

# SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

## READING GUIDE #14

### OPPRESSION

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. (1990). Five faces of oppression. In *Justice and the politics of difference* (pp. 39–65). Princeton University Press.

#### QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. What is Iris Marion Young's "enabling conception of justice" (p. 39)? Generally

speaking, how is oppression an injustice according to that conception?

2. Why is the meaning of oppression according to the "new left" (p. 41)? How is this different from the more traditional sense of oppression? Which one does Young favor and why?
3. Before diving into her five faces of oppression, Young spends some time discussing the nature of social groups and how this is different from how groups are understood in "methodological individualist" (p. 43) accounts.  
What does Young mean by a social group? How is this different from the "aggregate" (p. 43) model of groups? How is it different from modeling groups as associations or according to the "contract model of social relations" (p. 44)?

4. Young presents five forms of oppression:
  - A. Exploitation,
  - B. Marginalization,
  - C. Powerlessness,
  - D. Cultural imperialism, and
  - E. Violence

What is meant by each of these? How is each an injustice that represents

something distinct from concerns of distributive justice or material inequality? How then is each form of injustice supposed to be addressed by society?

5. In what ways do Young's five categories of oppression serve as helpful "criteria for determining whether individuals and groups are oppressed" (p. 64)?

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.