

## DISCOVERIES FOUND IN BOOKS

MOST writers do a lot of reading. They feel—why else would they read?—that in reading they make discoveries. Keats gave archetypal expression to this joyous feeling. After dipping into a translation of Homer, he declared—

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent upon a peak in Darien.

The poetry is great—unforgettable—but what did he find out? He doesn't say. He informs us of his ecstasy, but instead of listing its benefits compares it with other ecstasies. When Archimedes cried *Eureka!* because his bath had overflowed and he went tearing home naked through the streets, filled with the importance of a new idea, he had something tangible in mind. He now knew how to determine the purity of gold and would be able to see that a fraudulent smith would be punished. He had also made a scientific discovery that he and others could use again and again. It had, you could say, a cash value.

We are not of course deprecating Keats but trying to understand what it was he got out of reading. Apparently there are experiences in life which, when you try to count them up, slip through your fingers like grunion on the beach at midnight under the moon. The more you try to recapture the sequence and scenery of a wonderful dream, the sooner flat emptiness ensues. This sort of knowing eludes the will, responds to no straining intention. But the resonances of the experience may be banked somewhere, with a kind of credit we don't know much about increased.

People do try to keep books on all this, but the results are usually pathetic. Poets are not published because they have degrees in English

Lit. Good writers are by definition autodidacts, no matter what or where the institution in which they did or did not do time. College degrees are in no way evidence of what may be gained from reading books. Measurement is invariably an insult to the practice of an art. As Louis Armstrong put it, If you have to ask, you'll never know.

So Keats celebrated an ecstasy, not a calculated gain. The fact is that writers who gain the most from their reading are writers who make you throw away your yardstick. They create an occasion for intellectual embrace, for sailing with the winds of their mind, with perhaps a hand on the tiller to get where it seems worthwhile to go. *Eros* is the deity which presides over these regions and guides our explorations, and in this land of love counting is blasphemy.

Yet we can count, and the mind seems a special sort of terrain where loving and counting enter into both appropriate and inappropriate relations. Actually, the distinction between the two is a kind of counting. The best use of the counting facility may be this capacity to divide things up for closer examination. Plato did this with "love," and if any animating motive needs this harmless dissection by the mind, love needs it. Robert Cushman illustrates its services with a comment on the *Phaedrus*:

Three loves are really implied throughout this discussion: the one is self-regarding sensate love. It may be either sensual or calculating. The second is true friendship, and the third, love of ideal Being. Friendship is possible only on condition that the third form of love is vigorous and alive. Plato is, obviously, contending that the *philosophos* is the only true lover and friend. He alone has been liberated from envy that springs from self-will and self-love. Already in the *Republic* Plato had taught that the only "safe" guardian of the state is one whose love of truth extirpates concern for personal gain and private

advantage, and whose primary love is centered in the eternal. Finally, the distinction between "generous love" and "mortal prudence" is entirely apposite to the developing treatment of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*. In contrast with rhetorical contentiousness and polemic, dialectic may be pursued only by men of goodwill who undertake to discover truth rather than to enforce their own opinions and private causes. (*Therapeia*.)

The value of counting is quite evident here. Love is the power that makes different things combine, but if love is of different sorts, then so will be the resulting combinations, and their quality may determine the good we obtain from love. Well, we don't really like that sort of language to be applied to love, one great virtue of which is its generous indifference to calculation. Yet the mind, when active, insists on looking at the different kinds of love and, so to speak, measuring them.

So then, here is an essential value that we find in books. The authors instruct by making differentiations we haven't thought of. We see that one thing may be better than another and then a whole area opens up for application of the calculus of good, better, best. We have vague words to distinguish the use of this calculus—"taste" and "culture" are two of them. "Moral" is another, but since categories of the "moral" become external and brittle from continuously thoughtless and habitual classification, we avoid this designation because it vulgarizes the good.

If you are a scientist—a typically hardheaded one—morality is mainly a matter of the Method. It is effective enough, but only within limits. As Lewis Lapham remarked last year in *Harper's*, "the scientific technique (no matter how thoroughly indexed) fails to replace the lost sight of the imagination."

They lower their instruments into the depths, and they get back nothing more than a few ambiguous readings from the floor of the sea. Their systems analysis cannot account for the German officers who sent cattle trains to Auschwitz and yet, being in many other ways exemplary husbands and fathers, would have dismissed an adjutant for committing the indiscretion of adultery.

