

fluence both in general and in specific cases. To take an example, that of Down's Syndrome: in their general agreement that a damaged foetus should be aborted, with the parents' consent of course, there is no mention of the fact that Down's Syndrome produces various *degrees* of handicap, which cannot be identified by amniocentesis, or that children thus afflicted are, with the right support, increasingly able to lead not only happy, but useful lives. The terms 'severe mental handicap', 'severely retarded' are used throughout, and the entry on *Mongolism* – Down's Syndrome – is no more than a complaint that the latter term is likely to replace the former to describe the condition. If "the only guiding principle should be the emotional satisfaction, happiness and quality of life of the handicapped" (*Mental Handicap*) then the medical profession has a duty to insist that each handicapped person is as individual as the 'normal' person, and to avoid making the kind of generalisations which gave rise to the creation of huge, impersonal subnormality hospitals in the past.

The entry dealing with *Communication* is comprehensive in that it covers three different areas of communication: with the individual patient, with the public and within the profession. There is an encouraging awareness of the responsibility doctors have to educate themselves and their students in relating to their patients as individual human beings – an essential element in good and efficient medical care. The general excellence of the approach is however undermined by a remark such as, "Failures of communication are often blamed on patients' stupidity, forgetfulness, ignorance or pightheadedness, but all patients have these characteristics to some degree and the doctor has to recognise and overcome them so far as possible". It makes one wonder into which category the writer himself falls when in need of medical attention, and whether it is only people as patients and not as practitioners who have such characteristics.

CLARE PRANGLEY
and ROGER RUSTON O P

THEOLOGY AND POLITICAL SOCIETY by Charles Davis. *Cambridge University Press* 1980 pp ix + 196 £7.95.

"... What human beings are for or what constitutes a good human existence or what it is about human beings that makes them worthy of unconditional respect are all questions now considered beyond politics. We are apparently headed for the totally administered society, run according to the latest empirical theories and technical know-how...." (p 153). Charles Davis sets out to establish a specifically theological component of political action which will alter this lamentable situation and reintroduce a concern with the nature of the good life into politics.

His starting point is a consideration of 'political theology' in West Germany and Latin America. Both are, he argues, responses to the failure of 'orthodoxy' to establish any effective relationship to social practice.

Critical of the political theology of the

German theologian Johann Baptist Metz – "... Metz ... will not allow that the truth of Christianity, eschatological in nature as it is, is socially and politically mediated in its entirety" (p 7) – Davis turns to consider the theological implications of the work of the Frankfurt School for the attempt to establish a relationship between theology and political action.

Davis shares Habermas' abhorrence of the domination of 'instrumental action' to the exclusion of 'communicative action' in (it seems) all societies. He examines Habermas' attempt to provide a rational grounding for freedom: the very act of discourse anticipates freedom in the sense that the 'ideal speech act' is characterised by an absence of coercion and a quest for rational discourse. Yet such an argument is, as Davis says, ultimately circular. "How

can freedom be grounded by a discourse free from constraint, when such a discourse is possible only if freedom has been obtained?" (p 96). Supporting Gadamer in his debate with Habermas about the relationship between critical theory and hermeneutics, Davis argues that the impulse to freedom is grounded not merely in rational discourse but also in tradition and collective experience.

A detailed consideration of the concept of critique, especially within the Marxist tradition, leads him to argue for the development of a 'critical theology'. "... faith, together with theology, cannot be a genuine protest against domination and injustice, unless it acknowledges that itself and its own past history are the products of unfree society and therefore subject to criticism and revolutionary transformation. Critical theology is ineluctably the critique of religion and of theology as instances of domination ... Religious faith as a thrust towards plenitude and totality, as a pursuit of transcendent truth and value may surely be counted among the sources of emancipatory experience ..." (pp 130-131).

Davis also argues for the value of religious language – transcending the banally factual, it provides a utopian and theological dimension to 'discourse' and politics.

Similarly, the Christian emphasis on the individual is exactly the opposite of the post-Enlightenment bourgeois notion of individualism.

Yet, granted the signal failure of the Frankfurt School writers to establish a working relationship between social and political theory and political practice, Davis' choice of the work of this group of writers as the starting point for his call for a 'critical theology', which is to establish an effective relationship between theology and social practice, is perhaps unfortunate. Moreover, in his emphasis on "religious faith as a thrust towards plenitude and totality", Davis is no more helpful than the Frankfurt School writers when it comes to dealing with the question of the precise institutional structures which characterise and secure a society based on "plenitude" and "totality". Finally, if Davis is correct in arguing that "... the truth of Christianity ... is socially and politically mediated in its entirety", and if the 'critical theology' he advocates is "the critique of religion and of theology as instances of domination", is Davis not forced to agree that Christianity is what Marx always claimed it was – merely an ideology?

STEPHEN SALTER

CONTEMPORARY ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY, by Milton K. Munitz.

Macmillan, 1981. pp 434 £9.50.

Analytic philosophy is thought of in some quarters as one of the tools of Satan. Be that as it may, this book is an absolute godsend, though 'contemporary' in its title could be thought misleading.

The book is basically an introduction to the philosophy of language and meaning as that has progressed in the English-speaking world from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the present time. It is mainly concerned with Pierce, Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, the logical positivists, Quine and Kripke. It therefore neglects Davidson, Dummett, Strawson, Putnam and Tarski, and that is regrettable. But it is still a very good book, one which, to my mind, is entirely without equal. Bernard Harrison's *An Introduction to the Philos-*

ophy of Language (Macmillan, 1979) covers similar ground, and it does so with more originality. But it is rather obscure in parts and is best recommended to those who already know something about the writers it discusses. Munitz's text, on the other hand, is a model of clarity, and its exposition is ideal for beginners. Any obscurity in it lies, I should say, almost entirely in its quotations (of which there are many), for the contents of which Munitz of course, is not responsible.

So if you want an informative, intelligible survey of the writers Munitz deals with, something to get you going on them, Munitz's book is the thing to buy. I should add that it has a good bibliography.

BRIAN DAVIES O P