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Justice as Friendship: An Aristotelian Perspective on Just Caring and Caring Justice in a Global World

La Justice comme Amitié: une Perspective Aristotéenne sur les Soucis Justes et la Justice des Soucis dans un Monde Global

Moskop Wynne Walker, Associate Professor of Political Science & American Studies, Saint Louis University, 3500 Lindell Blvd. - St. Louis, MO 63110 USA

The spatial parameters of global and local injustices have become particularly visible since the 1970s--in global trade patterns, in the shift of responsibilities away from nation-states to transnational institutions and local neighbourhood associations and, in a “concentration of investments in the most globally competitive urban agglomerations.” The result is “an intensification of ...geographic disparity” between “have and have not neighborhoods...and have and have not global regions” (Bromberg et al, *Critical Planning*, Summer 2007).

In response to spatial injustices, global justice scholars are searching for alternatives to the Rawlsian universalist concepts of justice that have dominated liberal discourse about justice for the last three decades. This search for alternative conceptions of justice has much in common with the feminist scholars who, following Gilligan (1982) turned to an ethic of care as a necessary supplement, or even a replacement, for Rawlsian justice. Their mutual concern is that universalist concepts of justice and policy remedies based on these concepts neglect the importance to justice of identity, community and space, as well as gender. Addressing this concern requires an approach to justice that is sufficiently particular to take into account, to care for, the distinctions between persons, identities, communities, and circumstances that *phronesis*, or practical reason, detects and sufficiently general to avoid the injustice to strangers that caring friendships often connote. In other words, the goal is justice that is caring and caring that is just.

I argue that Aristotle’s view of justice as a kind of friendship based on shared goods serves this goal. It illuminates the injustices associated with undemocratic and unfriendly patterns of global development that are not based on shared goods and points toward more democratic, friendlier patterns. By situating persons in relationships, Aristotle insists on the centrality of their familial, social, and political ties to deliberations about what kind of equalizing justice requires. His central insight is that there are different kinds of friendships, and that what is just between friends varies with the basis of the friendship, that is, with what the friends have in common and care about. Associations that are not based on some mutual care, or good, are not friendships and cannot be just.

Conceiving the space that holds friendship broadly--to incorporate common goods as well as common territory, and unacknowledged associations among strangers as well as familiar social and political associations—reveals the structural relationships and commonalities that link persons who may not be familiar with each other. This approach to spatial justice uncovers potential transnational and subnational friendships, potential relationships of care based on shared goods; it lays a foundation for nurturing the kinds of publics that are needed to support global democracy and resist spatial injustice. The same broad perspective clarifies how “unfriendly” structures and alliances that are not based on shared goods disrupt and suppress potential friendships. To illustrate the utility of Aristotle’s perspective for addressing questions of spatial injustice, I sort through some thorny globalization issues. One example is the migration of care workers from south to north, which disrupts communities in the south and creates new hierarchies in the north.