A similar example is given by Erich Kahler:

Years may be devoted to saving the life of a single child, while in the field of war technology, rationality juggles the lives of millions of human beings as mere proportional figures. The most dainty comforts are produced alongside colossal destructivity. (*The Meaning of History*.)

These are ways of differentiating such generalizations as "science is a good thing" into true and false versions to show that it is really a bad generalization, one that conceals more important truth. Such criticism has obvious value. The instances are instructive, but the method—dividing various categories according to a rule which is above them—is the seminal principle Plato called finding "the natural joints." Good writers employ this method by a sure instinct. The especially valuable books are those which provide new categories of analysis which, once understood, force the mind into paths of continuing discovery.

A chapter in Ivan Illich's *Energy and Equity* (Harper & Row, 1974) illustrates how this works. He begins by noting that people need to move around. Then he distinguishes between the ways in which this is accomplished. There is *transit*, which we do by ourselves, and there is *transport*, which is done to or for us.

Transport stands for the capital-intensive mode of traffic and transit indicates the labor-intensive mode. Transport is the product of an industry whose clients are passengers. It is an industrial commodity and therefore scarce by definition. Improvement of transport always takes place under conditions of scarcity that become more severe as the speed—and with it the cost—of the service increases.

Illich now prepares for the introduction of another concept or category, another way of evaluating how we move—or get moved—around:

Every society that imposes compulsory speed submerges transit to the profit of transport. Wherever not only privilege but also elementary necessities are denied to those who do not use high-speed conveyances, an involuntary acceleration of personal rhythms is imposed. Industry dominates traffic as

soon as daily life comes to depend upon motorized trips.

Now the category:

This profound control of the transportation industry over natural mobility constitutes a monopoly much more pervasive than either the commercial monopoly Ford might win over the automobile market, or the political monopoly car manufacturers might wield against the development of trains and buses. Because of its hidden, entrenched and structuring nature, I call this a *radical monopoly*. Any industry exercises this kind of deep-seated monopoly when it becomes the dominant means of satisfying needs that formerly occasioned a personal response. The compulsory consumption of a high-powered commodity (motorized transport) restricts the conditions for enjoying an abundant use value (the innate capacity for transit).

Then a leap to wider meaning:

Traffic serves here as the paradigm of a general economic law: *Any industrial product that comes in per capita quanta beyond a given intensity exercises a radical monopoly over the satisfaction of a need.* Beyond some point, compulsory schooling destroys the environment for learning, medical delivery systems dry up the non-therapeutic sources of health, and transportation smothers traffic.

Well, a reader may say, I guess it's true, but we can't do anything about all that. Yet he has been made uncomfortable by the idea of radical monopoly. He may be a bit less submissive than he thinks. He may begin to take back control over a little more of what he does. It is a fact that the sales of bicycles are going up and up. It is a fact that, all over the country, people (a few of them) are starting schools and teaching their children at home. (For plenty of evidence see John Holt's paper, *Growth Without Schooling*.)

Nature, of course, imposes some radical monopolies, too. If you live in the tropics, you can't practice the kind of agriculture that is found in New England. People who live by the sea tend to eat a lot of fish. The Venetians need boats, Alaskans snowshoes. Technology is able to assist a lot of these processes of adaptation but its contribution doesn't create a man-made radical monopoly until it goes *beyond a given intensity*.

Obviously, we need an early warning system to tell us whenever we (or they) are getting close to that limit.

Living our own lives has a value we should not be willing to go without, and Ivan Illich's books are devoted to exploring the implications of this proposition in a variety of directions. His generalizations are fruitful for people who want to be the subjects, not the objects, of history, which is a fancy way of speaking of human freedom. Technology ought to be an extender of freedom, not a constrainer to weakening habits. The books of Illich open such questions up.

We all know the justifications offered by Galileo for restricting the focus of physical science to the measurable phenomena and forces of external nature. To use the method of science, which is mathematics, we need, he said, to be exact. You can't be exact about how you feel about the color of the sky, the smell of a rose, or the girl next door. Those things, he declared, are the secondary qualities of experience. How fast a thing moves, how much it weighs and what are its dimensions—those are the primary qualities in which science is interested. For several hundred years the world of learning and education has agreed with and repeated Galileo. It remained for a twentieth-century psychologist, Abraham Maslow, to say that the primary qualities of Galileo are secondary for human beings—not unimportant but *secondary*—while what Galileo called secondary are really primary. At the apex of his psychology of health Maslow placed the concept of the Peak Experience—the kind of thing Keats experienced on looking into Chapman's *Homer*—that Richard Byrd felt on a freezing night near the South Pole—that Herman Melville described in writing to Hawthorne about a day when he lay on a hillside and thought himself continuous with all of Mother Earth. The Peak Experience was for Maslow *self-validating* knowledge—the axioms of our conscious beinghood.

