

Considering Resistance in Economic Institutions

LMU Colloquium in Social and Political Philosophy

January 21, 2026

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2 Workplace Democracy

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Section 1

Introduction

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- if we think things are really bad, we must be morally allowed to do more

Section 2

Workplace Democracy

The status quo

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 - top level: seats on the supervisory board elected by employees/appointed by unions
- but all that still makes for little effective power on the ground
- superiors still have wide-ranging powers to order people around in their daily work lives

The basic moral-political argument

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 - efficiency: not clear how unchecked authority would further that value
 - property rights: for large business corporations, whose property rights?
 - a general problem: we usually don't think these values can outweigh political rights

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 - Or Tom Malleson: „the current system of hierarchical work is deeply unjust“ (*After Occupy*, 28)
 - Or Isabelle Ferreras: "citizens, when they arrive at their jobs, become the subjects of a despotic corporate government" (*Firms as Political Entities*, 3)

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 - or say that firms aren't important institutions

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 - consider resistance in relation to the severity of the problem

Section 3

Framework for resistance at work

A general thought about moral rights

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 - not just stealing because you like money!

Section 4

Considering categorical objections

Work isn't so bad after all

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 - e.g. work isn't an important part of people's lives

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- many possibilities for structuring firms differently!
- or for working in a different job where you're not doing bad things to people

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 - ② Democratic version: employees should try political activism before breaking the law

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- e.g. Finlay 2005 (132): “Necessity demands that agents choose that strategy for achieving the just cause that offers the best possible balance between morally relevant anticipated costs and morally relevant expected gains.” ”

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- consider empirical data on how easy or hard it is to do things politically
- again: err on the side of those who are harmed!

Section 5

Final thoughts

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- also brings into view the question of duties on part of managers