

INSTABILITY AND DISSONANCE: PROVOCATIONS FROM SANDRA HARDING

by Ann Milliken Pederson

Abstract. Sandra Harding's work is useful, not only as a critique of the scientific method and its epistemological constructs, but also in providing new energy and insights to the discussions about epistemology between theology and science.

Feminist theory has been critical of the worldviews inherited from the Enlightenment. No longer is there one unambiguous way of knowing ourselves and the world around us, a single vision of reality. Feminist philosophers of science like Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway have redefined the scientific method and its analytic categories. They have contributed significantly to this discussion by moving the Enlightenment epistemological issues into the arena of politics and ethics. Feminist theory continues to remind us that what is important is not only how or what we know but what we do with that knowledge and how we use it.

Keywords: dissonance; feminist philosophy of science; situated knowledge; "strong objectivity."

Feminist theory wrestles with the analytic categories and methods inherited from the Enlightenment, in part because of the hierarchy inherent in the dualisms of those categories. We sense that our "modern" way of understanding the world is abrading. In various discourses we speak of the decentering and dislocating of the human subject; in fact, the very self/world distinction drawn as subject/object by Descartes is at the heart of our understanding of the world around us. Paul Sponheim, in his book *Faith and the Other*, notes that "thus Descartes introduces us to the self/world distinction by which (we?) moderns understand reality. By virtue of our reason we human beings are other than nature, but we can confidently move to understand and act upon nature. The 'two' in this dualism are not created equal" (Sponheim 1993, 6).

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One issue with which I continually struggle is the nature of knowledge, that is, how we know the world and interpret our experience of it. How are knowledge and power related to our understanding and interpretation of our experience? Understanding ourselves and the world is related to our freedom and experience of justice. How we understand the world is related to changing the way the world works and vice versa. When we look at concrete data of our experience we also examine the issue of who determines the questions we ask in interpreting our experience. Feminists have raised questions about the ways in which power and authority often define "reality" and asked who determines what is real.

Feminist theory and theology thus connect power with knowledge, raising issues about whose knowledge is important and selected for interpreting our experience of the world. Alfred N. Whitehead said that "the chief danger to philosophy is narrowness in the selection of evidence. . . . Philosophy may not neglect the multifariousness of the world—the fairies dance, and Christ is nailed to the cross" (Whitehead [1929] 1974, 338). Sandra Harding agrees with Whitehead about the danger in the selection of the evidence. Her constructive program of "strong objectivity" outlines an alternative to the Enlightenment model for the interpretation and selection of evidence, a particularly challenging, provocative, and critical proposal for formulating critical questions and constructing alternative epistemological proposals.

Harding's feminist philosophy of science offers a rich and varied account of the world in which we live, a way of holding the dissonance and instability of diverse voices in a creative and productive tension; the question is not only one of knowledge as such but of whose knowledge counts and how that knowledge is put to use.¹ Other feminists echo Harding's concern that critical appraisal not degenerate into a form of relativism distanced from the "messy" world in which we live and work. Donna Haraway states:

Academic and activist feminist inquiry has repeatedly tried to come to terms with the question of what *we* might mean by the curious and inescapable term "objectivity." . . . Feminists have stakes in a successor science project that offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions. In traditional philosophical categories, the issue is ethics and politics perhaps more than epistemology. (Haraway 1988, 575, 579)

Feminist theorists claim that there is an "epistemological privilege of the oppressed" (Welch 1990, 128–29).² These feminist writers weave a path through the dualism of either an imperialistic universalism or a vague cultural relativism. In either polarity, feminist

theory claims that the knowledge base is reduced. The current feminist epistemologies attempt to broaden, enhance, and enrich the ways of knowing the world and to put that knowledge to use for the benefit of the world. This view diverges from the Enlightenment tradition, which claims that reason is universal and impartial. Feminist standpoint theory tries to avoid this polarity in epistemological categories. Standpoint theory attempts to include and value all diverse experiences in order to remain fluid and resistant.