Writing in *Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences* (Ohio State University Press, 1964), he said:

There is no doubt that great insights and revelations are profoundly felt in mystic or peak-experiences, and certainly some of these are *ipso facto*, intrinsically valid *as experiences*. That is, one can and does learn from such experiences that, e.g., joy, ecstasy, and rapture do in fact exist and that they are in principle available for the experiencer even if they never have been before. Thus the peaker learns surely and certainly that life *can* be worthwhile, that it *can* be beautiful and valuable. There *are* ends in life, i.e., experiences which are so precious in themselves as to prove that not everything is a means to some end other than itself.

Another kind of self-validating insight is the experience of being a real identity, a real self, of feeling what it is like to feel really oneself, what in fact one is—not a phony a fake, a striver, an impersonator. Here again, the experiencing itself is the revelation of a truth.

My feeling is that if it were never to happen again, the power of the experience could permanently affect the attitude toward life. A single glimpse of heaven is enough to confirm its existence even if it is never experienced again. It is my strong suspicion that even one such experience might be able to prevent suicide, for instance, and perhaps many varieties of slow self-destruction, e.g., alcoholism, drug-addiction, addiction to violence, etc. I would guess also, on theoretical grounds, that peak-experiences might very well abort "existential meaninglessness," states of valuelessness, etc., at least occasionally. . . .

Health brings one "up to" higher levels of reality; peak-experiences can be considered a transient self-actualization of the person. It can therefore be understood as lifting him "higher," making him "taller," etc., so that he becomes "deserving" of more difficult truths, e.g., only integration can perceive integration, only the one who is capable of love can cognize love, etc.

Elsewhere in this book, to give substance to the meaning of the peak-experience, he wrote:

Perhaps my most important finding was the discovery of what I am calling B-values or the intrinsic values of Being. When I asked the question, "How does the world look different in peak-experiences?", the hundreds of answers that I got

could be boiled down to a quintessential list of characteristics which, though they overlap very much with one another can still be considered as separate for the sake of research. What is important for us in this context is that this list of the described characteristics of the world as it is perceived in our most perspicuous moments is about the same as what people through the ages have called eternal verities, or the spiritual values, or the highest values, or the religious values. What this says is that facts and values are not totally different from each other; under certain circumstances, they fuse. Most religions have either explicitly or by implication affirmed some relationship or even an overlapping or fusion between facts and values. For instance people not only existed but they were also sacred. The world was not only merely existent but it was also sacred. . . .

In the peak-experiences, not only is the world seen as acceptable and beautiful, but, and this is what I am stressing, the bad things about life are accepted more totally than they are at other times. It is as if the peak-experience reconciled people to the presence of evil in the world.

Of course, this is another way of becoming "god-like." The gods who can contemplate and encompass the whole of being and who, therefore, understand it must see it as good, just, inevitable, and must see "evil" as a product of limited or selfish vision and understanding. If we could be god-like in this sense, then we, too, out of universal understanding would never blame or condemn or be disappointed or shocked. Our only possible emotions would be pity, charity, kindness, perhaps sadness or amusement. But this is precisely the way in which self-actualizing people do at times react to the world, and in which all of us react in our peak-experiences.

In a book largely devoted to Maslow's contributions, *New Pathways in Psychology* (Mentor, 1979), Colin Wilson says:

. . . man's achievement is to have created a world of the mind, of the intellect and imagination, which is as real in its way as any actual country on the map. Sir Karl Popper, in one of his most important papers, calls it "the third world." The first world is the objective world of things. The second world is my inner subjective world. But, says Popper, there is a third world, *the world of objective contents of thoughts*. If some catastrophe destroyed all the machines and tools on this earth, but *not* the libraries, a new generation would slowly rebuild civilization. If the libraries are all destroyed too, there could be no

re-emergence of civilization, for all our carefully stored knowledge would have gone, and man would have to start regaining it from scratch. Teilhard de Chardin called this "third world" the noösphere—the world of mind. It includes the works of Newton, Einstein, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Plato; it is the most important part of our human heritage.

