

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION:  
*DISCOVERING REALITY TWENTY YEARS LATER*

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It is unusual for an anthology to be reissued two decades later. How should we understand the continuing value of these essays for today's students, teachers, and scholars in philosophy, women's studies, and other fields?

The good news is that the issues raised by these essays are still relevant. The collection remains valuable as a scholarly and classroom resource. Indeed, we should probably understand its usefulness in these contexts as having expanded since its original publication. The fact that feminists reasonably can address the abstract, philosophic kinds of concerns represented here has now become more familiar to readers in virtually all research fields, outside as well as inside feminist research and scholarship and women's studies programs. Moreover, while most of the authors were junior scholars at the time, many have now become distinguished senior scholars whose work is widely known in this country and elsewhere. Thus the scholarly credentials of the collection and importance of its kind of issues are more obvious now than initially. Consequently, these essays are both accessible and of interest to a far broader audience than was the case two decades ago. While only pedagogically highly talented teachers, intrepid ones at that, attempted to teach this collection in upper-level undergraduate courses in philosophy or women's studies two decades ago, today such audiences are far more prepared to understand these authors' concerns. The book may be taught at a lower level of familiarity with feminist scholarship and with its stated philosophic topics than at the time of its first publication.<sup>1</sup>

There are other issues that this second edition brings into focus in valuable ways. One is that feminist work in epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and philosophy of science has been a collective endeavor from the beginning. Without taking away from the brilliance, innovative strategies, and truly difficult labors required on the part of the individual authors to produce these analyses, readers can see that it is a transformed and transforming collective consciousness that the anthology presents. Of course the mere appearance of an anthology that is breaking ground in its era provides evidence for that claim. Moreover, the early standpoint epistemology papers in the collection specifically make such a claim: subjugated groups can become groups *for*

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed several of these essays have been reprinted in undergraduate philosophy and women's studies texts.

*themselves* - progressive collective consciousnesses - through the political struggles that it takes to see the actualities of social relations (and their directing conceptual schemes) beneath the ideological "alibis" for them to which we are daily exposed. It takes "science and politics," as Nancy Hartssock puts the point, to learn how to use distinctive forms of exploitation and oppression (such as housework, the institution of motherhood, the exploitation of women's bodies, or women's emotional labor) as sources of collective insights into how society is actually structured.<sup>2</sup>

However, these essays also are notable for the ways in which they were addressed to other feminists at least as much as to mainstream audiences. They mark the emergence in philosophy of the idea, revolutionary at the time in such scholarly and research contexts, that women should listen and write to each other. Or, rather, since the collection includes two male feminist authors - also an unusual phenomenon at the time - that feminists should listen and talk with and to each other. Of course this was a principle of the women's movement which played such a powerful role in stimulating the issues of this collection. Yet such feminist scholarship of the era often was addressed to the hostile and uncaring androcentric mainstream. Indeed, it had to be so addressed if the task of transforming knowledge-producing institutions, their canons, practices, and cultures were to succeed. Yet there was another important task for feminist thinkers also - to talk with each other, often across otherwise formidable disciplinary boundaries - with which this collection engaged.

This leads to another issue that this collection brings into sharp focus: feminist work in epistemology, metaphysics, methodology and philosophy of science has from the very beginning been actively engaged by scholars working in disciplines other than philosophy.<sup>3</sup> While these concerns certainly have spread from the writings of philosophers to other disciplines, they were also initially formulated in those disciplines from whence philosophers have in turn learned. The collection records one "escape route" of significant areas of philosophic work from control by philosophy departments and institutions--a phenomenon far more widespread than feminist philosophy. Moreover, the kinds of arguments these feminist scholars posed have also been raised by poststructuralist and postmodernist thinkers, as well as by race and ethnicity theorists, and by multicultural and postcolonial studies in science and other

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Feminist Standpoint Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2003) for highlights of two decades of lively contestation and revision of standpoint approaches.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to philosophy, the authors here came from disciplinary backgrounds in political science (3 authors), biology (4 authors), physics, psychoanalytic theory, and history of science. In this respect the collection does not differ from mainstream philosophy of science, where influential figures in recent decades have been formally or informally trained in physics, biology, the history of science, linguistics, and behaviorist psychology.

disciplines. (Harding 1993, 1998, Harding and Figueroa, 2003). This is so even though the essays themselves are, with just a few exceptions, firmly situated in the analytic tradition from which many of the authors had emerged (a point to which I return.) The depth and breadth of the "troubles" with which mainstream Western philosophy has been confronted are far greater now than two decades ago. *Discovering Reality* has played at least some small role in increasing these troubles.<sup>4</sup>

Yet republication also brings into focus some bad news - namely that the issues raised by these authors *are* indeed still relevant, that they still feel freshly argued two decades later! Unfortunately, mainstream epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and philosophy of science, as practiced in the natural and social sciences as well as in philosophy, have not yet fully adopted feminist insights (to understate the issue), though the kinds of concerns raised in these essays have increasingly stimulated self-reflection in these fields. To be sure, feminist understandings have been less difficult (but not easy) to integrate into sociology and biology, with their histories of thinking about how politics systematically shapes inquiry, than into economics, physics, and the analytic tradition of philosophy itself, which lack such histories.<sup>5</sup>

The next section reminds readers of the historical context in which these essays were produced. The original introduction to the collection, which follows this one, guides readers into main themes of the individual essays, so such introductions will not be repeated here. Instead, the third section identifies central issues in these essays that have received increasing attention in feminist and other research and scholarship during the last two decades. The fourth section identifies additional concerns that may be usefully examined in thinking about these essays.