Harding's program of strong objectivity outlines a model for the interaction between religion and science, offers a constructive critique of Enlightenment dualistic categories, and adds a constructive alternative that includes the standpoint of the other, those in groups that have not been central to Western discussions of epistemology and science. Her model of "conversational praxis" offers a reflexive movement between subjects and objects, rectifies the dangers of dualisms, wrestles with the tensions and dissonances of the analytical categories, incorporates the voices of the other, and moves the discussion of epistemology to the arena of politics and ethics. Her model, in contrast to the scientific methodology inherited from the Enlightenment which she critiques, includes "self-involving elements of discourse" and "the messy world in which dynamics of race, gender, class, and culture interplay and condition the analyst's reflections" (Taylor 1990, 4).³

Harding's method might be described as a conversational praxis in which the concreteness of the discussion moves to the cultural, political, and social dynamics. This conversational method is "locational" in the sense that it draws the voice of the other in all its particularities. She claims that

we need a more complex understanding of how the development of Western sciences and models of knowledge are embedded in and have advanced the development of Western society and culture but also have led to the simultaneous re-development and continual re-creation of "others"—Third world peoples, women, the poor, nature. (Harding 1991, ix)

Her logic of using standpoint epistemologies to direct our thinking about knowledge and how it is claimed and used as normative provides an opportunity to think from the standpoint of the members of groups that have not been central to Western discussions of science and epistemology. Paul Sponheim uses a similar method in Christian theology for traversing the boundaries between self and other, connection and disconnection (Sponheim 1993, vii).⁴

FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF ENLIGHTENMENT
EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS

Contemporary feminist theory attempts to reinterpret and augment the analytical categories of varied disciplines, like the philosophy of science, in such a way that women's experiences and contributions become manifest. Feminists had hoped that they "could make the categories and concepts of the traditional approaches objective or Archimedean where they were not already" (Harding 1986, 645). Instead, what feminist theory has learned is that "neither women's activities nor gender relations" could be added to the disciplines and their discourses without radically altering the subject matter and its rhetoric. Have these analytical categories, having been traversed and reinterpreted by feminists far beyond their original claims, been stretched beyond their usefulness? As Harding notes, the "very fact that these borrow from these theories often has been the unfortunate consequence of diverting our energies into endless disputes with the nonfeminist defenders of these theories: we end up speaking not to other women but to patriarchs" (Harding 1986, 645). Feminist voices critique the analytical categories of the Enlightenment for their dangerous dualistic split between subject and object, their division of the individual from the needs of the community, and the distancing of critical consciousness into an "objectifying, impartial" knowledge of the other.

Feminist philosophers of science like Harding share a common critique of the Enlightenment epistemological categories that undergird much of the scientific method. In her most recent work, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Harding offers her study as *a* study, not *the* study, as she is joined by a multiplicity of other voices that also critique the Enlightenment and attempt to develop nondualistic constructs for interpreting experience. A voice who also shares this concern and critique of Enlightenment dualisms is Ian Barbour, who notes that

these more radical critiques arise partly from considering the dualisms that have been so pervasive in Western thought: mind/body, reason/emotion, objectivity/subjectivity, domination/submission, and impersonal/personal, power/love. In each case, the first term has been identified in our culture as male, the second as female. But precisely these first terms are taken to characterize science: mind, reason, objectivity, domination, impersonality, power. . . . I cannot agree with those postmodernist feminists who recommend that we should reject objectivity and accept relativism. Western thought has indeed been dualistic, and men have perhaps been particularly prone to dichotomize experience. But the answer is to try to avoid dichotomies, not merely to relativize them. Nor do we want to perpetuate them in inverted form by rejecting the first term and affirming the second in each polarity. Such a move would be shortsighted, even as

a temporary corrective strategy, if we seek to acknowledge the wholeness of life. (Barbour 1990, 79)

Harding, in ways similar to Barbour, wants to avoid the dangerous dualisms of Enlightenment thinking and so moves the discussion from the center of epistemology to the arena of politics and ethics. What is valuable about Harding's contribution to the epistemological discussion between science and religion is her constructive trajectory that seeks neither to succumb to dualisms nor to perpetuate a new form of dualistic thinking. She argues that we need a richer, more complex understanding of how the development of Western science and our models of knowledge are inextricably interwoven in the pluralistic culture and society of the West.