This seems a good way to put it. Reading books keeps you in touch with the noösphere. But this is too simple, and it overlooks the fact that reading can also be a kind of disease which displaces actual thinking. Reading without thinking is only a sponge operation. The fruit of cultural evolution—Popper's third world—may lose its life and turn bloodless and pale, like Julian's beloved pagan gods, and when this happens there is no more civilization, no matter how many libraries there are. Ortega's warning must be kept as alive as the libraries. He said in *Man and People*:

Far from thought having been bestowed upon man, the truth is . . . that he has continually been creating thought, making it little by little, perforce of a discipline, a culture or cultivation; a millennial, nay, multimillennial effort without having yet succeeded—far from it!—in finishing the job. . . . And even the small portion gained, being an acquired and not a constitutive quality, is always in danger of being lost, many times in fact, in the past; and today we are on the point of losing it again.

Making the actual discoveries in what we read a constitutive element or quality—whenever they are adding worth to our native being—that is the art we need to acquire. At present how this is done remains a mystery. A few modern writers—one is John Schaar—have given the question attention.

## *REVIEW*

### MORE THAN JOURNALISM

WE get, no doubt, the journalism we deserve, largely for the reason that anything much better than what we deserve wins little support. The writer for the large circulation media must choose his virtues carefully; they should be somewhat noticeable yet not interfere too much with vulgar tastes or common inclinations. A good man, if he desires to be popular, learns to make it possible for readers to share his views without giving up too much. For some, this may come naturally, but in the case of other writers there is calculating design. Journalists and reporters are not innocent of the political methods applying to their trade. They soon discover from experience that at least some of the stepping-stones to fame and fortune are "ingrained prejudices, unexamined opinions, and unchallenged commitments." The public purrs contentedly when these attitudes are left undisturbed or dressed in borrowed finery.

It would be wrong, however, to accuse *all* journalists who are admired and widely read of deliberate practice of these marketing techniques. There are writers, naturally skilled, who feud all their lives with dishonesty, hypocrisy, and everyday pretense, while remaining inoffensively conventional in many of their opinions. Such limitations seem hardly important in view of the services they render. Personal integrity, after all, is far more valuable than having correct opinions, and even poor social arrangements may work surprisingly well when basic human decencies are observed.

Attention is forced to such considerations when the writer involved is Ambrose Bierce, the journalist and commentator who for some thirty years was the most distinguished newspaperman in the United States. We have already given attention in these pages to his biography by Carey McWilliams (Archon), and we now have for review *Ambrose Bierce—Skepticism and Dissent* (\$13.95—Delmas Books, 4605 5 Mile Road, Ann

Arbor, Mich. 48105), edited by Lawrence I. Berkove. The selections from Bierce's work are limited to writings from 1898 to 1901, the time of the Spanish-American war—a topic to which Bierce brought his thorough experience as a soldier who fought for the North in the Civil War. The columns reproduced are mostly from the Hearst papers in San Francisco and New York. Introducing them, Mr. Berkove says:

The articles are related by virtue of their common origin in a short but highly turbulent and crucial period of American history and by the fact that they reflect a fairly consistent interpretation of that turbulence. They have been neglected too long, and like rediscovered antiques, their value may now be appreciated. . . .

Carey McWilliams called this period of Bierce's writing "the last burst of his fine satirical powers." Bierce's short stories have for some time been recognized as literary classics; it is now time for another major facet of his talent to be acknowledged. His journalistic perceptions of his milieu are among the most clear-eyed and acute in our national literature. He wrote not only about battles and strategies, but also, and more importantly, about the feelings and self-deceptions of men and societies which needlessly deserted the modest and peaceful occupations of the civilian for "the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction." For what has been astutely observed of his fiction is equally true of his journalism: that though his works pertain to war, at the core they are "enduring peace tracts."

Indeed, in some ways they may be better than peace tracts. The pacific influence of what Bierce writes spreads far above the level of moral polemics, having the quality of an honest man who, while no pacifist, hated the folly and indecency of war. While Bierce might and did find some sense in this or that conflict, war was for him in itself a brutal and senseless thing, and this is what comes through for the reader. He had little respect for those who, while makers of war, did not fight, and he had even less respect for the devices they employed to stir up warlike emotions in common folk. He believed in a standing army and advocated compulsory military service giving reasons that seemed to him "democratic" at the

time—and quite likely these "sound" opinions gave greater force to his dissenting views.

He wrote in June, 1898:

Says an esteemed though local contemporary:

"The American flag is an emblem not only of freedom but of civilization; and as such, it ought to be beloved and worshipped by all who live under it or who in any wise receive the benefit which it confers on mankind."

