



Dear colleagues,

The Department of Philosophy and the African Centre of Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (ACEPS) at the University of Johannesburg invite you to the following in-person talk:

‘Saving the World: On Knowing and Being in Yunkaporta’s *Sand Talk*’

Fiona Jenkins, Professor of Philosophy, Australian National University

2 November 2022 11:20-12:50 (SAST/UTC+2)

Humanities Common Room, C-Ring 3, UJ, APK

Lunch with Fiona after the talk: Piza e Vino

ABSTRACT

This paper, in early draft, philosophises in company with a recent book, Tyson Yunkaporta’s *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World* (2020). The work centres an Indigenous perspective on global knowledge systems, refusing to accede to a more familiar demand to report on Indigenous knowledge for a global audience’s benefit. Yunkaporta stresses the importance of processes of Indigenous knowing and transmission, over the content of such knowledge. It is the task of ‘custodians’ not simply to look after Country in a naturalistic sense, but to increase connectedness within creation, transmitting knowledge within ‘cultural frameworks aligned with the patterns of creation’ (119). As the epistemic condition of relating to (or saving) the world, such connectedness is basic to sustainability at multiple levels.

My primary aim in the talk will be to outline some of the philosophical contours of this account. At the centre of Yungaporta’s narrative is the claim that the unsustainable life of city-based civilisations embodies a narcissistic structure of ‘greater-than’ everything else. This narcissism is the essence of Law-breaking, and leads to destruction. Conversely, Yunkaporta describes Indigenous ways of practising equality as corresponding to a relation with time experienced as ongoing and regenerating creation, giving rise to an imminent and unsurpassable Law. Cautiously, for fear of a certain civilisational narcissism creeping in, in the second part of my paper I will comment on some affinities between this work and the deep criticism of assumptions about knowing and being to be found in certain threads of European thought. In particular, I look to build some links with Jean-Luc Nancy’s ontology of singular-plural existence, which also offers a critique of global knowledge systems and a reframing of time and existence.

BIO

Fiona Jenkins is a Professor in the School of Philosophy at the Australian National University and is the Convenor of the ANU Gender Institute. Her research includes a wide range of interests with particular focus on topics in feminist and political theory, and several Nietzschean strands of European philosophy. She also has worked on gender equity in philosophy and academia more broadly, leading a multidisciplinary research project ‘Gendered Excellence in the Social Sciences’. A list of over 50 publications can be found

here: <https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/jenkins-fk#publications>

