

## Diversifying Syllabi 2015 Text Summary and Teaching Tips

**Article/Essay Title:** Why Should a Knower Care?

**Author:** Vrinda Dalmiya

**Readability:** Moderate

**Thesis:** Caring should be incorporated as an intellectual virtue into virtue epistemology in two mutually-enforcing ways: first, as a reliabilist faculty that enables agents to reach truth in certain domains, and second, as a deeply-engrained responsibilist excellence that generally enables them to reach the truth. The latter further suggests a reorientation in epistemology generally to integrate currently marginalized voices of care.

### **Key Definitions:**

Caring: a dyadic relation between the “one-caring” and the “cared-for” sustained by the following five-faceted process: (1) caring about, (2) caring for, (3) taking care of, (4) care reception, and (5) caring about caring

(1) Caring about: valuing “particularized others” irrespective of properties that might make them naturally attention-worthy

(2) Caring for: attitudinal involvement with another through a process of simulating the cared-for and thereby entering her “world”

(3) Taking care of: volitional, motivational displacement manifesting in a readiness to get involved in his or her projects, acting in accordance with the point of view of the cared-for herself for her good

(4) Care reception: the one-caring wishes that the cared-for’s happiness be caused, in part, by the one-caring’s efforts to further her projects; the one-caring wants the cared-for to recognize her efforts and feel good about the fact that she cares

(5) Caring about caring: self-reflective commitment to the abstract value of caring, the relationship with the cared-for, and the cared-for herself

Virtue reliabilism: beliefs are epistemically adequate if arrived at through the intellectual virtues, which are faculties or stable dispositions enabling us to reach truth or to avoid believing falsehoods in a particular domain, including sight, hearing, memory, introspection, deduction, and induction

Caring as a reliabilist intellectual virtue: a cognitive disposition or competence to reach truth and avoid falsehoods in a particular domain

Care-knowing: justified belief arising from the exercise of the reliabilist intellectual virtue of care

Virtue responsibilism: agents are accountable for developing a character that integrates intellectual virtues, which are motivations impelling them to acquire truth-conducive dispositions and skills, and individual beliefs are judged as epistemically good if they follow from such character

Caring as a responsibilist intellectual virtue: a deep and enduring cognitively acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to achieve the end of valuing particularized others and reliable success in bringing about that end

Care-based epistemology: caring encounters (instead of abstract reasoning) are the paradigm for cognition

### **Brief Summary:**

Dalmiya takes as given the significance of caring in the ethical and political spheres. In this paper she argues for its impact on virtue epistemology, which she also takes as given. Her argument has three parts: (I) her own conception of caring, (II) how caring contributes to epistemic success given a reliabilist conception of truth, and (III) how the relation of caring to epistemic success should reorient the epistemological framework of science.

(I) On Dalymiya's conception, the one-caring is committed to valuing a particularized cared-for (caring about). This valuing manifests as an attitude that allows the one-caring to imagine the world from the perspective of the cared-for (caring for) and motivates the caring-one actually take actions towards the cared-for's projects (taking care of). A successful relationship cannot be one-sided; the one-caring seeks the approval and recognition of the cared-for (care reception). Moreover, the one-caring cares not only about the cared-for, but about the abstract idea of caring itself, which requires the one-caring to reflect on and be critical of her own caring (caring about caring). Dalmiya argues that the traditional objections against caring, such as paternalism or self-sacrifice, are a result of identifying caring with only one or some of the five facets.

(II) On a virtue reliabilist approach, Dalmiya argues that caring is an intellectual virtue; it is a faculty that reliably outputs true beliefs in a particular domain under normal conditions. The five-step process of caring reliably allows the one-caring to forms true beliefs about the cared-for and herself, because it combines strongly motivated empathy with built-in checks based on the cared-for's feedback and the one-caring's own self-reflection. Dalmiya argues that caring gives an agent access to information about herself and particularized others that she cannot get through traditional reliabilist faculties such as analogical inference, introspection, or detached scientific observation.

(III) Dalmiya's conception of caring also maps well onto virtue responsibilist approach; caring can be construed as an excellence aimed at valuing the importance of others which is consciously and self-reflectively acquired. For Dalmiya, the importance of the other in caring is analogous to the importance of reality in the pursuit of truth; both involve the self receding into the background. Thus, the virtue responsibilist approach to caring suggests that caring is not only a reliable way of knowing, but a character-type of agents that enables them to reach the truth. In

this way, while care-knowing may be domain-specific, a caring character-type is epistemically important for all fields of inquiry, including science. In this, Dalmiya, is arguing for a radical reorientation of epistemology in the scientific context. This reorientation would situate the scientist herself as a target of epistemic appraisal and emphasize the communal nature of scientific inquiry—not only the community of scientists, but also those who are objects of scientific research. Thus, such a reorientation would blur the lines between epistemic and moral constraints on research. Such a reorientation would not only advance epistemology, but would be deeply politically significant in legitimizing typically-marginalized voices of care in the scientific context, as well as in the public context more generally.