That is a pretty fair sample of the stuff that one can be brought to write by indulgence of the awful human propensity for confusing things. Human nature presents no more striking characteristic than the tendency to neglect the substance and consider the shadow; to forget the end in contemplation and approval of the means to substitute principle for action and ceremony for principle; to attribute to the symbol the virtues of the thing symbolized. It evidently did not occur to the patriotic gentleman who wrote the quoted sentence, and much else in the same spirit, that the flag being only an "emblem" of freedom and civilization (our kind of freedom and civilization, by the way) is not at all entitled to the love and worship that he solicits for it; these should go, not to the flag, but to the things of which it is an emblem to freedom, to civilization. His idolatrous tendency and his truly heathenish confusion of mind are still further shown in his reference of "the benefit which it" (the flag, observe) "confers on mankind." His is a typical utterance: the vestigial idolatry of the cave-dweller and the sylvan nomad is still strong in the race, and flag-worship is one of its most reasonless manifestations. Everywhere and always in these days of war we hear and read words about the flag which a thinking human being would be ashamed to utter of an actual beneficent deity. There is no room whatever for doubt that what the average patriot acclaims and honors is the actual colored silk or bunting, not the abstractions that it represents. To the conception of abstractions he comes unfitly equipped, but he can see a tinted rag. I do not know that any harm comes of his idolatry; it is noted here merely as an interesting and significant phenomenon—one of a thousand proving the brevity of our advance along the line of progress toward the light. It is of a piece with the average human being's more or less sincere respect for truth, justice, chastity and so forth, not as practicable means to the end of human happiness, but as things creditable and desirable in themselves, even when subversive of their actual purpose by promoting misery. Let the flag

flap, and let "our ill-starred fellow citizens" who are unable to get a firm mental grasp on what it stands for knuckle down upon their knees before it and lift the voice. But God bless them, how they would be shocked to observe the indifference with which it is regarded by soldiers in battle! One of the sharpest and most righteous rebukes I ever got from high authority was for permitting my color-sergeant to flaunt his gaudy symbol in the face of a battery. To civilian orators and poets the flag is sacred; to the soldier it is useful.

Bierce found time for asides about the conduct of the Boer war, then going on. The Boers, someone had remarked, "for a long time objected to railways in their country because railways are not mentioned in the Bible." Bierce inferred: "They seem to have always thought that good book singularly garrulous about Mauser rifles and Creusot cannon."

The war with Spain was an imperialist war, whatever its proudly advertised intentions. Bierce saw this early and prepared his readers for seeing it, too. Commenting on the public relations of the "home front," he wrote:

A half-dozen "millionaires" of New York are said to have "sounded" the Government as to whether it will accept a battleship to be built and presented by them. All railway employees are to be asked by an association of their fellows to contribute to the building of a battleship for presentation to the Government. It is proposed that the school children of the country shall assess themselves ten cents each to build a battleship for the navy.

In short, public opinion was being cultivated to demand that the U.S. become a great sea power. Bierce speaks of the nation's "delighted acquiescence in Mr. Cleveland's extension of the Monroe doctrine, entailing incalculable responsibilities; in the project for annexation of Hawaii."

That we shall add the Philippines, Porto Rico, and eventually Hawaii, to our possessions is as nearly "manifest destiny" as it is given to be in a world from which design and fate have not expelled chance. All this means an increasing increase of our navy. If eager to grasp we must be strong to keep.

A month later Bierce wrote:

This is a war of conquest; if it had not been it might have been already brought to a triumphant conclusion without enlisting a single soldier. We had only to destroy Spain's navy by a prompt, bold, and persistent initiative. Then Spain herself, with all her possessions and dependencies, would have been at our mercy. If we had not intended to hold the island colonies, not against Spain but against the European powers generally, our expeditionary forces would have been needless their organization and dispatch a most unmilitary measure.

Standing apart, Bierce analyzed the war in terms of motives as much as tactics, and saw and reported its effects:

War—even a little war like ours—is a horrible business; not so much because of the privation, suffering and death afield as because of its effect upon the minds of the noncombatants. A nation fighting is like a dog fighting: or, for that matter, a man. It has no powers of reason—nothing but a blind, passionate fury that is neither vincible to suasion nor pregnable to sense. Those who are not incapable of justice to the enemy are as bigoted in his defense as the others in his vilification. If these disagreeable phenomena are less conspicuous in our national life today than they were during the civil war it is only because the present affair touches our interests and therefore our feelings, less nearly; we are no better than we were then.

