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Workplace Democracy and Distributive Justice: On the Place of Distributive Principles of Justice in the Arguments for Workplace Democracy

Shin Osawa

Abstract

This paper argues that the arguments for workplace democracy put forth by Dahl and Young are incomplete as they do not provide distributive principles of justice that can tell us how we should distribute the benefits and burdens of adopting workplace democracy among citizens. Dahl and Young hold that justice requires us to respect citizens' equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends. And on these grounds, they call for workplace democracy so that we can respect citizens' equal moral freedom in the workplace. However, although introducing workplace democracy out of our concern for justice would enable us to respect some citizens' moral freedom, I argue that it could prevent us from respecting other citizens' moral freedom; this is because some citizens may prefer the goods of undemocratic practices in workplaces. If this is the case, in order to respect the equal moral freedom of all citizens, we need to identify reasonable methods and the extent to which we should adopt workplace democracy by defining reasonable trade-offs between the goods of democratic and undemocratic workplace practices. Given this analysis, I further argue that such identification can be given by distributive principles of justice, and the arguments for workplace democracy need to be supplemented by the arguments for distributive principles of justice for workplace democracy.

I. Introduction

In today's liberal capitalist societies, people spend large amounts of time and massive amounts of energy in the workplace to accomplish what they are required to do. In the workplace, some superiors have significant power and discretion to define rules and tasks

while others are just required to follow these rules and carry out predefined tasks. In most workplaces, there is such a hierarchical order. On the other hand, these societies uphold a social and political ideal of equal and free personhood. According to this ideal, all members of society have equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends, and social institutions need to respect such equal moral freedom. Justice is to realise this ideal. From the viewpoint of this motivational concern of justice, how we fare in workplaces in terms of our life-plan pursuits appears to be a matter of justice, and the hierarchical order in many workplaces triggers our moral concern for justice. Given this moral concern, Dahl and Young have presented important arguments for workplace democracy in order to realise justice. In this paper, I point out some problems with their arguments for workplace democracy given their fundamental moral concern for justice, and argue that distributive principles of justice are called for in order to address this problem.

Dahl (1985) and Young (1990) argue that the workplace should not be the site of domination and oppression. In their view, an undemocratic hierarchical order in the workplace enables superiors to create rules and define tasks, as well as require subordinates to accept these rules and tasks without their consent. Here subordinates are simply *dominated* by their superiors, and *oppressed* to the extent that they are deprived of interesting and skill-developing tasks. Dahl and Young consider this situation to be not in line with justice; it does not respect the equal moral freedom of all citizens. Out of such a concern, they strongly advocate workplace democracy in order to eradicate these problems of domination and oppression.

However, introducing workplace democracy could bring moral problems given the diversity of citizens' conceptions of the good and the various social goods we identify according to them. That is, it may be the case that (1) workplace democracy prevents the efficient operation of firms and reduces social productivity, and/or it eradicates workplaces that inherently require hierarchical order for effective operation; (2) workplace democracy makes some citizens bear excessive additional stressful management burdens; (3) workplace democracy reduces opportunities to engage in work in hierarchical workplaces that are important to some citizens according to their own conceptions of the good. These appear morally problematic inasmuch as we recognise that each citizen's life-plans are of equal moral worth; we need to see that introducing workplace democracy itself is not free from social costs to be borne by some citizens.

Having pointed out this important point, I argue that current arguments for workplace democracy should be supplemented by distributive principles of justice. The distributive paradigm of justice shares the motivational concern for justice with arguments for workplace democracy. That is, it recognises that justice is to equally respect the moral freedom of each member of society. However, the main task of distributive justice is to define a reasonable distribution of "the benefits and burdens of social cooperation" (Rawls 1971: 4) when we need to trade off various goods of social cooperation among people and each person acquires a differential share of such goods through trade-offs. Such a

perspective of distributive justice enables us to recognise the fact that the goods of democratic practices in workplaces are accompanied by the loss of the goods of undemocratic practices in workplaces, and we need to define reasonable trade-offs between them in terms of citizens' shares thereof. As such, distributive principles can help us define how the goods and costs of workplace democracy should be distributed among citizens for what moral reasons.

This important role of distributive justice is overlooked by the arguments for workplace democracy made by Dahl and Young. Dahl recognises that the values of social life are diverse and there are trade-off problems among them, but does not develop moral arguments or principles that can address such problems. On the other hand, Young recognises this point *and* holds that, in order to keep the good of collective production which requires authority and specialisation, workplace democracy is required only to a reasonable degree. Despite this recognition, however, exactly what is a reasonable degree is not identified by Young's theory.

Given this situation in the arguments for workplace democracy, I conclude that Dahl and Young need to take distributive justice seriously, giving it a proper place in their arguments, and their arguments should be supplemented by distributive principles of justice. This will enable theories of workplace democracy to develop in a new fashion and attract more attention from theorists of distributive justice.

II. Workplace Democracy for Justice: Basic Ideas

Work as a labour activity in market conditions our lives significantly. What we can get in and through work considerably promotes or constrains our life-plan pursuits. For example, income from work is still a significant factor which determines how we can pursue our distinct life-plans. Without some decent income from work, citizens' lives will fall into poverty and deprivation. In addition to income, we can find various aspects of work that determine our life-quality: labouring activities, leisure time, occupational safety and security, social productivity and so forth.

