Gombrich, former director of the University of London's Warburg Institute, is one of the world's foremost art historians. Not surprisingly, these tributes to 12 great Western humanists—from the philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel to the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud—frequently illuminate Gombrich's own historical and aesthetic preoccupation. He credits Hegel, for instance, with fathering the discipline of art history by recognizing that standards of beauty (and, therefore, styles of art) change according to the "spirit of the age." Gombrich praises Freud's interpretive brilliance, particularly as shown in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and other studies of the unconscious mind. But most of all, Gombrich respects Freud for the restraint he displayed in writing about works of art such as Michelangelo's *Moses* or Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*; Freud consistently refused to explain a work of art by exposing its creator's neuroses—"to say more than he [Freud] thought he could answer for." The Dutch historian, Johan Huizinga, whose *Homo ludens* (1949) and other books explored the importance of the "play element" to the civilized life of a society, epitomized Gombrich's ideal of humanism: the art of showing others, through the study of human works, "what man can be."

Difficult decisions faced the Japanese at the end of the 19th century. Just emerging from a feudal past as European powers were busy carving up the rest of Asia, the islanders had to protect their territory and modernize. Nakae Chomin, a prominent intellectual of the Meiji Era (1869–1912), made Japan's dilemma the subject of an imaginary dialogue, published in 1887 and now translated into English by Tsukui, a professor of English literature at George Mason University. Master Nankai, an open-minded chap who likes to mix drink with political discussion, plays host to two men espousing radically different programs for the future of their country. One guest, the Gentleman of Western Learning, echoing his cher-
ished European authors, wants to make Japan "a laboratory for democracy, equality, moral principles, and learning." He would abolish the monarchy and disband the military. Armed only with political freedom and civic virtue, Japan could progress without fearing the Western nations whose best values she would so avidly endorse. The other guest, the Champion of the East, dismisses the Gentleman's ideas as something that "can be written in a book but cannot be practiced." War, he insists, "is an inevitable force in the actual world," and Japan can compete with the West only by military expansion. His counsel: to invade "a great country . . . vast and rich in natural resources"—an obvious allusion to China. Just "empty words," pronounces the host of both viewpoints at the debate's end. But some 40 years after the book's publication, Japan followed the Champion's course. After their defeat in World War II, the Japanese once again turned to Chomin's classic, this time heeding the words of the cautious Gentleman.

Science & Technology

THE BIRTH OF NEUROSIS:
Myth, Malady, and the Victorians
by George Frederick Drinka, M.D.
Simon & Schuster, 1984
431 pp. $21.95

In 1733, British physician George Cheyne published *The English Malady*, the first treatise on the role of the nerves in psychological and behavioral disorders. But it was at least a century more before Western physicians attributed abnormal behavior to nervous conditions rather than to such traditional "causes" as an imbalance of humors or mysterious vapors. Drinka, a Portland, Oregon, psychiatrist, shows how cultural and technological developments in 19th-century societies supported, even shaped, the new medical thinking. Exotic personality myths, derived from literature or from the lives of famous individuals, influenced scientists and physicians. The Biblical story of Onan warned of the dangers of masturbation (e.g., impotence and homosexuality), while the notion of the "Noble Savage" emphasized the corrupting power of the city. All such myths, Drinka says, embodied "Victorian fears, prejudices, and