Bierce saw quite clearly and he never falsified the meaning of what he saw. He was paid good money for expressing his opinions well, but the opinions were always his own.



## *COMMENTARY* COUNTER-REVOLUTION

THE analysis in *Nature's Price* (see *Frontiers*) of the effects of the Green Revolution on countries which depend on wet paddy fields for growing rice deserves attention. Since the numerous old species of rice have been replaced by a few hybrids called HYVs (High Yielding Varieties), the dangers of monoculture have become obvious. The hybrids are susceptible to virus infestation, which may soon spread to vast areas. Control is then sought with a chemical pesticide, which gets into the food chain and kills off the rice-birds. Rats which eat the dead birds are resistant to the poison, but the black snakes which eat the rats are not, so they disappear and the rats multiply wildly. The stalks of the high-yielding variety of rice are short and strong. Rats couldn't climb up the old varieties, which had long, weak stalks, but now they devour the rice harvest. Meanwhile deforestation in the area has brought nutrientless flash floods to the paddies, which begin to require artificial fertilization, but this kills the fish that eat the larvae of the malaria mosquitoes, and they breed uncontrolled.

After many centuries of stable agriculture, through a unique system of cooperation with nature, the result of the change is leached-out soil, an increase of rats, malaria and hunger. Java now has 80 million inhabitants. In order to be able to feed the population, which is increasing by 2.5 million people annually, rice cultivation is being extended and modernized. Ostensibly this has been successful so far, because rice production has increased. But the drawbacks are already becoming obvious. Yet people persist in travelling this road, which will lead to Java's becoming a desolate land before the end of this century. A waste land.

Meanwhile the birds are dying off. One songbird, the authors say, eats 675 insects every day, or about 100,000 annually. Economists will admit that this is useful work. It would cost about \$15,000 a year to pay a human fly and mosquito catcher to do the work of one little bird, according to a guess admitted to be a bit absurd, yet the

birds do eat many of the bugs that the world now spends 30,000 million dollars a year to kill with poisons.

The farmers themselves, according to a report from the East, don't like the new methods but are pushed into using them by their creditors, who believe that they understand "business" better than peasants. But Nature, alas—or fortunately—is not a business enterprise. How can more people be persuaded of this?

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### HEARN COMES FIRST

IN years past we often took note of what seemed good books for small children, and after reading a column which singled out several of such books as of superior quality, decided to do it again. The reviewer sounded knowledgeable and when we got them from the library they were all old and worn, which seemed a good sign. But while looking through them the impression grew that all we can really bring to the review of these books is utter incompetence. Who knows what a small child will enjoy? Then a comforting thought came along, produced by the fact that it was fun reading them. It is highly probable, after all, that the children's books which sell well are the ones the *parents* like, since they do the buying. So, being an erstwhile parent, we may have qualification enough.

But first another report on reading to older children—ten and over. Our greatest success has been with books written for adults. The subtleties of the humor seem to delight readers of, say, eleven or twelve much more than ostentatiously designed comedy for juveniles. You also get a chance to talk about words they haven't come across. One story we have read (a bit edited) several times to children is Lafcadio Hearn's "A Living God," which begins his *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* (1897). This is a tale about a great tidal wave, and how an old man and his grandson saved the lives of the villagers whose homes were close to the sea. The old man lived far up the mountain and saw the *tsunami* at its start—a sudden withdrawal of water from the shore. The old man—Hamaguchi—knew what this meant: the tide would soon come back in a great, engulfing wave.

But the people in the village were not old enough to know about such things. How could they be warned in time? What would draw them

up the mountain to safety? Hamaguchi called to his grandson:

"Tada! quick,—very quick! . . . Light me a torch.

*Taimatsu*, or pine-torches, are kept in many coast dwellings for use on stormy nights, and also for use at certain Shinto festivals. The child kindled the torch at once; and the old man hurried with it to the fields, where hundreds of ricestacks, representing most of his invested capital, stood awaiting transportation. Approaching those nearest the verge of the slope, he began to apply the torch to them,—hurrying from one to another as quickly as his aged limbs could carry him. The sun-dried stalks caught like tinder, the strengthening sea breeze blew the blaze landward; and presently, rank behind rank, the stacks burst into flame, sending skyward columns of smoke that met and mingled into one enormous cloudy whirl. Tada, astonished and terrified, ran after his grandfather, crying—

"Ojisan! why? Ojisan! why?—why?"

