

“Study” is a problem for me these days (in other words, “figuring out what is really going on”). With the tsunami of resources and the plethora of media, I find myself at sea trying to find firm ground to stand on, and an articulated perspective of what is going on that has some basis beyond my current opinions or those of my (currently) favored commentators. This emerging dilemma was recognized, last century, in the work of the staff and colleagues of The Ecumenical Institute of Chicago. In their courses and internal operations they spelled out an approach to “Study Methodology” that, for its time, seemed helpful. A half century later, I wonder how to outline an adequate approach to “study” .

That is to say, what are 3 insights you have about what makes authentic study these days?

STUDY METHODOLOGY

- I. **GESTALT** - What we are after is to get hold of the mind of the author, the way he thinks about life.
 - A. **Initial Gestalt**: In the first feeling through of the paper the author's mind is perceived.
 1. **First** - a quick analysis of the major turning points in the paper gives the major concerns of the author.
 2. **Last** - a more detailed analysis modifies and clarifies the structure of the paper.
 - B. **Final**: When the paper hangs together in this fashion, then a dialogue with the author has begun.
 1. **Addresses You** - the reader first of all allows the paper to speak to his own life.
 2. **You Address** - then out of the way he finds life to be he speaks back to the paper.
- II. **RELATIONS** - We are out to find out the way the parts of a paper relate to each other and the way the parts relate to the whole.
 - A. **Parts**: An author discloses his emphasis by the amount of space given to each section of the paper.
 1. **Divisions** - every time there is a shift in the author's thought the sections of the paper are disclosed.
 2. **Summary**: - a grasp of a section is made possible by a statement of its context.
 - B. **Whole**: An author has been encountered as a witness by seeing that his whole thought is present in one paper.
 1. **Statement**: the author's stance is his statement about all of life made in even a brief piece of writing.
 2. **Image**: the important thing therefore is to leave an image which holds the content of an author's witness.
- III. **CLUES** - An author's witness is heard by his structure and by the address he makes to the reader.
 - A. **Objective**: The structure is revealed to the reader through certain objective clues.
 1. **Key Paragraphs**: - certain seminal paragraphs reveal the structure of the author's mind.
 2. **Relational Terms**: - phrases which indicate the turns in a paper and the relation between the parts are clues to the meaning of a paper.
 - B. **Subjective**: The reader's response to a paper on all levels are integral parts of studying a paper.
 1. **Feelings**: - the readers emotional response to the paper as a whole and to various individual parts are clues to what the writer is saying.
 2. **Associations**: the life experiences which the reader finds being called to mind are also clues to what the author is speaking about in life.
- IV. **REACTION**: The reader who studies a paper necessarily makes his own particular response to a writer.
 - A. **Objective**: There are certain external or objective ways a reader can respond to a paper.
 1. **Questions**: to know what questions the reader brings to and are raised by a document is crucial to grasping what the writer has said.
 2. **Disagree**: knowing where you disagree with a writer is essential to grasping the writer's witness.
 - B. **Subjective**: There are also certain internal or subjective reactions which a reader makes to a paper.
 1. **Yes**: if a paper talks about life, then one reaction is to say that you have known that all your life.
 2. **No**: if that is not the way you fine life, then you are required to respond that life is not that way but this way.

STUDY ASSIGNMENTS

BULTMANN

Introduction

1. It is time that the Church picked up the task of serious education.
2. The charting method is an attempt to provide a quick way of grasping the address of a document.
3. On this weekend we intend to make full use of our time together to find out what it means to be disciplined men of faith in the 20th Century.

Assignment

1. We will study only Section I of this paper.
2. Number the paragraphs down to Section II; you should find 12 paragraphs.
3. **Draw a horizontal line 1/3 of the way down on a blank piece of paper turned length-wise and divide into 12 parts. putting the paragraph numbers in the slots.**
4. **Feel through the paper and divide it into sections where you find breaks in the author's thought and label the sections.**
5. **Get hold of what the author has to say in each section.**
6. **Are there any questions about the assignment?**

TILLICH

Introduction

1. The task of theologizing is inescapable; every man must do his own thinking.
2. The charting method is crucial to getting an image left on your mind when you finish a paper.
3. The decision to participate with this particular group is to decide to expose your own life.

Assignment

1. Chart the whole paper by paragraphs; there are 15 paragraphs.
2. Number the sentences in paragraph 12, and chart the paragraph by sections (groups of sentences).

BONHOEFFER

Introduction

1. Being a theologian in depth is utterly required to be fully human and to priest your neighbor.
2. Charting is more than getting a rational grasp of a paper; it requires pulling it through your own life.
3. At this time in the afternoon to study is to decide to study as a tired person.

Assignment

1. Chart the first section of the paper down to Vocation; there are 10 paragraphs.
2. Then go back and chart paragraph 3 by sentences; there are 12 sentences.

NIEBUHR

Introduction

1. In order to initiate our dialogue about what it might mean to embody the new image of the Church as mission we want to study a brief paper.
2. There are no absolute ways of charting a paper; what you are after is a construct that adequately holds the paper for you.
3. To take your experience seriously is to decide that no question or comment anyone makes is insignificant.

Assignment

1. Chart the paper by paragraphs.
2. Then chart paragraph 1 by sentences.