Given these diverse aspects of work that determine our life-quality, significant attention has been paid to the manners in which the rules and tasks in workplaces are created and defined. The rules and tasks we have in our workplaces for labouring activities define how positive and negative impacts of work on our life-prospects are distributed among the members of a firm, and as such, these rules and tasks change our life-prospects significantly. Under such circumstances of modern liberal capitalist societies, if our moral freedom and life-plans are of equal worth, we require that these rules and tasks that significantly define our labouring activities and social lives respect our moral freedom and life-plans equally. That is, these rules and tasks need be determined by the process that takes the moral freedom and life-plans of each person in a workplace into equal consideration. When this is not done, we consider that workplaces have failed to appreciate our

fundamental equal freedom to pursue our own ends. We need to pay special attention to the manners in which these rules and tasks are determined.

Such a moral issue of workplaces is often discussed as a matter of social justice. Although political theorists have provided various conceptions of justice thus far, it seems natural that they regard the above workplace issue as a matter of justice given the gist of these conceptions of justice.

The common core idea of various conceptions of justice seems to be giving equal respect to the moral freedom of all citizens.¹ That is, justice is to realise a social situation in which we can recognise that citizens' freedom to pursue their own ends is respected equally. This motivational concern of justice has been expressed in various ways but this core idea is well shared by political theorists in various camps. Kymlicka (2002:3-4) gives this a well-known name, that is, the "egalitarian plateau". This "plateau" can cover even political theorists who call for respecting citizens' distinct identities. For example, Young (1990: 11) argues that the idea of equality will damage social justice by introducing oppression and domination when this idea is regarded as "sameness" and requires people to give up their differential identities. Although this sounds somewhat anti-*egalitarian*, it is not difficult to see that Young aspires for equal respect to citizens' distinct identities that are of equal moral worth. Indeed, such an aspiration lies in the core of egalitarian theories of justice that take "distinction between persons" (Rawls 1971: 27) seriously.

Remember that our moral concern for the manners in which rules and tasks for our labouring activities are determined stems from our moral belief in citizens' equal freedom to pursue their own ends. Given what justice means, such moral concern is well captured as a concern of justice. We want citizens' equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends to be respected equally in the rules and tasks that determine how they work and what they get from work. This is a concern of justice for citizens' working life. Such a concern of justice regarding work has been further developed into the arguments for workplace democracy.

In liberal societies where a command economy is absent, rules and tasks for working life are subject to collective decisions in the private sector within legal limits. Insofar as there is no harm to the public, enterprises are allowed to introduce various activities for their business, establish rules of work activities and allocate their resources including human capital according to their needs and interests. Given such a situation, our concern for justice regarding the rules and tasks of our work has been often articulated as a concern for workplace democracy: it depends on how we can participate in the process that determines the rules of work and defines labouring activities whether workplaces respect or disrespect our equal moral freedom to pursue our own ends. Democracy in the workplace is here understood as a process in which all workers involved in an enterprise can put forward their views on its operation such as plans of business, definition and allocation of positions, income structure, and so forth equally. If we are, morally speaking, equally entitled to pursue our own ends in and through the workplace, it would be said that decisions regarding such matters need to be supported by the approval of workers *represented as equals*. If this

is done, we can regard the rules and tasks of work as giving equal consideration to each participant's equal moral freedom to pursue his/her own ends as to how he/she works and what he/she gets from/through it. Workplace democracy is indeed geared to this end, and it has been considered to be a social institution which we need in order to realise the demand of justice, that is, paying equal respect to citizens' respective moral freedom.

III. Claims for Workplace Democracy: Against Oppression and Domination

Political theorists such as Dahl and Young have delved deeper into this line of argument for workplace democracy as a demand of justice. For these theorists, workplace democracy is required to prevent domination and oppression in workplaces. Domination and oppression in the workplace represent social situations that fail to respect citizens' equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends, and workplace democracy is to serve as a remedy for such situations.

1. Domination

Domination refers to a situation in which workers are required to follow the orders and rules for their labouring activities introduced by superiors without their approval. Given that members of an enterprise are all morally equal, this appears problematic.

Dahl argues that the moral principle which requires us to equally share decision-making power in an association of equals applies to business enterprises, and this principle demands that all members of a business enterprise should have an equal voice when making collective decisions. Dahl's arguments for workplace democracy are based on the following premises with regard to the nature of an ideally democratic association (Dahl 1985: 57-59): (a) a collective body of people need to make some collective decisions that will bind them all; (b) before the decisions are made final, there is an agenda-setting stage²; (c) those decisions are made only by those who will be bound by them; (d) there is a weak principle of equality that each person's goods should be considered equally; (e) there is a principle of liberty that each person should be regarded as the final authority to determine what his/her interests are; (f) there is a strong principle of equality that all members are roughly equally qualified to determine what the matters for collective decision should be *and* they are roughly equally qualified to determine which matters should be subject to democratic self-determination and for which matters they require delegation of authority; (g) there is a principle of fairness that equally devisable resources should be allocated equally for equally valid claims *and* for undividable resources, each equally valid claim should have equal opportunities to obtain them. Dahl (1985:ch.4) argues that these conditions should be ideally met in economic associations as well as political associations, and this calls for economic/workplace democracy. Employees of a firm are like residents of a state, and ideally they should possess an equal share of the power for making decisions

that bind them all. Mayer summarises the gist of these points of Dahl's arguments as follow: "if equals should be treated equally, and members of a group are indeed equal in all relevant respects, then each is entitled as a matter of right to an equal share of power in the association" (Mayer 2001: 226-227).