But Hamaguchi did not answer: he had no time to explain; he was thinking only of the four hundred lives in peril. For a while the child stared wildly at the blazing rice; then burst into tears, and ran back to the house, feeling sure that his grandfather had gone mad.

But Hamaguchi was not mad. Seeing the blaze, an acolyte in a nearby temple sounded the big bell, and the people responded. When the first contingent of helpers arrived, Hamaguchi told them,

"Let it burn, lads!" . . . "let it be! I want the whole *mura* here. There is a great danger,—*taihen da!*"

All the village rushed up the mountain, even children, who helped to pass water, and their lives were saved. In gratitude the people built a temple in his honor, and called him Hamaguchi DAIMYOJIN—a god.

How he felt about it I cannot say,—I know only that he continued to live in his old thatched home upon the hill, with his children and his children's children, just as humanly and simply as before, while his soul was being worshipped in the shrine below. A hundred years and more he has been dead; but his temple, they tell me, still stands, and the people still

pray to the ghost of the good old farmer to help them in time of fear or trouble.

A paperback edition of *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* is available from the Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont. It contains other good things.

What about the books we got from the library? First, the pictures. The illustrations done by Natalie Babbitt for *Phoebe's Revolt* (Farrar, Strauss, 1968)—about a girl who hated ruffles and insisted on dressing in her father's clothes—tell the story all by themselves. The determination in Phoebe's face, the shock on the prim visages of the servants, the awful respectability of affluent life in New York City at the turn of the century is all there, and you hardly need the poetic text; but here is a bit of it:

In nineteen-four, at any rate  
 Phoebe Euphemia Brown was eight.  
 The trouble all began in June  
 While getting dressed one afternoon.  
 For Phoebe, who was mostly good,  
 And often did the things she should,  
 Stepped forward in her underwear  
 With mingled passion and despair  
 And loudly said she hated bows  
 And roses on her slipper toes  
 And dresses made of fluff and lace  
 With frills and ruffles every place  
 . . .  
 She said she had just one request:  
 To dress the way her father dressed,  
 In simple white and sober black  
 Unornamented front and back.

We'll tell about the rest of the books some other time.

The Fall 1979 issue of *Contemporary Education*, published by the School of Education in Indiana State University (Terre Haute), presented a symposium on "Teaching as a Performing Art," with arguments pro and con. The materials on the "pro" side are persuasive and interesting, but truth seems to lie with the "con" position, taken by Ralph Smith, editor of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, who says:

. . . the teaching-as-acting image, if it is to be at the center of pedagogical theory, has the effect of subordinating the learner's performance. And by stressing matters of style or ways of acting, the image diverts attention from matters of substance. If the acting analogy were carried to its logical extreme, a teacher who took it seriously would never have to *understand* anything. Only lines would have to be memorized. But that is absurd, and I am not implying that advocates of the analogy say this.

. . . to be sure, there is performance involved in education even the performance of a script. The script in question, however, is not the one the teacher performs; rather, it is the very self of the learner, given at birth and in continuous need of being rewritten and performed throughout life as a person grows and matures. What is interesting in this image is that the teacher would be seen more as a director of the learner's educational performance than as an actor, unless one wants to call a director a performing artist. . . . But the director analogy also breaks down when it is realized that a director of a play strives to realize a play's intention which is actualized in a highly structured form that has the capacity to perform the distinctive function of dramatic art. The teacher as director of learners has different aims, and the performances in question—the performance by learners of their individual selves—take a myriad of forms which bear very little resemblance to the unfolding of a play.

Yet, on the other hand, all the skills of the performer, when they are used spontaneously, may extend and make effective the work of the teacher. The teacher is not an *actor*, but a kind of "universal" agent for awakening and stirring the hunger to know and delight in knowing. A sense of the dramatic unities in life will enrich all that the teacher does.

## *FRONTIERS* A Good if Trivial Book

THE scale of modern problems makes them appear to require the attention of managers. Managers are people trained and experienced in dealing with the totality of human enterprises. In the not so distant past they were kings and colonizers. Today they are practical economists. Tomorrow they may be ecologists. Today the voice of the ecologists grows stronger from year to year, but the economists are still in charge. That is to say, the individuals who are believed to understand the interests of industry and commerce make most of the decisions about the management of the external processes which affect human life.