DISSONANCE AND MULTIPLICITY AMONG FEMINISTS AS A MODEL

In order to understand Harding's argument, it is helpful to locate her among other feminist voices. Feminist scholarship is clearly not monolithic. Its diversity in fact provides part of the constructive agenda for Harding as she seeks neither to embrace nor to reject any position in its entirety. Harding shares with Barbour the hope that both women and men can express their capacities in all their diversity, plurality, and ambiguity. Because feminist thought starts from the experiences of diverse women, its discussions are both diverse and even contradictory (Harding 1991, 310). In fact, Harding states, "We need to be able to cherish certain kinds of intellectual, political, and psychic discomforts, to see as inappropriate and even self-defeating certain kinds of clear solutions to the problems we have been posing" (Harding 1986, 650).

How then does one attempt to construct a feminist theory or a feminist epistemology to correct the dilemmas in Enlightenment epistemology? Can one find analytical categories that are free from the patriarchal flaws inherent in their very structures? Harding recommends that, instead of framing a coherent and clear conceptuality which borrows here and there from patriarchal categories and is under constant scrutiny, we "must learn to embrace the instability of the analytical categories; to find the instability itself the desired theoretical reflection of certain aspects of the political reality in which we live and think; to use these instabilities as a resource for our thinking and practices. No 'normal science' for us!" (Harding 1986, 648). It would be delusory to assume that all feminists would agree or arrive at some "master theory."⁵ Instead, Harding argues that the analytical categories should be unstable and dissonant because

we live in an unstable and dissonant world. If the sciences are socially constructed, then the invitation to conversation about the instabilities and dissonances within scientific discourses and feminist critiques will transform the sciences as disciplines.

Harding encourages us to embrace as valuable resources the instabilities in three feminist critiques of science and epistemological programs: "feminist empiricist philosophy, which tries to correct 'bad science'; feminist standpoint theory, which tries to construct knowledge from the perspective of women's lives; and feminist postmodernism, which is suspicious of Enlightenment loyalties in such scientific and epistemological projects" (Harding 1991, vii).

The distinctions drawn by Nancy Tuana among these three voices serve to analyze these three feminist critiques. Feminist empiricism is used by researchers in biology and the social sciences primarily as a "justificatory strategy" to uncover the sexist and androcentric biases that infiltrate scientific research. When viewed as social constructs these biases are rectifiable if one "adheres to stricter existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry" (Harding 1986, 24). Inclusion of women in the institutions of science is an important corrective. Feminist empiricism suits the categories of traditional science and allows for dialogue with nonfeminist philosophers and historians of science. However, Tuana notes that feminist empiricism fails to perceive a relationship between science and politics and also is not particularly hospitable to issues of race, class, gender, and economics.

Feminist standpoint epistemologies utilize the Marxist notion that the dominant position of white, middle-class, Euro-American males limits and perverts knowledge. Knowledge grounded in experience and feminist theory based on the perspectives of women can provide a more comprehensive, less distorted, more true knowledge. Feminist standpoint theory claims that the subject/agent of feminist knowledge is "multiple and contradictory" (Harding 1991, 181). However, this position often is criticized, particularly by postmodernists; arguing for "women's experience," it is claimed, reverses the dualism and makes claims for an "essentialist" account of "woman."

Postmodern feminism rejects the foundationalism, essentialism, and absolutism of the modernist project and provides a nondualistic, decentered alternative. Because sexism is inherent in the dualistic epistemology of the Enlightenment, only a "thoroughgoing deconstruction" of the Enlightenment categories will work. Postmodern feminism often draws upon the works of the French feminists, like Luce Irigaray, who argue that "one ought not to replace one set of privileged concepts and associations with another but . . . break the

binary opposition of phallocratic thought" (Tuana 1992, 101). No absolute foundations, centers, or grounds for knowledge exist; they are plural and heterogeneous.