In Dahl's view, if an enterprise does not adopt workplace democracy, it means that some of the members of an association are not recognised as of equal worth: they are treated as undeserving of equal consideration and of a fair share of resources, and unqualified to make judgements for their interests and decide by themselves which matters should be subject to delegation of authority. We can call this moral problem "domination" following Young's terminology. According to Young:

Domination [...] consists in persons having to perform actions whose rules and goals they have not participated in determining, under institutionalized conditions they have not had a part in deciding. [...] Prima facie, justice implies freedom, in the sense of self-determination, the ability of people to decide what they will do and why. In collective activity such freedom cannot be autonomous and self-contained, but rather implies a right of participation in decisionmaking. (Young 1990: 218; see also, Young 1990: 38)

As such, domination indicates a situation in which some members of an association are just told to follow the rules and decisions that have been introduced and made without their approval, and in this way their equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends is disrespected. Given this definition of domination, we can consider that Dahl's claim for a right to voice one's interests in economic enterprises is directed toward the prevention of domination.

For Young too, workplace democracy is required for the prevention of domination. Young holds that "the division of labour between task division and task execution enacts domination" (Young 1990: 218). In current economic enterprises, there is a hierarchical order between superiors and subordinates: superiors are entitled to define tasks while subordinates are just to execute the tasks designed by their superiors. Here the "basic task-defining decisions" (Young 1990: 218) are beyond the control of subordinates. According to Young, these decisions involve the decisions regarding "what will be produced or accomplished, how the organisation's division of labor will be structured to accomplish it, how the production process will be structured, and what the pay scales and relations of superiority and subordination will be among the positions" (Young 1990: 218). In current workplace hierarchy, these basic task-defining decisions are only made by superiors. Workplace democracy rejects such hierarchy, and make the basic task-defining decisions subject to the democratic procedures in which all members of an enterprise participate. This is to respect citizens' equal freedom to pursue their own ends in workplaces.

To summarise the points of their arguments, Dahl and Young find a moral problem in workplaces that involve domination, and propose workplace democracy to prevent this. Domination is simply a negation of the equal moral freedom to pursue one's own ends. If we oppose domination, rules and decisions with regard to task-designing in workplaces need to consider all voices and claims of members of an enterprise equally; this is to respect the equal moral freedom of all members. Workplace democracy enacts such a morally desirable situation.

2. Oppression

In addition to domination, Young also finds oppression as a key moral problem regarding justice in workplaces. According to Young:

Oppression consists in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen. (Young 1990: 38)

Given this, Young finds the "oppression of powerlessness" in present-day workplaces (Young 1990: 219-220). Because of the division of labour between task-defining and task-executing jobs in workplaces, those who are assigned with task-executing jobs will only undertake monotonous labouring activities that prevent them from exercising and developing their skills and capacities. This is to make those nonprofessional workers powerless "in the sense that they are subordinate and exercise little workplace autonomy and decisionmaking power. [...] Nonprofessional workers typically must follow orders and have little opportunity to give them" (Young 1990: 221).³ Young considers that "justice entails that all persons have the opportunity to develop and exercise skills in socially recognized settings" (Young 1990: 220), and on this moral ground, she criticises oppression in today's workplaces.

Young here adopts workplace democracy as a remedy for oppression in the workplace. First of all, workplace democracy makes the basic task-defining decisions (see the section above) subject to decision-making procedures joined by all. This will prevent professional workers from making nonprofessional workers subordinate to their decisions. Given this, Young holds that nonprofessional workers' "having the right and opportunity to participate in major workplace decisions could make their working life more interesting and skill-developing" (Young 1990: 224). Disappointingly, Young's arguments for workplace democracy as a remedy for oppression in this regard are not very clear: she does not fully explain how workplace democracy makes work interesting and skill-developing, to what

extent, or in what manner it does so. However, it is not very difficult to imagine that workers will be assigned with more interesting and skill-developing tasks when they have the right to make the basic task-defining decisions: when they call for interesting and skill-developing labouring activities, through democratic processes, this will be incorporated in the business plans of an enterprise to be carried out by them. In this manner, workplace democracy will reduce oppression in workplaces.

Dahl and Young both consider that members of a workplace have equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends and thus should equally share the power exercised to define the rules and tasks of their business. When such equal power-sharing is not achieved, we are likely to find moral problems of domination and oppression. Dahl and Young introduce workplace democracy to prevent such a situation. Workplace democracy provides all workers with the power to put forward their voices so that they can form rules of business and define labouring tasks, and opens the way for workers to obtain interesting and skill-developing tasks as matters of justice/right. In their view, this is indeed to respect the equal moral freedom of all members of society.

IV. Trade-Offs Caused by Workplace Democracy

Having seen Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy, I now argue that workplace democracy as an institutional proposal for justice may not by itself allow us to respect the freedom of all citizens equally. Suppose that we introduce workplace democracy at the social policy level. Workplace democracy would then be regarded as a requirement of justice, and all workplaces would need to introduce it. Here we might be faced with three kinds of trade-offs between the goods of workplace democracy and the goods of undemocratic practices in workplaces. These trade-offs are: (1) social productivity and other important goods of social life, (2) opportunities not to engage in stressful work and management and (3) opportunities for self-realisation. These trade-offs will bring a differential share of the advantages and disadvantages of social life to citizens who have distinct conceptions of the good. Note that these trade-offs do not constitute an empirical exhaustive list, but are provided only as examples of possible trade-off situations we may face. The point of mentioning these trade-off situations is this: if each citizen's moral freedom to pursue his/her own ends is differentially advantaged or disadvantaged by workplace democracy, we cannot say that introducing workplace democracy will *automatically* allow us to equally respect citizens' moral freedom; we need something more than this.

