

# SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

## READING GUIDE #21

### THE SOCIAL CONNECTION MODEL

WHEN doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

#### READING

Young, I. M. (2011b). A social connection model. In *Responsibility for justice* (pp. 95–122). Oxford University Press.

#### QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. What is the “liability model of responsibility” (p. 98) that Iris Marion Young considers? According to this model,

what three (or so) characteristics of an agent’s action make the agent responsible for any harm done by that action?

2. What conceptual and normative (or “philosophical”) limitations does Young suggest the liability model has when it comes to *finding* agents responsible for structural injustice?
3. Christopher Kutz attempts to extend the liability model to account for complicity in collectively caused harm. In part, this account is supposed to be able to assign responsibility for structural injustice.

What is Young’s argument that Kutz’s approach still fails to capture the sense of personal responsibility needed when it comes to structural injustice?

4. What are the five features of Young’s “social connection model” (p. 104)? How do each of these features distinguish it from the liability model?
5. Why does Young believe her social connection model is conceptually and normatively (and philosophically) appealing when it comes to *holding* agents responsible for structural injustice?
6. In the last section of this chapter, Young presents three pragmatic (or “rhetorical and practical”) limitations of the liability model, as a result of it being based upon a “spirit of resentment” (p. 115):

- It “oversimplify the causes of justice” (p. 116),
- It “produce defensiveness and unproductive blame-switching” (p. 117), and
- Even when “people admit that they are blameworthy.... it can be unproductive” (p. 118).

What is resentment in this context, and why does Young believe that it is essential to the liability model? How does such resentment lead to each of the issues above? What pragmatic limitations with the liability model does each reveal?

7. By contrast, why does the social connection model seem to avoid these problems?
8. What is Young’s notion of “solidarity” (p. 120)? What rhetorical or practical purpose is this supposed to serve in favor of the social connection model?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.