Harding embraces the tensions between all three of these epistemologies. She believes that the multiplicity of these discourses reflects the tension that actually exists in prior discourses. The instability of the categories also is due to the social situation in which we are located. Harding explains that since the "social relations that are our object of study, which create and re-create us as agents of knowledge and within which our analytical categories are formed and tested, are themselves in exuberant transformation . . . feminist analytical categories should be unstable at this moment in history" (Harding 1986).

CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION: STRONG OBJECTIVITY

Harding's work can provide a model for the conversation between religion and science as a conversational praxis that includes "self-involving elements of discourse." Her constructive contributions to the discussions are her pathways through the dichotomies that oppose objectivism to relativism and ahistorical to experiential foundationalism (Harding 1991). Her appropriation of the lives and voices of "others" allows for creative tensions between diverse voices, incorporates views of the other to allow for a richer lens of objectivity, and offers a means by which theologians can work within their own religious tradition to offer a vision of healing and restoration to a fragmented and broken world, a vision whereby we learn to regard and cherish the natural world.

Scientists such as Ian Barbour have objected to the conventional understanding of objectivity as a value-free, impartial, impersonal, dispassionate guide for the scientist's research.⁶ Without an objective perspective, advocates for the conventional understanding say, we would have no way to discern knowledge from mere opinion. Harding contrasts this traditional notion of objectivity, which she labels objectivism, with its opposite, epistemological or judgmental relativism, which denies any criteria for adjudicating between competing truth claims. Many fear, however, that if we give up universal foundations for truth all truth claims will be decided only by people's personal opinions. How else are we to adjudicate between truth claims if finally all knowledge is bound by either personal preference or culture? Harding notes, "Insistence on this division of epistemological stances between those that firmly support value-free objectivity and those that support judgmental relativism—a dichotomy

that has gained the consent of many critics of objectivism as well as its defenders—has succeeded in making value-free objectivity look more attractive to natural and social scientists than it should” (1991, 139).

Arguing for another option that avoids succumbing to the “fruitless and depressing choice between value-free objectivity and judgmental relativism,” Harding attempts to construct a relationship between what she calls strong objectivity and socially situated knowledge (Harding 1991, 142). In fact, a feminist standpoint epistemology calls for stronger standards for objectivity. “The call for the acknowledgement that all human beliefs—including our best scientific beliefs—are socially situated . . . require[s] a critical evaluation to determine which social claims tend to generate the most objective knowledge claims” (Harding 1991, 142). Strong objectivity requires a scientific account of both the historical and social situation of the beliefs and their objectivity.

At this point, Barbour’s concerns about absolutism and relativism match Harding’s because he wants neither to relativize nor to perpetuate dichotomies. Barbour also claims that we need to redefine objectivity and decide what kind of criteria would apply to adjudicating the objectivity of certain epistemological claims. He defines objectivity as the process by which we know that scientific data are theory-laden and intersubjectively produced, and that criteria for adjudicating competing claims should be “impartial” and shared by the community.

According to Barbour, objectivity cannot mean that the understanding of theories is determined only by the object itself. Inquiry and observation is always participatory. Objectivity cannot mean reductionism. Objectivity should strive for holistic categories and analysis. Harding agrees that “the notion of ‘strong objectivity’ conceptualizes the value of putting the subject or agent of knowledge in the same critical, causal plane as the object of her or his inquiry” (Harding 1991). Both Barbour and Harding claim that a reciprocal relationship between subject and object exists that changes the nature of scientific inquiry. One cannot observe research from a distance. Instead, the object of research and the researcher form an interacting, reciprocal, living system. These ontological claims have political and ethical implications for the nature of the scientific method.

Harding gives three essential reasons for her argument for separating objectivity from its associations with value-neutrality:

1. Objectivity “has a valuable political history. There have to be standards of distinguishing between how I want the world to be

and how, in empirical fact, it is. Otherwise, might makes right in knowledge-seeking just as it tends to do in morals and politics” (Harding 1991, 160). This historical narrative can help us discover the connections between power, knowledge, and experience and can teach us how to form trajectories for research programs in the future.

