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Sumner, Hitchens, Goh, Rigler, and Easterly Study Guide

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SUMNER, HITCHENS, GOH, RIGLER, AND EASTERLY STUDY GUIDE, 2011 Steven Alan Samson

WILLIAM GRAHAM SUMNER: THE FORGOTTEN MAN

<http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Best/SumnerForgotten.htm>

Study Questions

William Graham Sumner, who had planned to study under Francis Lieber, instead succeeded him at Columbia University and helped develop the field of political economy in America, in which Lieber had also pioneered. This essay (the original is longer) is a variation on Bastiat's Broken Window Fallacy as well as his idea of legal plunder based on "stupid greed" and "false philanthropy." In Sumner's calculus, "A" might be a politician or a businessman who seeks some undue political or economic advantage. "B" might be a humanitarian who wants to relieve suffering or perhaps his own conscience by assisting "D." "A" and "B" may find it advantageous to join forces to assist "D," particularly if somebody else can be compelled to foot the bill. This somebody else is "C," the Forgotten Man.

1. What does government produce? What is capital? Is it a scarce resource that should not be squandered? We are told that it is better to give than to receive. Is it also better to give rather than to save?
2. Why did conditions in Sumner's day favor unskilled labor? Do you think this is true today? What might have changed?
3. How do trades-unions raise wages? How do they create a monopoly? Why does Sumner say that "almost all legislative effort to prevent vice is really protective of vice? What does Sumner mean by saying that we can never eradicate a penalty? [R. J. Rushdoony made a similar point when he remarked that liability is an inescapable concept – at best we can only shift the burden to someone else].

GOH KENG SWEE: DINNER ADDRESS, 13 NOVEMBER 1973

<http://stars.nhb.gov.sg/stars/public/viewPDF.jsp?pdfno=PressR19721113b.pdf>

Study Questions

1. Why has material progress in the rich industrial nations of the west failed to bring happiness or security? What has happened to the old beliefs? What is happening in the underdeveloped portion of the world? What factor do both of groups have in common? What is lacking? What is missing from the vast literature on economic development?
2. Speaking with a widely traveled American banker, what advice did Dr. Goh have to solve the economic problems of a poor country? What do sick societies need most?

SARA YOHEVED RIGLER: THE REVOLUTIONARY REVELATION

http://www.aish.com/shavuothemes/shavuothemesdefault/The_Revolutionary_Revelation.asp

Study Questions

1. "What would the world look like if Torah had never been given? What are some of its specific fruits in education, regarding the sanctity of life, rule of law, the calendar, and social service agencies? Here it would be well to seek whether there can be any common ground between Sumner's views (which focus on the state rather than private charity) and Rigler's.
2. In *The Five Books of Moses*, Robert Alter writes: "Though there is some dispute among interpreters about the meaning of 'stand over the blood,' there is a degree of consensus among traditional commentators, supported by the bracketing of the two sentences in this verse [Lev. 19:16], that it means to stand by without intervening while your fellow man's blood – literally or figuratively – is spilled" (p. 627 n. 16).
3. Why, according to Thomas Cahill, would we be unrecognizable to ourselves if we lived in a world in which the Torah had never been given? What are some of the innovations that Cahill credits the Jews?

WILLIAM EASTERLY: THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

CHAPTER ONE: PLANNERS VS. SEARCHERS

Study Questions

1. **Planners' Failure, Searchers' Success** How do Planners and Searchers differ from each other? Into which category does Jeffrey Sachs fall? Why? Why do the Big Plans fail? What does Easterly mean by saying that "Searchers have better incentives and better results?"
2. Evaluate the following: "The Planners have the rhetorical advantage of promising great things: the end of poverty [the title of a book by Jeffrey Sachs]. The only thing the Planners have against them is that they gave us the second tragedy of the world's poor."
3. **Big Problems and Big Plans** How do military intervention and occupation [as in Iraq and Afghanistan] "show a classic Planners' mentality?"
4. **The Backward Question That Cripples Foreign Aid** What is one of the key predictions about Planners? Why is "setting goals" counterproductive?
5. **Philosophy off Social Change** How does Charles Lindblom define "rich-country politics?"
6. **Feedback and Accountability** What is it about these the two elements that make searches work? What does Lindblom mean by "disjointed incrementalism?" Where do Planners flourish? Why do the needs of the rich get met? Thought Question: Where do Planners and Searchers fit into Bastiat's and Sumner's discussions?