The prevailing motive and dynamic of economic enterprise is self-interest. Accordingly, if ecologists and environmentalists and other reformers desire to alter the patterns of human behavior in behalf of a better—or *some*—future for all, they often put their case for change in the language of self-interest. They want the managers to be able to recognize and grasp the force of their arguments. *Nature's Price: The Economics of Mother Earth* (Marion Boyars Inc.) by W. van Dieran and M. G. W. Hummelinck, first published in Holland in 1977 and now available in English translation, is a book designed to appeal to people who agree that they should learn to think as managers think. The first chapter is an "apology", to the reader for this hardheaded approach. The authors explain:

The decision-makers of today's society must be made aware that there are things happening now which will make them an abomination to generations unborn. Who are these decision-makers? How do their minds work? How do they judge priorities? How do they finally reach a decision?

They think in figures, in money. They estimate investments and interests and are financially responsible to those for whom they work. They know that "politics is the organization of the possible." Their activities are limited by what electors, supporters, stockholders, bankers and unions allow them to do. As a rule, allowances will be made on

the basis of what the figures say. Their greatest incentive is always "economic growth," which really means increased production, commercial or financial growth. So it has been for centuries past in the developed world. And so it will continue until we can make it very plain that nature, too, is a part of the economy and its health is an essential condition for our prosperity. . . . Perhaps one day there will be people who run an enterprise in a new, democratic way, respecting nature. If this ever comes about, much will have been gained, but the situation is so serious now that the conservationist cannot wait around for things to happen. . . . What we do know about the secret of life is so little that it will take a long time before nature's role is taken into account in our plans as a matter of course. In the meantime we should seize every opportunity to express the value of nature in "economic" terms. Maybe the time will come when nature's value, as an essential for prosperity as well as for its beauty, is realized.

In short, this is a book which does for the household of earth what Scott Burns's *Home Inc.* does for the personal domestic economy. It tells you what may be lost in dollars and cents when you cut down a tree, and what may be added when you plant one and see it through to maturity. In one place there is an account of the air-purifying capacity of a hundred-year-old beech tree with 800,000 leaves. Remarking that in the German Ruhr "one million tons of dust are spewed out each year," the authors point out: "The large beech tree, with its leaf area of 1,600 square metres, intercepts several hundred kilos of this dust, filtering it out of the air." While very fine dust is exhaled by human lungs, the medium-sized particles may cause illness.

Deciduous trees are naturally the most efficient in performing the dust-filtering function—especially the alder, willow, oak, plane and beech, which have a great resistance to atmospheric pollution and so can grow well in regions where their air-purifying effect is most needed. Anyone who walks in an avenue of trees, or a park, therefore breathes filtered air, which is also cooler because the trees provide shade and reflect the irradiated heat of the sun and any surrounding buildings.

What is this service worth to us in money?

In 1971, two "purification towers" about the size of advertisement pillars were erected in the Avenue de Ledru-Rollin in Paris. They cost 27,500 French francs at the time but, when mass-produced, the price fell to 8000 French francs. The capacity is 100 million cubic metres of air, containing 0.3 to one milligramme of dust per cubic metre. So one tower can extract thirty to fifty kilos of dust from the air annually, and several thousand of them would be needed to extract the dust from the Parisian air. Not unnaturally the towers are operated by electricity, the generation of which, of course, creates pollution elsewhere. Trees however, are more efficient, do not create pollution elsewhere, and work for nothing into the bargain. They are also more aesthetically satisfying.

This is the sort of comparison made throughout the book, whenever possible, and there are numerous estimates of the cost of replacement of sound ecological conditions in areas where abuse has made wastelands out of once highly productive terrain.

*Nature's Price* is a conscientious and informative piece of work, well written and at times vividly interesting, although at other times it reads like a textbook composed for the young. We no doubt need such books, if only to bridge the gap between the present and that far-off day when the thinking of "managers" and that of ordinary people will be more alike. How will this Utopian situation come about? When our problems can be conceived more in terms of human scale, and there is no longer need for so much quantitative analysis, then "expertise" will no longer have to be stepped down by well-intentioned journalists for the instruction of us common folk.

In the meantime, while admitting the usefulness of such "economic" arguments, in order to "fit nature into economics," we should never forget that the real if long-term project is to "fit economics into nature." Another sort of thinking is required for this.

The best example of it we know is the concluding chapter of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. Contemporary conservation

theory, he said, "defines no right or wrong, assigns no obligation, calls for no sacrifice, implies no change in the current philosophy of values." And this, he said, and showed from history, is not enough.

No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it. In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial.