

Session 3 agenda, 9/18/03. Sociology 929, *Envisioning Real Utopias*. Asset Redistribution

I. General considerations

- 1. Conception of human nature.** These discussions all seem to suppose a model of individuals as purely self-interested. This is an unsatisfactory view of motivations, especially in the family-obligation case. How should we think of the self-interest assumption? (Liz)
- 2. Efficiency & Productivity as values.** Are these really legitimate values for a real utopian project? What about the ecological critique of growth? (Adam)
- 3. Reciprocity & Equality.** What is the relationship between the egalitarianism proposed by B&G and the idea of “reciprocity” which they discuss in the conclusion? What are the real values underlying their egalitarianism? (Richard) How does reciprocity link to the residual claimancy argument? (Jay)
- 4. Evidence for the equality/productivity relation.** The crisis of the European welfare states and the stagnation of the East Asian NICs suggest that B&Gs data may be out of date. (Change)

II. Specific proposals

- 5. Implementation & Transition infeasibility.** How would the proposal actually be implemented – through taxes, loans, or what? (Cesar, Patrizia) Wouldn't any proposal for an egalitarian redistribution of corporate assets lead to market collapse, capital flight, asset-hiding strategies, etc? How is the transition engineered? (Stuart, Richard, Eric)
- 6. Democratic paralysis.** Doesn't the model presuppose an unrealistically benign, cooperative democratic process? What about governance pathologies of democratic collectives? (Stuart)
- 7. Job changes & asset ownership.** How does a model of workers collective ownership deal with job changes? Would this impede job mobility? (Patrizia)
- 8. risk taking.** Will the asset redistribution in the B&G model actually increase risk-taking among the poor? This seems problematic. (Cesar)
- 9. the insurance scheme.** How would this really work? Wouldn't it become a massive subsidy to big corporations? (Cesar)
- 10. effects on inequality.** Redistributing capital assets could actually increase inequality because of interactions with unequal social and cultural capital. (Cesar)
- 11. Embedding workers in capitalism.** Doesn't the B&G proposal just embed workers more deeply in capitalism? Is this desirable? Maybe more class conflict is preferable. (Adam)
- 12. Issue of the type of firm:** only manufacturing? What about services? Public sector? (Linda)
- 13. The logic of the models of coordination failures.** IS B&G justified in treating coordination failures as such an important, pervasive problem in capitalism? On what basis do they see this as the defining characteristic of the employer/employee relation? It seems like they derive their reasoning from a mathematical model rather than use the math to illustrate their concepts. (Matais) Isn't the state's capacity to solve CFs increasingly limited? (Chang)
- 14. Exploitation.** Firm-level asset redistribution seems to solve the exploitation issue, but many of the critics seemed to prefer BI. This was surprising. (Richard)
- 15. Sources of Inequality.** what is the relationship between inequalities generated in labor markets and in capital ownership? Why would redistribution of the latter impact on the former? (Eric)
- 16. Vouchers** Will educational vouchers lead to increasing disparity between central city and suburban areas, since the market will work more effectively in the suburbs? (Linda)