**Possible Applications:**

Epistemology  
Ethics  
Philosophy of Science  
Bioethics  
Philosophy of Law

**Possible Class Activities:**

-Consider how care-based epistemology would evaluate some examples of scientific interaction. You could have students come up with their own examples. Other ideas include looking at famous research ethics cases (Tuskegee experiments), Stanford Prison Experiments.

Or have them look at trends in scientific research:

For example to 10/90 gap which refers to the fact that “less than 10% of worldwide resources devoted to health research were put towards health in Developing Countries, where over 90% of all preventable deaths worldwide occurred.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/90\\_gap](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/90_gap)

You can discuss whether caring *too much* ought to be considered a vice. Look at Youtube videos of conspiracy theorists and question what the “right amount” or the virtuous amount of care would look like.

You could also look at research on primate psychology and compare field research with lab research. Does the way you interact with and care about your research subjects in this context change the outcome of your research? Should researchers get to know chimps or other research subjects? Or should they try and remain as far removed as possible? Should researchers name the chimps they work with?

How might a care perspective change how doctors interact with patients in the wake of medical error?

How might a care perspective change how they make diagnosis? Or reach other understandings about their patients?

Note: If you’re looking for a good description of what caring is, you can excerpt Dalmiya’s section on this and use it in a unit on care or virtue ethics.

## **Complementary Texts/Resources:**

### Texts to have Students Read Before

Chapter 1 of Lori Gruen's Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships With Animals

<http://www.amazon.com/Entangled-Empathy-Alternative-Relationships-Animals/dp/1590564871>

### Texts to pair this reading with:

Linda Alcoff's piece "Sotomayor's reasoning" <http://www.alcoff.com/articles>

The NPR story: "Sotomayor Differs with Obama on Empathy Issues"

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106569335&refresh=true>

Nancy Sherman's book After War: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers

<http://www.nancysherman.com>

### Texts cited by Dalmiya:

Baier, Annette. 1982. The importance of what we care about: A reply to Frankfurt. *Synthese* 53: 273-90.

Garry, Ann, and Marilyn Pearsall, eds. 1989. *Women, knowledge and reality: Explorations in feminist philosophy*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a different voice*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Noddings, Nel. 1984. *Caring: A feminist approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Scheman, Naomi. 1993. On sympathy. In *Engenderings: Constructions of knowledge, authority and privilege*. New York: Routledge.

Sevenhuijsen, Selma. 1998. *Citizenship and the ethics of care*. London: Routledge.

Young, Iris Marion. 1997. *Intersecting voices: Dilemmas of gender, political philosophy and policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zagzebski, Linda Trinkaus. 1996. *Virtues of the mind: An inquiry into the nature of virtues and the ethical foundations of knowledge*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### Other Texts/Resources:

Kukla and Ruetsche, "Contingent Natures and Virtuous Knowers: Could Epistemology be Gendered?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (2002).

Douglas, "Inductive Risk and Values in Science," *Philosophy of Science* (2000).

Fricke, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007).

Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986).

Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice* (1996).

## **What traditional texts might this text replace:**

### Texts cited by Dalmiya:

- Dancy, Jonathan, and Ernest Sosa, eds. 1992. *A companion to epistemology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Darwall, Stephen. 1998. Empathy, sympathy, care. *Philosophical Studies* 89 (2-3): 262-82.
- Goldman, Alvin. 1992. Epistemic folkways and scientific epistemology. In *Liaisons: Philosophy meets the cognitive and social sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, David. 1975. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Niclitch. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smith, Adam. 1976. *The theory of moral sentiments*. Ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sosa, Ernest. 1991. *Knowledge in perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Other Texts:

- BonJour, L. 1980. "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5, 53-73.
- Cohen, S. 2002. "Basic Knowledge and the Problem of Easy Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXV:2, 309-29.
- Goldman, A. 1967. "A Causal Theory of Knowing," *Journal of Philosophy* 64:12, 355-72.
- Sosa, E.. 2007. *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Volume I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).