

Questionnaire: "Oppression" by Marilyn Frye

1. Why does Marilyn Frye claim that saying that "oppressors are oppressed by their oppressing" is stretching the word "oppression" to meaninglessness?
2. What has this stretching done to the word "oppression"? What has done to the women that deny men or other oppressing group are not oppressed?
3. What is Frye's aim on this text?
4. What is the link between the meaning of the word "press" and the "oppressive" situation of women (or other oppressed groups)?
5. What is the "double bind"? Explain the concept and what it is trying to describe.
6. Imagine and describe a situation in which the "double bind" is in effect—do not use the ones described by the author.
7. Why does she describe the life experience of those oppressed as the "experience of being caged"? In your answer, describe and explain the analogy she draws between the birdcage and the life of the oppressed.
8. Why is according to many the "male door-opening ritual" offensive? What is its symbolic meaning? Distinguish between a microscopic and a macroscopic view at this issue.
9. Revising the answer to 8, do you agree with her analysis of the symbolic meaning of the ritual? Why or why not?
10. Oppression can only be understood if we look at it macroscopically. Now, what is the best way to understand the oppressive nature of an individual's life?
11. What inhibits the perception of "woman" as a group of oppressed people? How can we, according to Frye, recognize "woman" as a group?
12. What is the "function of women"? Do you agree with her definition of it? Why or why not?
13. How do we know if a particular harm or limitation is an element in an oppressive structure?
14. Why wouldn't we consider the restriction to stop our cars in front of a stop sign as an element of oppression?
15. How do we know if a barrier or force is oppressive?
16. Marilyn Frye claims that sex-roles restrict women and men in different ways. Explain the conceptual differences in her examples of restraints imposed by sex/gender-roles (men not being able to cry and women having to carry a cramped posture). What are the social effects on each group?
17. What is the difference between women's and men's experiences in life (oppression, advantages, disadvantages)?