1. Social Productivity and Other Goods for Social Life

For many of us, social productivity is one of the most important goods of social life as it

supports us individually and provides the material basis for reasonable life-quality. In addition, how workplaces operate is often publicly important as it often affects citizens' lives directly: the smooth operation of various workplaces is a very important good of social life. For many of us, according to our conceptions of the good, these economic goods are of crucial importance in our daily life, and how social institutions affect them becomes a serious concern in public debates. Workplace democracy will be one such social institution.

If we adopt workplace democracy, this will affect the degree of social productivity considerably. This effect can be both positive and negative. For example, there can be positive effects that stem from better information-exchange between workers. Or sharing the same sort of ideals may also contribute to achieving better productivity. However, it is also possible that workplace democracy damages social productivity significantly. If we eradicate the distinction between professional and nonprofessional jobs and give task-defining positions to all members of a firm, we would lose various goods of cooperative production. For instance, making decisions with regard to corporate finance has considerable effect on how a business is run including available labouring activities in the business. Making such decisions flexibly and rapidly requires great skill, talent and knowledge. Yet, if workplace democracy is instituted to the degree that it disallows such professional corporate finance positions as unacceptably privileged, the significant merits of introducing efficient corporate finance will be lost. This can damage social productivity as a whole. Here the point is that there can be serious demerits in adopting workplace democracy, as well as great merits. We need to recognise this possible trade-off.⁴

Secondly, if a society introduces workplace democracy at the social policy level, this could eradicate workplaces which require hierarchical order to some degree in order to operate. Workplaces with hierarchical order can provide great social goods for many people. For example, a construction site ordered in a well-organised hierarchical manner will provide the good of safety to the public. However, the goods of such workplaces will be lost when we introduce workplace democracy to the extent that even a marginal degree of hierarchy is not allowed. Supervision and subordination in workplaces have degrees. Some proper level of supervision and subordination may be crucial for an efficient working environment. When we carry out workplace democracy to an excessive degree, such goods will become unavailable. Here again, we need to recognise there is a trade-off.

2. Opportunities Not to Engage in Stressful Work and Management

As Dahl and Young claim, having very little control over rules and routines regarding one's work can be regarded as disrespectful to one's equal moral freedom. Yet, engaging in the decision process of task-definition could be fairly burdensome for workers, and this may be felt as an extra burden to them.

Engaging in workplace democracy does not seem to be an easy thing to do when taken seriously. The scale of democracy instituted in private firms will not allow workers to vote

for or against proposed policies according to their whim; this is because their voice could have considerable effects on the operation and performance of their firms and thus affects the life-prospects of themselves and those involved in their business. Suppose that you and your colleagues are now required to vote for/against a policy that allows you not to work on Wednesdays in addition to the weekend. Is it really a good policy? Here, you need to consider how you and your colleagues will fare in your private lives, how the performance of your company will change in the globally competitive market of your industry, how many of drivers of the bus service company that offers transportation services for you and your colleagues will lose their jobs, and so forth. Here your vote will have a much more direct and recognisable impact on people's lives and you will feel a more direct sense of responsibility towards the lives of people around you than in the case of political democracy where your vote has only a very minute impact.

In such a situation, you will need to collect a lot of information required to make a decision that is reasonable for you and others, and need to bear great pressure due to this responsibility. Indeed, engaging in workplace democracy can be considered as extra work, and participation in management could be very stressful and needs to be undertaken even in your off-time. Introducing workplace democracy could put extra burdens on some people, reducing their opportunities to not engage in stressful work and management activities. These people may prefer to work under a benevolent hierarchy where professionally informed people make various decisions for them, believing these experts can make much better decisions and bear the responsibility for their decisions. Here we face a trade-off between the goods of workplace democracy and the opportunity to not engage in stressful work and management.

3. Opportunities for Self-Realisation

Suppose that for some people, self-realisation does not stem from how they work, but from their achieved status in certain industries and its recognition by the public; for their self-realisation, it does not matter how their tasks and routines are defined. For these people, it may be the case that workplace democracy hinders the performance required to achieve their status-based self-realisation. This is because predictability of democratic decisions regarding management can be fairly uncertain compared to hierarchical, manual-based management-decisions: hierarchical management can be more principled inasmuch as official authority and the accompanying responsibilities are clear, while highly democratic management that consistently seeks a better way of doing things could lack this merit. For those people who prefer hierarchical workplaces for self-realisation, workplace democracy can prevent their achieving self-realisation in work; we are faced with trade-offs between the goods of workplace democracy and the opportunities for self-realisation.

In the examples above, introducing workplace democracy seems to contradict its

fundamental moral concern: respecting the equal moral freedom of all citizens. Some people may become worse-off when workplace democracy is introduced, given their conceptions of the good and their respective life-plans: when introduced as a social policy, workplace democracy could make life tougher for some people. It could be argued here that adopting workplace democracy does not lead us to respect the equal moral freedom of all citizens: adopting workplace democracy can also bring some burdens on some people other than domination and oppression, and in this respect, their freedom is not respected. Note that those people are *not* unwilling to take part in social cooperation through work. They just prefer some other manners as to how they work and what they get from it. So, their claims are not unreasonable, at least *prima facie*.⁵ Their more difficult lives under workplace democracy bring genuine costs of social life.

