

Book Reviews

Guided Sight Reading, a New Approach to Piano Study, by Leonhard Deutsch, Crown Publishers, New York, 1950. Reviewed by Victor Popper, *Chicago*.

As occasional polls among adults show, only very few former piano students continue their *active* relationship to music after having discontinued, or terminated, their studies. Indeed, most of them later never touch the piano. Strange to say, not many people are even aware of this striking misproportion between effort and result, and those who are, submit to this fact as to a natural law.

Why have the conventional methods of piano instruction been so ineffective in most cases, and what *can* be done to enable the average pupil to increase and enjoy his proficiency after having ceased taking lessons?

Leonhard Deutsch's book gives the answer to these questions in a way that is both convincing and (to this writer, at least) fascinating. (In 1931, a book representing the same ideas, though not quite as daring, was published by the same author in Germany.)

To Dr. Deutsch, the reason why most people practically stop playing piano as soon as they stop taking lessons is obvious. With few exceptions, all they have learned from their teachers is, at best, how to play a very limited number of pieces. They soon get tired of this repertoire, and that is the point where they abandon the piano for good. This deplorable result can only be avoided by changing not only the *methods*, but, in the first place, the *aim* of piano instruction.. The reason why a student works only as long as he takes lessons instead of forging ahead afterwards, making himself acquainted with the infinite variety of piano music, the reason, we repeat, is that he is not able to pick out new pieces of any considerable complexity without the help of a teacher.

Thus the aim of piano instruction should be to make the pupil independent of his teacher—in other words, to teach him how to read at sight. Self-evident as this may seem, it took the author years of experiments and failures to arrive at this conclusion and, moreover, to develop a method as to *how* to teach sight-reading. Incidentally, it is a method that can be applied to any pupil, as Leonhard Deutsch, being one of the earliest disciples of Alfred Adler, refuses to exclude "untalented" aspirants.

A child-prodigy succeeds, no matter how he is taught, because he really follows his own method. The problems begin with less fortunate pupils. For them sight-reading should not be just another exercise, in addition to the conventional technical and repertoire studies. It should be the essence of piano study. This reviewer, having been a follower of Dr. Deutsch since the time he started advancing his ideas in Vienna, can testify that a pupil needs to be taught hardly anything but sight-reading. It may be applied from the beginning, and is, at the same time, the best preparation for repertoire study since it is evident that, the better one grasps a piece at sight, the easier it will be to perfect it.

Only little can be said within this space about how sight-reading should be taught. To avoid a misunderstanding: By sight-reading, in this connection, is not meant the task of playing a new piece with the required speed at all costs, no matter what happens. Quite the contrary. The student should aim at absolute correctness in the first place, in the second, at playing evenly. To achieve this goal he will have to play very slowly. His ideal should be a "slow-motion rendition of the correct performance." . . . "Technique is developed by slowing down the practicing tempo." . . . During the first few repetitions—and more are not advisable—the speed will gradually increase. A piece which the pupil drops for the time being will seem much easier after he has advanced to more complicated sight-reading material. He will this time be able to start with greater speed, without having played the piece in between.

Much space is devoted to a feature of Dr. Deutsch's method which he stresses now more than he did years ago. It is *guiding* the pupil by playing along with him, joining the beginner in the higher octave, playing duets, distributing the parts of the two hands between pupil and teacher. Somewhat advanced students should, if possible, be accompanied on a second piano. The musical contact with his teacher, if correctly applied, proves to be the most effective way of helping him along, from finding the right keys up to playing with natural expression. Profound understanding of the pupil's peculiarities and individual needs is here, more than elsewhere, necessary.

This review can convey only a faint idea of what the book contains in 110 pages, replete with meaning. You will find no small talk in it; everything is said with a minimum of words. The author's keen sense of humor, latent most of the time, reveals itself here and there, as in the advice: "Never should a teacher be more ambitious for the pupil than the pupil is for himself, lest the teacher fall into the weak position of a creditor toward his insolvent debtor."

Even readers who are not ready to agree with all of Leonhard Deutsch's views, will find his book highly stimulating.

Lift Up Your Heart, by Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, McGraw-Hill, New York 1950, 308 pages. Reviewed by Leonhard Deutsch, *New York, N.Y.*

This book, though it is written from the viewpoint of religion, not of science, and thus offers wisdom rather than knowledge, will greatly interest the followers of Individual Psychology. The author has transcribed the biblical concept of human nature into an exquisite modern prose, including a multitude of aphoristic sentences—gems which, even detached, would keep their value.