2. “Objectivity also can claim a glorious intellectual history” (Harding 1991, 160). Objectivity, as standpoint theory demonstrates, not only has belonged to the historical elite but also has served to justify “unpopular criticisms of partisan but entrenched beliefs” (Harding 1991, 160). Objectivity can be a warning to either dogmatism or a judgmental relativism. Standpoint theory provides a critical voice, an alternative to that of the majority, that does not succumb to the temptations of dualisms.
3. The appeal to objectivity is helpful not only for feminists but also for other emancipatory movements. This understanding of objectivity helps to separate more partial and less distorted claims from others. Harding’s program of strong objectivity tries to move beyond “mere talk.” Her goal is not only to include other voices but also to offer a new vision of the science project itself. This also would be the goal of the conversation between religion and science. As the voices of the other are incorporated, the nature of the conversation and its effects are altered.

Harding has responded to criticisms from postmodern theorists who claim that standpoint theory is still too essentialist and too tied to Enlightenment categories. This claim is part of an ongoing debate among feminist scholars and is a particular challenge to American feminists from French feminists. In addition to the postmodern critics, Harding notes, epistemologists and philosophers of science and sociologists of knowledge have raised questions such as the following about feminist standpoint theory:

1. Is standpoint theory excessively foundationalist and thus “too epistemological”?
2. Are the standpoint epistemologies not epistemologies at all but really only sociologies of knowledge?
3. Does standpoint epistemology value science too highly?
4. Are standpoint theories essentialist and Eurocentric?
5. Is feminist standpoint theory excessively modernist—remaining too humanist and too loyal to Enlightenment beliefs?

Some feminists argue that standpoint theory is still too tied

to the Enlightenment. However, Harding replies that there are postmodernist tendencies in feminist standpoint epistemology. These tendencies include an understanding that reason is socially located, that it is better to begin from some social locations and not others, that historical arguments are always embodied, that truth is determined as more or less partial or distorted, that knowledge arises "from bifurcated consciousness" of women trying to fit into conventional categories, and that it is out of both the difference and the commonalities that the "scientific and epistemological advantage of feminist thought develops" (Harding 1991, 160). One must not worship "difference" for its own sake, or one can exploit or romanticize the missing voices still lacking connection to the task at hand. Standpoint theory is both critical and constructive, noting differences and seeking connections.

Harding's appropriation of difference and the other moves beyond inclusion of others to consideration of their lives as a means by which the program of strong objectivity may be put into practice. This approach involves starting from the other to "ask research questions, develop theoretical concepts, design research, collect data, and interpret findings" (Harding 1991, 268). The grounds for feminist standpoint theory, as Harding so often emphasizes, are not women's experiences per se but the "view from women's lives." She tries to avoid the dichotomy between ahistorical and experiential foundationalism. Western epistemology starts from the view from nowhere that claims to see everything "from a distance." The opposite view insists that individual experience provides a unique perspective from which to prefer certain beliefs over others. In her chapter "Reinventing Ourselves as Other" Harding tries to avoid this dichotomy as she examines the relationship between experience and knowledge. Her middle position is to "characterize as 'reinventing ourselves as other' the standpoint enterprise that produces agents of history and knowledge who use experience in their knowledge-seeking in a different way from that of proponents of the two strategies to be avoided" (Harding 1991, 270).

Three surprising consequences follow from the logic of standpoint theory:

First, the subject of feminist knowledge—the agent of these less partial and distorted descriptions and explanations—must be multiple and even contradictory. . . . Further, each individual feminist knower is also multiple in a way that mirrors the situation of women as a class. (Harding 1991, 284–85)

Subject and object are internally related through their multiple centers.

Consequently, and second, the logic of standpoint theory requires that the subject of liberatory feminist knowledge must also be the subject of every other liberatory knowledge project. (Harding 1991, 285)

The praxis of standpoint theory is situated among those of other emancipatory projects. These locations contribute to each other as they seek to accomplish their political and ethical goals even as they supply a solidarity among the voices.