### **Historical Context: "Riding the Torrent of Our Aging Revolutions"**<sup>6</sup>

The late Merrill Hintikka and I conceptualized this collection in the late 1970's.<sup>7</sup> We put out a call for papers through the Society for Women in

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<sup>4</sup> Another piece of good news here is that the collection initially found a publisher who has remained enthusiastic about the kind of scholarship that this volume represents. See, for example, Nelson and Nelson 1996. It has also lead the way among mainstream publishers of philosophy of science in presenting postcolonial science and technology studies, which has come to share assumptions and projects with some feminist science and technology studies authors, such as this one. See, for example, Petitjean, Jami, and Moulin 1992, and Selin 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Of course marxist theory can be considered the origin for such reflection on how social relations and their politics shape thought. Yet this intellectual tradition has a significant presence in only a small handful of U.S. social science and philosophy departments today, and virtually no presence in U.S. economic policy. To be sure, U.S. policy is far less friendly to centering voices of women and of the poor in global policy than are the vast majority of nations around the world.

<sup>6</sup> The phrase is Kathryn Addelson's, in correspondence.

Philosophy and other organizations and journals.<sup>8</sup> I recollect that I was jealous of my colleagues in other fields of philosophy who could far more easily bring the energy and insights of the women's liberation movement, the emerging women's caucuses in the disciplines, and the fledgling women's studies programs to the work into which they had been trained in ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of law and the history of philosophy. But how were feminist concerns and insights to be brought to bear on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and philosophy of science--the philosophic fields that were purportedly completely immune to social influences? This was the question we posed in the call for papers (quoted in the original introduction to the collection). To our astonishment, we received some 120 submissions. Evidently we were not the only feminists puzzling over such questions. The time was right for producing this collection.

Let us recollect the larger social, political, and intellectual contexts in which these authors worked and the book was produced. The Cold War was still on. The scars of the U.S. engagement in Viet Nam had barely begun to heal. The spirit of the revolutions of the 1960's was still alive--the civil rights movement, anti-war movements, the counterculture movements-- though aging (as Kathy Addelson put the point). Yet windows of opportunity that they created were still open.

The Women's Liberation Movement, as it was then called, was almost a decade old and still expanding. Many of the authors here had been activists in it as well as, in most such cases, in others of the 60's movements. The concerns of those activist movements in many respects shape how the philosophic issues are framed in these essays.<sup>9</sup> Socialist Feminism and the movement referred to as Radical Feminism had emerged to challenge the limited resources provided by both Liberal Feminism and earlier forms of Marxist Feminism for feminist thinking in this "second wave," as it was called, of the women's liberation movement. Women's studies programs and women's caucuses in the disciplines had emerged (The Society for Women in Philosophy had been formed in the early 1970's.) Exciting new work was coming out of women's history, feminist social sciences, and feminist criticisms of biology and the life sciences, as well as in every other research field then represented in North American

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<sup>7</sup> Merrill died January 1, 1987--an untimely death. It is a great loss to philosophy and to feminism that her intellectual brilliance, enthusiastic feminist energy, and superior organizing abilities are no longer with us. It has also been a personal loss to me. She was a splendid collaborator in this project: it could not have happened without her amazonian efforts. It is sad that she cannot get to appreciate the effects of her work. Two other contributors have passed away: Ann Palmeri in 1984, and Louise Marcil-Lacoste in the late 1990's.

<sup>8</sup> The feminist philosophy journal *Hypatia* would not begin publication until 1983, the year in which this anthology appeared.

<sup>9</sup> Addelson pointed this out to me.

universities. Feminists in England and France had in different ways reclaimed important insights of psychoanalysis in the face of compelling feminist critiques of this theory's assumptions. Interdisciplinary pedagogical and scholarly projects were becoming more acceptable in the humanities and social sciences.

Moreover, fifteen years after the publication of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962/1970), and more than a quarter century after W. V. O. Quine's (1953) challenges to logical positivist assumptions, "Science, Technology, and Society" programs were beginning to appear on campuses, taking the social studies of science in directions different from the earlier "History and Philosophy of Science" programs. Significantly, Kuhn himself used a political language of reform and revolution to describe patterns in his new kind of history of science; one wonders to what extent that rhetoric itself helped to link feminist science studies into the new social and then cultural studies of science and technology. Progressive science movements were questioning natural sciences' links with militarism, technologies of social control, environmental destruction, and the deepening exploitation of labor in the third as well as the first world, threatening the pose of value-neutrality characteristic of philosophies of those sciences as well. In this context, analytic epistemology and philosophy of science were actively developing the "barricades" mentality still evident today, a stance which insists on separating scientific and philosophic issues further and further from consideration of how the sciences actually function in the world today.<sup>10</sup> In the social sciences, too, had appeared criticisms of anthropology's and sociology's complicity with power.

Thus on the one hand, young feminist scholars were trained up in an environment of lively disputes around the new research possibilities opened up by Quine, Kuhn, left critics, and the subsequent work of historians, sociologists, and ethnographers of the natural and social sciences. On the other hand, positivist tendencies in the disciplines (including in analytic philosophy), firmly declared on the side of conventional philosophies of "pure science" and their accompanying epistemologies, metaphysics and methodologies. In the context of the concerns of the rising women's movement and the still prevalent spirit of such 60's directives as "resist authority!", what were young feminist scholars to do but challenge the authority of their disciplines to determine what counted as legitimate topics, theories, and methods?!

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<sup>10</sup> Indeed, today there is little if any attempt to relocate mainstream philosophy of science onto the new maps provided by accounts of the "net society," where the production and management of information has moved to the base of the global political economy. See, e.g., the three volume series by Manuel Castells (1997/2000).