Msgr. Sheen brands our civilization the climax of materialism, based on the pleasure principle, advocating liberties instead of inner freedom, keeping man irresponsible and ruled by selfish tendencies, camouflaging vices as virtues, upsetting social relations, and leading to inner and outer conflicts and disasters. This is essentially identical with Adlerian thought.

Yet the author, following the doctrine of the Bible, also goes beyond Individual Psychology and stresses the Divine level of human nature. Man's faith in himself and his fellows is rooted in his faith in God. Social interest implies

that all of us are God's children; love of one's fellow-men is a manifestation of the love of God.

Very likely most readers of this book are believers; it may teach them that egotistic character traits, even though covered up by lip-service, are incompatible with true religious faith. Faith, whether in mankind or in God, is more than a theoretical conviction; it is a deeply rooted feeling.

The complacent philosophy of "enlightenment," elated and blinded by the achievements of science, proclaimed Faith as a matter of the past. Msgr. Sheen's book makes us understand that Faith belongs to the future. "God is Love and Love is our destiny." We have abundantly trained our brains; what we still have to learn is to lift up our hearts.

Dianetics, The Modern Science of Mental Health, by L. R. Hubbard, Hermitage House, New York 1950, 452 pages. Reviewed by Leonhard Deutsch, *New York, N.Y.*

"Dianoua" is the Greek word for "thought" and, according to its author, "Dianetics" means "the science of mind." This seems to be just another word for "psychology." Actually, not a trace of psychology, not even of scientific thought can be found in "Dianetics."

Without any reference to Freud, Mr. Hubbard explains a neurotic symptom as the after-effect of a traumatic experience. Yet while Freud meant an actual and afterwards repressed experience, Mr. Hubbard assumes that a trauma can occur only in a state of unconsciousness and is recorded as an "engram" in a brain cell. He further holds that the most significant period of unconsciousness is pre-natal life: from the moment of conception, a woman's emotional and physical shocks and pains cause "engrams" in the cells of the embryo or foetus and become the sources of all kinds of disorders in later life.

Precisely like Freud, Mr. Hubbard claims that a trauma is rendered harmless when it is raised into consciousness. Yet while for that purpose Freud worked out an intricate and tedious technique, Mr. Hubbard can manage with a very simple and quick procedure: the patient (called "pre-clear") lies down on a couch and closes his eyes; the therapist (called "auditor") puts him into a "reverie" and leads his memory back to his early childhood. Soon the patient slips further back into his mother's womb, talks the dianetic jargon and the auditor, snapping his fingers, lifts his patient's "engrams" to the surface where they promptly burst like soap-bubbles.

Freud, Adler, and other pioneers of psychotherapy spent their lives elaborating their ideas and never ceased revising and amending them. Mr. Hubbard hit the jackpot right at the beginning and within twelve years brought "Dianetics" to perfection. Freud and the others were self-critical, aware of the difficulty of their problems and of the limits of their achievements. Mr. Hubbard, unperturbed by modesty, insists that "Dianetics" works with the precision of a press-button machine, curing unfailingly, in no time, radically, and without relapse, all kinds of emotional and mental trouble, psychotic conditions, and psychosomatic illness. He puts on the list of the latter a great many clinical diseases,

from colds to tuberculosis and cancer. He believes that susceptibility to them is caused by "engrams" which could be "cleared" in time. "Dianetics" promises a paradise on earth, redeeming mankind from plague and insanity, war and destruction, irresponsibility and injustice, simply by eradicating "engrams." Also, the author promises that the reading of his book is sufficient for every intelligent person to become a successful "auditor." Ardent readers can cure themselves mutually, a sort of psychotherapeutic self-service.

Mr. Hubbard does not bother with references to other schools of psychotherapy. He merely presents "Dianetics" as the only and eternal truth, one of the greatest discoveries of all times which has been sought before in thousands of years and now renders all other theories wrong, ineffective, and obsolete.

Loquacious as the author is otherwise, he does not waste one word on the history of his ideas. He calls his phantastic, purely mechanistic hypotheses "established laws" and "scientifically proved facts," but does not offer any other evidence than a vague reference to hundreds of cured patients, without furnishing case histories or other specific data.

The book is crammed with bragging and swaggering, pseudoscientific bombast, platitudes and vulgarities, and a great deal of sheer nonsense.

For several months this book was on the best-seller list. Now the evil seed is sprouting in a "dianetic" periodical, in many training-courses, and countless offices of "dianetic" practitioners. Such a fabulous success shows that gold still lies in the streets for those who appeal to stupidity, gullibility, and wishful thinking.