Third, therefore, women cannot be the unique generators of feminist knowledge. Women cannot claim this ability to be uniquely theirs, and men must not be permitted to refuse to try to produce fully feminist analyses on the grounds that they are not women. (Harding 1991, 286)

All voices must contribute to the conversation or else the hierarchy of dualism is simply inverted.

Feminist standpoint theory, accompanied by the notion of strong objectivity, provides Harding a way of saying that thinking from women's lives will change science by replacing the sciences of the academic and social elite. She states that "without such new sciences, privileged groups remain deeply ignorant of important regularities and underlying causal tendencies in nature and social relations, of their own location in the social and natural world. Without such sciences, the majority of the world's peoples remain deprived of knowledge that could enable them to gain democratic control over the conditions of their lives" (Harding 1991, 312). This gives Harding's program both a pragmatic and practical concern.

The difficulties with Harding's program of strong objectivity arise at this point. Putting such a program into place becomes an extremely complex, exhausting, and difficult task. At all points along the way, barriers to inclusion of the silenced voices arise, whether from lack of funds, silencing of voices, or institutional politics. On the one hand, conversation and incorporation sounds easy. On the other hand, we must be patient with the dissonance that will follow. It is much easier to sing the same old song over and over again; it is much more difficult to know how to find a new harmony when we don't even know for certain what voices will be included in the composition. The connection between knowledge and power is critical for this conversation.

MODEL AND AGENDA FOR RESEARCH

Harding's program of strong objectivity offers a model for the conversation between religion and science as well as a constructive alternative to the problems and hazards of the Enlightenment epistemological dualisms. Both religion and science offer particular narratives about the world in which we live (Hefner 1993). Telling

particular stories in concrete situations will help to permanently validate the voices of those who have been marginalized. We must learn that religion and science are not monolithic, nor does either one tell the whole truth about the world. The purpose of telling these stories is finally to elicit solidarity and move toward transformation of our world. Particular location calls us to recognize our own story and to be accountable to listen to the stories of others. The goal of conversation is not only consensus but also, and most importantly, mutual critique. As Sharon Welch suggests, that solidarity is more important and more inclusive than the goal of consensus (Welch 1990, 137).

Harding helps us to struggle with the problem of binary categories that are in part tied to the Enlightenment—subject/object, male/female, rational/irrational, and so on. Moving from binary to multi-centered categories may more fully address the complexities and ambiguities of human life. We move through and with the dualisms and dichotomies toward a multiplicity of perspectives. We tend to see ambiguity, difference, plurality, and complexity as threats or as problems to be solved. With Harding's eyes we can see differences as ways of knowing the world and see in those seeds of difference a tension leading to new growth. The ground of standpoint theory might just be the fertile soil for human creativity, for richer political and social constructions, and for a way to move into a theological system that finds God in that grounding.

My final comments about the work of Sandra Harding seem somewhat practical but they raise tough issues for me. Telling particular stories in particular concrete situations will help to bring the view of the other into our perspective. How one goes about this seems problematic. How does one incorporate the view of the other without either romanticizing or exploiting that other? The purpose of telling our stories is to elicit solidarity and to transform the boundaries that exclude the other in the disciplines and from our lives. Thus, it seems that we must be particularly attentive to our own location and accountable for our own perspective as we try to listen to the voices not our own.

The task of the Christian theologian is finally that of dealing with that which is other. Paul Sponheim notes that diversity is both threat and promise. We always risk being transformed in the engagement with the other as boundaries that seemed fixed and firm become diverse and fuzzy. Difference is not an absolute in itself. Neither, as Harding notes, can it degenerate into an absolute relativism that still is dislocated from the daily lives of people. Difference, Sponheim notes, involves connection.

Harding recognizes that this method of strong objectivity always is located in the concrete particularities of our lives and our disciplines. Sponheim notes that such meeting of our differences and locations involves a living conversation. He states: "In this actual meeting of actual others it is clear, then, that no single method holds sway. Such a single method would be another abstraction. We meet to work together at meeting. We come to the conversation with our criteria—with our methods—for this conversation, this 'intimate association or intercourse,' is a living thing" (1993, 178).