However, the cases above are surely exaggerating the situation where workplace democracy is in order. One can argue that workplace democracy is not required *to the extent and in the manner* that it damages social productivity, makes the smooth operation of workplaces unfeasible, forces workers to engage in stressful extra work and management, and makes it difficult to foresee management decisions. One can even argue that we should be only given the *opportunity* for workplace democracy, rather than workplace democracy itself. Maybe one should remember Dahl's delicately proposed features of workplace democracy that allow participants of an enterprise to determine which matters of the management of an enterprise require democratic decisions and which do not.

The moral view that underlies the arguments above can be summarised as follows: workplace democracy should be introduced to a *reasonable* extent and in a *reasonable* manner given the diversity of citizens' conceptions of the good and the differential sets of benefits and burdens of social life they obtain from it. Although this view still requires workplace democracy so as to respect the equal moral freedom of citizens, it also recognises that workplace democracy differentially affects the lives of citizens whose freedom has equal moral worth, and this brings different sets of the benefits and burdens of social life to different people. As each citizen's moral freedom to pursue their own ends is of equal worth, the differential shares of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation they obtain through workplace democracy need to be reasonable, that is, mutually and publicly justifiable on the moral grounds that they respect equal moral freedom of citizens equally.⁶ Introducing workplace democracy according to such moral grounds helps us achieve equal respect to citizens' life-plans through workplace democracy.

This view perfectly suits the fundamental concern of justice (i.e., respecting citizens' equal moral freedom equally), and shows us the essential point of the arguments for workplace democracy required for justice. It is all about providing arguments for *reasonable* workplace democracy: identifying the moral grounds that tell us how we should make trade-offs between the goods of democratic and undemocratic practices of workplaces and distribute the benefits and burdens of workplace democracy among citizens.

Having identified this crucial point of arguments for workplace democracy required for

justice, I argue that *distributive principles* of justice for workplace democracy, which can help us identify reasonable manners and extents of introducing workplace democracy, should occupy an important place in the arguments for this economic institution.

V. Distributive Principles of Justice: A Precondition of *Reasonable* Workplace Democracy

Distributive justice is based upon a distinct moral perspective that is set in order to respect people's equal moral freedom in a morally distinct context of human life. Such a context can be defined by the following Rawlsian arguments that define the moral features of social life relevant to distributive justice.⁷ First, all members of society have equal moral freedom to pursue their own ends. Second, given the scarcity of resources required to exercise their moral freedom, these members establish a scheme of social cooperation in which they aim at mutual advantage. This is possible because their interests and capacities are often mutually complementary and the resource scarcity is not very harsh (Rawls 1971: 127). Third, since there are both identities and conflicts between their interests (Rawls 1971: 4), each member obtains to differential degrees both promoting and hindering impacts on their life-plan pursuits from social cooperation. We call these promoting and hindering impacts "the benefits and burdens of social cooperation" (Rawls 1971: 4). Given differential capacities, we have differential conceptions of the good as to how we use our moral freedom, and this enables each member of society to have distinct interests. According to these distinct interests, citizens find the circumstances of the scheme of social cooperation favourable or not favourable to advancing their interests. That is, a citizen's interests identify various goods in socially cooperative life, but it is not always the case that these goods are provided to a full extent. When other citizens' interests prevail and they have more opportunities to obtain scarce resources, his/her goods may need to be traded off against other citizens' goods. Such trade-offs happen in every citizen's life: we obtain various goods from social life, but we also lose various goods because of social life. We are all faced with such trade-offs between the goods of social life and this trade-offs affect citizens' life-plan pursuits differentially. Thus, there are both benefits and burdens in citizens' socially cooperating life and citizens will obtain unequal share of them. These are the features of human social life relevant to distributive justice. Given such trade-offs and inequality, if we still want to retain the good of social cooperation and to respect the equal moral freedom of all members equally, we need to define a *reasonable* distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation, that is, a distribution which we can mutually justify as equals. This is the aim of distributive justice.

Given such a purpose, the crux of distributive justice is setting up principles for reasonable trade-offs between social goods among citizens, that is, principles for a reasonable distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. In practice, distributive principles as such determine reasonable arrangements of social institutions with

regard to the distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation: social institutions are set up to realise the demands of justice identified by such principles for distribution. It is important here to note that distributive justice is not oriented to the identification of the goods we find in various fields of life in an ad hoc manner. In our social life, we can identify various states of affairs which we find morally desirable. For example, if we can develop our skills and talents in socially recognised places, we would recognise this as an important good of social life. However, from the viewpoint of distributive justice, to identify a desirable state of affairs is not to set up principles of justice. Rather, given these goods of social life which we identify in an ad hoc manner, distributive justice aims to make reasonable trade-offs between these goods among people.⁸

