Germany and England. The major thesis of the book may be said to be that the critical method in Old Testament studies was accepted in England only when the philosophical and theological conditions were right for acceptance – and indeed that Wellhausen was not received in England without a modification of his position in the light of the neo-Hegelian philosophy which was influential in England towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Fascinating too are the brief reflections which Rogerson allows himself on what might be described as the role of chance in the story which he has to tell. A letter of sympathy written by the influential early critic de Wette to the mother of a theological student who had murdered a diplomat was intercepted by the Prussian secret police, resulting in de Wette's dismissal in 1819 from his Berlin chair, which was eventually filled by the conservative Hengstenberg, who proved to be one of the most influential figures in opposing the critical approach. A comparable case on the English side concerns the death in 1828, at the early age of 35, of Alexander Nicoll, which left vacant the Oxford chair of Hebrew from which E.B. Pusey then exercised a strong conservative influence for the next fifty four years. But Rogerson does not allow himself to dwell long on such 'might have beens', intriguing though they are.

The book is full of treats: a detailed exploration of the charges of plagiarism which were levelled at Samuel Davidson; the remarkable story of Bishop Colenso of Natal; an appendix tabulating the Old Testament professors in Protestant Faculties in Germany throughout the nineteenth century; and much else besides. When Rogerson arrives at his final section ('The Streams Converge', dealing with the path to Wellhausen and with his successful reception in England) one cannot help feeling that the story is drawn to a close a little too briefly – one's appetite has been well and truly whetted and one wants more! But to overstate this disappointment would be churlish; this book is a rich feast, the fruit of eight years of painstaking research, much of it in German libraries, for which we owe John Rogerson a debt of thanks. We have reason to rejoice that in these days of often increasingly narrow specialization, Rogerson has had the courage to pursue this interdisciplinary task and that it has issued in a book which is not only scholarly but also very readable.

Hopefully this book should give us a greater sensitivity to the historically conditioned nature of all scholarly activity. We have long since come to recognize that the biblical authors were influenced, indeed shaped by their cultural milieux; Rogerson here gives us a fascinating insight into the way in which the biblical scholars of the nineteenth century were conditioned by their environments. But there is also a more personal lesson for us here, namely that we too are, to a far greater extent than we generally acknowledge, both in our study of the bible and indeed in our study of nineteenth century biblical criticism, the creatures of our times.

PAUL JOYCE