

THE NATURE OF STUDY

By Sidney A. Cook •

Reactions to study courses reflect the differences in students and in teachers. A particular study course brings enthusiastic reports of evenings of deeply instructive interest, good attendance and of eager looking forward to classes week by week. The same course also brings comment of dryness and disinterest. What makes the difference? The study sheets, the references, the division into subjects, the suggestions for class work, are identical. Yet one student finds it tremendously good, the other finds nothing.

Clearly, the difference is not in the course, but in the students and the teacher. The one group proves that the good, the value, the interest, is there to be drawn from the course. The other merely fails to find it. These facts lead us to a consideration of the nature of study. Evidently study is not *just* reading. Clearly, it is not *just* listening, for both groups read and listen.

The key to the difference is *work*, and work is giving of one's own energies, an expenditure of effort to achieve results. The difference in the effect of the course and the reaction of the group, therefore, is attributable to the difference in honest effort by teachers and by students—probably both—for students and teachers must be mutually sustaining. Both must work; both must give of themselves, of their effort.

Study is not merely reading. Study is delving; it is search; it is comparison; it is an effort not merely to understand, but to understand more. For to read and to understand—even to reflect and to understand—do not constitute study. To study is to read, reflect, understand and *discover*—to discover something new through one's own deep thought into and probably beyond that lying immediately behind the words read. There are no results to be found equal to those spread before the Theosophical student who works.

A study course, a lesson, is but a jumping off point. Each student must make their own flight through their own thinking. They must search and discover through effort of their own—research and discovery. If they do this, they and their class facilitator will find any Theosophical course interesting, instructive, and uplifting. If they fail to do this, no course, however beautifully constructed and presented, will to them be a success. Any class to which each student brings one single new thought discovered in themselves through honest effort at the lesson *will* be thrillingly alive.

• Sidney A. Cook was president of the Theosophical Society in America from 1931-45.