As such, distributive principles of justice should be set up in order to define reasonable extents and manners as to how to introduce workplace democracy. As shown above, both democratic and undemocratic practices in workplaces have their own merits, and when they are traded off, they bring advantageous and disadvantageous impacts on citizens' life differentially. As such, these impacts are caused in the context that motivates our concern for distributive justice: workplaces are located in the scheme of social cooperation where citizens try to achieve mutual advantage, but citizens obtain differential sets of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation when workplace democracy is introduced, due to their differential interests and resource limitations.⁹ On the one hand, workplace democracy will bring some citizens various benefits of social cooperation as Dahl and Young argue. On the other hand, it would also give other citizens various burdens of social cooperation by the loss of the social goods of undemocratic practices in workplaces. When introducing workplace democracy, we need to recognise that there will be such trade-offs, and citizens' interests will be advantaged/disadvantaged differentially through the differential share of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation they get from workplace democracy. Remember that we establish distributive principles of justice so that we can identify reasonable trade-offs between the goods of social cooperation and in this way define reasonable shares of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation citizens obtain. In adopting workplace democracy, we are faced with the demand for trade-offs between the goods of democratic and undemocratic practices in workplaces and unequal distribution of the benefits and burdens of workplace democracy. Here, we have good reasons to call for proper distributive principles of justice *for workplace democracy* that make the trade-offs and the distribution mutually justifiable, in order to respect citizens' equal moral freedom. If we can identify such principles of justice, they will serve as the criteria by which to determine the reasonableness of the distribution of the benefits and burdens of introducing workplace democracy and from which we can determine reasonable extents and manners as to how we adopt this social institution. Distributive principles should occupy such an important place in the arguments for workplace democracy.

VI. Charge of Incompleteness: For the Development of the Arguments for Workplace Democracy

Having identified a crucial role that distributive principles of justice should play in the arguments for workplace democracy, Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy appear incomplete: they need to be supplemented by distributive principles of justice.

In some parts of *A Preface to Economic Democracy*, Dahl recognises the plurality of socially important values (such as efficiency, productivity and fairness) and trade-off problems between the goods identified by these values we will be faced with when introducing workplace democracy.¹⁰ However, his arguments for workplace democracy are not geared to providing distributive principles. Rather, his arguments are given so as to vindicate workplace democracy against sceptical views. According to Dahl, workplace democracy should be claimed as a matter of right, which is not nullified by any consequences of adopting it:

For my argument is that self-government in work need not be justified entirely by its consequences, for, as in the state, it is justified as a matter of right. And just as the imperfections of the democratic process in the government of the state do not justify abandoning democracy in favor of guardianship, so its imperfections in economic enterprises would not justify our accepting guardianship as better in the government of economic enterprises.¹¹ (Dahl 1985: 153)

As such, Dahl's arguments for workplace democracy do not aim at identifying distributive principles of justice that can weaken the moral claims for workplace democracy per se.

On the other hand, Young seems to recognise the trade-off problems at least in some important contexts of social life, but her theory does not address them. We should note that Young writes of a caveat to her arguments for workplace democracy. That is, Young says that she does not reject necessary specialisation and hierarchy in workplaces. According to Young, specialisation means "the development and consolidation of particular technical, artisan, social, or organizational skills for the accomplishing of specialized ends, and the allocation of such specialized work to persons trained in those skills" (Young 1990: 216). She continues, "Specialization in this sense usually has distinct advantages both for accomplishing collective ends and for the individuals who develop their capacities and exercise these skills" (Young 1990: 216). Young also admits that "often there are good reasons for establishing supervisory and leadership roles in a collective endeavor, and for coordinating largescale operations through a chain of authority" (Young 1990: 216). As one can see easily, specialisation, supervisory activities and leadership can be turned into

oppression and domination when these practices go beyond some reasonable level. In this sense, specialisation, supervisory activities and leadership are undemocratic practices. Yet, Young recognises the goods that stem from these undemocratic practices in workplaces and says that what she opposes are specialisation that results in a too detailed division of labour and prevention of skill-development, and excessive authority in workplaces (Young 1990: 216). These points seem to indicate that Young recognises the goods of undemocratic practices that can be lost when we adopt workplace democracy; Young seems to be aware of the trade-off problems at least in this context and the need to define reasonable trade-offs. However, in her arguments for workplace democracy, there is no detailed consideration as to how we should make such trade-offs.

Now we find that Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy lack detailed arguments or principles for reasonable trade-offs between the goods of democratic and undemocratic practices in workplaces. This makes their arguments for workplace democracy vulnerable to the criticism of incompleteness. As we saw above, given the diversity of citizens' conceptions of the good regarding how they should work, what they should obtain from work, how the economy should run and so forth, defining reasonable trade-offs regarding workplace democracy is of crucial importance so as to respect the equal moral freedom of all citizens equally; we do need to determine how we should adopt workplace democracy, in what manner, and to what extent in order to make it reasonable. Without having distributive principles for workplace democracy that can address this trade-off problem, Dahl's and Young's moral arguments for workplace democracy remain incomplete. They identify the goods of workplace democracy as *ad hoc* goods of social life, distinct from other goods of social life. However, they do not consider whether the goods of workplace democracy finally function as benefits or burdens of social life to each citizen when other goods of social life are traded off against these good of workplace democracy. That is, if workplace democracy damages social productivity significantly, makes the workplace environment unsafe, affects the structure of the opportunities to achieve self-realisation, or fills the life of citizens with a great deal of stress, workplace democracy serves as a burden of social cooperation to be taken on by some citizens. Here, if we are to respect the equal moral freedom of all citizens equally, we need to know a reasonable manner in which to distribute the benefits and burdens of workplace democracy. Ignoring this issue undermines Dahl's and Young's motivational concern for workplace democracy and makes them incomplete guides for action.

