

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

READING GUIDE #18

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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. (2011). From personal to political responsibility. In *Responsibility for justice* (pp. 3–41). Oxford University Press.

QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. According to Iris Marion Young, what are the differences between structural and personal accounts concerning the causes of and responses to poverty?
2. What seems to be meant by “personal responsibility” in the context of efforts to dismantle elements of the welfare state?
3. What are the three major assumptions made by critics of welfare policies? What reasons does Young give to suggest that each of these assumptions is faulty? What evidence suggests that even these critics themselves do not fully endorse or actually accept these assumptions?
4. While Ronald Dworkin, John Roemer, and other luck egalitarians (including G. A. Cohen) defend a more expansive welfare state, Young sees three problematic similarities between these luck

egalitarians and the critics of the welfare state. (Two of these similarities are addressed in her critique of Dworkin, and the third right after her assessment of Roemer.)

What are these three similarities? Why are they all problematic?

5. What two aspects of John Roemer’s form of luck egalitarianism does Young see as quite promising and valuable? Why does she ultimately believe, however, that his account does not go far enough?

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.