How do we go about this incorporation of the other? There is no doubt in my mind that we must accomplish this without either romanticizing or exploiting the other. We need to acknowledge the dissonance and ambiguity that this new conversational method will bring us. The course will not be easy or unambiguous. We may even have difficulty finding a familiar refrain or a single line of melody. But as Sponheim notes, "The composition is fugal, fitting the complexity of life" (1993, vii). God's way with us in the world may seem more like a fugue than one melodic choral line. The composition must fit the melodies which are often like the players—complex, ambiguous, and dissonant. However, there is—finally—music.

NOTES

1. Harding's rather lengthy quote about the incorporation of women's voices into theory is important for the critique of the Enlightenment categories. Already in 1986 she was attempting to move beyond the polarities of an epistemological relativism or some sort of transcendental absolutism: "However, we sometimes claim that theorizing itself is suspiciously patriarchal, for it assumes separations between the knower and the known, subject and object, and the possibility of some powerful transcendental Archimedean standpoint from which nature and social life fall into what we think is their proper perspective. We fear replicating—to the detriment of women whose experiences have not yet been fully voiced within feminist theory—what we perceive as a patriarchal association between power and knowledge. Our ability to detect androcentrism in traditional analyses has escalated from finding it in the content of knowledge claims to locating it in the forms and goals of traditional knowledge seeking. The voice making *this* proposal is itself super-Archimedean, speaking from some "higher" plane, such that Archimedes' followers in contemporary intellectual life are heard as simply part of the inevitable flux and imperfectly understood flow of human history. . . . When it is unreflective, this kind of postmodernism—a kind of absolute relativism—itself takes a definitive stand from yet further outside the political and intellectual needs that guide our day-to-day thinking and social practices" (1986, 647–48).

2. Feminist theologians like Welch make use of Harding's work to indicate how the knowledge of women is of particular value. The use of "other" voices is not so much to reify the other as to incorporate and develop a richer and deeper way of knowing and of reaching more mutual understandings of what justice is and how it is achieved in the world.

3. Taylor draws upon hermeneutics and the method of correlation to develop his own version of conversational praxis. He notes that "critical disciplines need their own technical jargons, but often these lead to the neglect of self-involving elements of

discourse. Even when theology turns to critical reflection upon experience, the turn is often to phenomenology, ontology, perhaps to the social sciences, but rarely to the messy world in which dynamics of class, gender, race, and culture interplay and condition the analyst's reflections. Still more rare is a self-locating consciousness operative in the various philosophical-theological studies of experience." Taylor's work has been helpful as a method for a revision of the "location" of the theological subject and as a model for the conversation between religion and science. I find his work to be a bridge between the theological methods typified in George Lindbeck's work, *The Nature of Doctrine*. Taylor's use of "location" situates theological method between text and context.

4. "Furthermore, difference marks not only the structure for the conversation but also the voices to be heard in it. My hope is that any confusion the book occasions in the reader will derive only from the reality of the living situation I seek to describe" (Sponheim 1990, vii). Sponheim joins the voices of those such as Harding, Philip Hefner, and Mark Kline Taylor who assert that the method and content must be applicable to the living, messy, ambiguous world in which we live. Difference and connection matter. He closes the opening of the book with the following: "Thus the book closes with comment on how one may hear the voice of the other, discerning difference and claiming connection in faithful and fruitful ways." It is in these faithful and fruitful ways that Harding's voice makes a contribution to a conversational praxis between the voices of religion and science.

5. Such disagreement must be noted among scholars. Noretta Koertge notes that her disagreement with Sandra Harding "goes far beyond matters of the extent of sexism or the proper role of rhetoric in academic discussions. It concerns the very nature of the core or constitutive values of science" (Koertge 1994, B3). Koertge's critique slashes to the heart of Harding's program—the idea of strong objectivity.

6. Harding notes the decline of objectivism in the sciences. "Scientists and science theorists working in many different disciplinary and policy projects have objected to the conventional notion of a value-free, impartial, dispassionate objectivity that is supposed to guide scientific research and without which, according to conventional thought, one cannot separate justified belief from mere opinion, or real knowledge from mere claims to knowledge" (Harding 1991, 138).

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