One could argue here that my arguments above simply miss what Young intends to provide. In her short yet insightful essay, she argues that what justice really needs to address is the problems stemming from "institutions, discourses, and practices [that] distinguish the normal and the deviant, and the privilege they accord to persons or attributes understood as normal" (Young 2006: 95). The pressure of normalisation that tells people to accept the dominant norms of society in order to become "normal" prevent us from treating people as being of equal worth. For example, the prejudice and discrimination against women in

workplaces according to male-dominant social norms demonstrates this very clearly. Then, what she wants to address as a matter of justice is the pressure of normalisation which further causes the problems of domination and oppression, and social norms that mistreat citizens of equal moral worth. This indicates that, for Young, the site where justice and injustice occur is individual goods and *bads* of social life with which each citizen is faced according to the social norms in *this* or *that* situation, that is, in an ad hoc manner. Thus it can be argued that considering the balance of these goods and *bads* of social life for the sake of a reasonable whole just blurs and weakens Young's point of arguments, that is, the problem of normalisation pressure.

This objection is illuminating when looking at the *motivation* of Young's arguments. However, surely it does not make her arguments free from the burden of explaining proper methods of introducing workplace democracy inasmuch as Young wants us to take her arguments seriously as *a moral guide for building social institutions*. When treated in this fashion, we need to know the moral consequences of her arguments rather than the background motivation of her arguments. And the moral consequences show that we need to know how we can address the trade-off problems discussed above. Furthermore, given that Young herself does recognise that there are some goods in non-democratic features of our economic life and that there should be reasonable manners and degrees as to how we institutionalise workplace democracy, the objection above does not serve as a defence against the charge of incompleteness. Young needs to address the issues of distributive justice regarding workplace democracy to make her arguments fully developed.

To sum up, from the perspective of distributive justice, Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy are *not unreasonable*, but incomplete. Given the motivational concern of justice, we can reasonably recognise the goods of workplace democracy. Yet, introducing workplace democracy as a social policy significantly and differentially changes how citizens can pursue their life-plans. So, if their life-plans are of equal worth, those who want to bring workplace democracy into their society needs to account for the reasonable impact this will have on citizens' share of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. Such accounts will be provided by distributive principles of justice. Distributive principles of justice should occupy a crucial place in the arguments for workplace democracy. However, it is such distributive principles that Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy require but do not provide.

So, I conclude that the arguments for workplace democracy proposed by Dahl and Young are incomplete and call for distributive principles of justice. More importantly, we should notice here that distributive principles of justice will explain what really constitute morally problematic features of domination and oppression in workplaces. For example, suppose that we introduce workplace democracy at the level of social policy and workplace democracy becomes a ubiquitous practice; every worker now has a right to voice their concerns in the workplace. This does not mean that there is no hierarchy or that all workers can enjoy skill-developing and interesting labour: as Young admits, there can be

specialisation and supervision in workplaces even if we adopt workplace democracy and this can bring losses to workers in terms of power-sharing, job-attractiveness and skill-development. This is necessary in order to maintain other social goods such as better productivity or occupational safety. Can we call such a situation domination or oppression? We cannot make judgements about this until we obtain distributive principles which can determine what is an unreasonable degree of inequality in the share of power, and what are unreasonably unequal opportunities for interesting/skill-developing labour. Here again we can see how important a role distributive principles of justice should play in the arguments of workplace democracy.

Having argued how distributive principles of justice can help the arguments for workplace democracy, I also admit that current theories of distributive justice may not be of great help, as they are not geared to solving practical problems of daily life. They are often too abstract and vague to be applied to specific issues of social life and/or they do not really answer the questions regarding reasonable trade-offs between social goods. Consider a situation where we introduce workplace democracy and this significantly affects citizens' opportunities for self-realisation in work and social productivity. When we need to trade the former off against the latter, what are the reasonable extents and manners for this trade-off? To address this issue, we will need to know how these goods are distinctly important to citizens and determine which manners of trade-offs are reasonable given these reasons. But the preferred lists of distribuenda of current theories of justice, such as Rawls's primary goods, might not be informed about the distinct moral importance of these goods. Further, current theories of justice may not tell us how to make reasonable trade-offs between these distinct goods as they merely indicate a desirable state of affairs. For instance, it would be difficult to address the trade-off problem above by a theory that claims justice requires citizens have *equal* shares of socially important goods. This is because it does not consider cases where the goods of self-realisation in work and other socially important goods secured by high social productivity need to be traded off. As such, I must say that current theories of justice are not sensitive to the distributive problems of workplace democracy.

However, this does not mean that arguments for workplace democracy do not need distributive principles of justice. Rather, theorists who uphold workplace democracy are in a position to develop distributive principles of justice that are sensitive to workplace democracy.¹² The recognition of the incompleteness of current arguments for workplace democracy is not bad news for those who have argued for workplace democracy. The need for distributive principles does not nullify their arguments for workplace democracy so far; the goods of workplace democracy are genuinely goods we can identify out of the concern of justice, at least *prima facie*. Given this, what we need here is further *development* of the arguments for workplace democracy through the arguments for distributive principles of justice that are sensitive to this social institution. This will also help distributive theories of justice become more informed and developed, and be sensitive to practical issues of society. Therefore, the recognition of the incompleteness of the arguments for workplace democracy

should not be lamented by those who uphold it. Giving distributive principles of justice an important place in their arguments will help them develop in a new fashion and attract anew attention from theorists of distributive justice.

VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I examined Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy and argued that their arguments should give a proper place to distributive principles of justice that can determine reasonable methods of introducing workplace democracy. Out of a fundamental concern for justice, Dahl and Young both argue that we need to adopt workplace democracy in order to respect the equal moral freedom of all citizens equally. Introducing workplace democracy, however, could bring further burdens of social life to some citizens according to their conceptions of the good while delivering great benefits to other citizens. Given the fundamental aim of adopting workplace democracy, this situation calls for distributive principles that define a reasonable distribution of the benefits and burdens of workplace democracy among citizens. Without such principles, Dahl's and Young's arguments for workplace democracy remain incomplete. Having pointed out this incompleteness, I concluded that giving a place to distributive principles of justice in the arguments of workplace democracy helps us to achieve further development of this important topic.

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Notes

¹ Cf. Dworkin 1985: 190-191.

² That is, according to Mayer (2001: 226), "a deliberative process before rules are adopted".

³ For the distinction between domination and powerlessness, see Young 1990: 219-220. There Young argues that domination does not necessarily entail powerlessness as the dominated can sometimes enjoy creative and skill-developing laboring tasks.

⁴ Note that my arguments regarding the relationship between economic productivity and workplace democracy is posed in order to clarify the moral points of the arguments for introducing workplace democracy. I do not say, empirically, that the economy with workplace democracy will achieve better or worse productivity. I just point out that productivity is an

important issue when adopting workplace democracy. Dahl's arguments pay significant attention to the empirical problem of social productivity and workplace democracy. See Dahl 1985: 130-133.

⁵ The reasonableness of their claims is only *prima facie* because the policies that favour their claims will prevent life-plan pursuits of citizens who favour lives under workplace democracy and thus these policies will appear unreasonable to those pro-workplace-democracy citizens. The *all things considered* reasonableness of those claims cannot be determined until we obtain distributive principles of justice as to how we should adopt workplace democracy, as I shall argue later.

⁶ Of course one can argue, according to some sorts of perfectionism, citizens should work under the economic regime where workplace democracy is in order in every workplace so that they can achieve some kind of human perfection or civic virtues. However, given that we regard citizens' conceptions of the good as of equal worth, this justification is not available. We need some moral grounds on which we can reconcile each citizen's claims for workplace democracy and claims against workplace democracy, as both of these need to be respected to respect the equal moral freedom of all.

⁷ See Rawls 1971: Part I. Note that the arguments provided here are not Rawls's arguments but Rawlsian arguments made through my rational reconstruction.

⁸ This means that the values we consider in order to identify distributive demands of justice should be classified into two groups: values to human beings and distributive values. While values to human beings indicate what we regard as goods in our social life, distributive values, such as fairness and reciprocity, tell us what we should do with regard to the distribution of these values to human beings. For this distinction, see Meckled-Garcia, 2009.

⁹ That is, limitation of social goods including the goods of democratic and undemocratic practices in workplaces available to each citizen.

¹⁰ See for example, Dahl 1985: 88-89, 138-139.

¹¹ As Arneson (1995:138) says, Dahl's arguments for workplace democracy are based on the "parallel case" view which considers that power-sharing in the economy is situated in the same moral context as that of politics. But this view seems dubious as political and economic democracies are placed in morally distinct contexts; our moral reasons for supporting democracy for a state may not be available in the context of the economy and this may weaken our claim for economic democracy. For example, the fortitude of superiors' order in workplaces will never be as great as the legal orders of a state. In the case of a state, we would have stronger moral reasons to adopt democracy to control the power of orders and defend our freedom than in the case of the economy. For the context distinction issue, see Arneson 1995 and Mayer 2001.

¹² In doing this, the crucial question we need to consider is this: how should distributive principles of justice regulate workplaces through the "basic structure" of society?

In Rawls's view of distributive justice, the appropriate object of the regulation by distributive principle of justice is the "basic structure" of society "understood as the way in which the major social institutions fit together into one system, and how they assign fundamental rights and duties and shape the division of advantages that arise through social cooperation", and it entails "the organization of the economy" (Rawls 2005: 258). So, the basic structure will include workplaces as part of the organization of the economy.

However, how principles of justice should regulate the details of each social institution such as workplace through the basic structure is a matter that needs further discussion that I cannot provide here. On this point, I tentatively argue that distributive principles need to adopt *distribuenda* that are sensitive to the moral nature of the goods we obtain from distinct spheres of life, and through such *distribuenda*, they should externally regulate social institutions related to these spheres in a manner that does not undermine their moral aims and purposes. Note that this is only to suitably put limits on the operation of these spheres and what we can aim and achieve there, respecting the moral aims and purposes of the spheres.

This view is based on the following reading of Rawls's description of the basic structure above: "the way in which the major social institutions fit together into one system". I read this phrase as meaning that there is no basic structure *as one entity* that can be regulated to bring about background justice all at once for all the social institutions within, by adopting a single set of principles of justice. Rather, given this phrase, I argue that we should regard basic structure as a web of inter-related social institutions that function in relation to each other *keeping their distinct moral aims and purposes of operation*. From the viewpoint of this reading, distributive principles of justice should be set up for distinct spheres of social life as distinct sets of principles in terms of the sphere-specific values they need to respect. Within the basic structure, these distinct principles should be informative to each other, and in this way, they should be made fit into one system maintaining their distinct importance and achieving some point of equilibrium. Workplace-sensitive principles of distributive justice should constitute such distinct-yet-interrelated sets of principles of justice.

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