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***Comparing Knowledge Traditions: Working with Multiplicity, Sustaining Criticism and Avoiding 'Epistemic Charity'***

Indigenous knowledge traditions and scientific knowledge traditions can be compared as forms of local knowledge. Their differences lie not in the quality or 'truth' of their knowledges but in their ontologies and in the ways the knowledge is assembled and transmitted. This argument for the comparability of knowledge traditions reveals a basic tension in the discussion of indigenous knowledge traditions in academia. How do you maintain the possibility of criticism if you deny that science is the yard stick by which all knowledge should be measured without falling into what Meera Nanda in *Prophets Facing Backwards* (2003) calls epistemic charity. Some knowledge traditions may in fact be oppressive and Nanda focuses on fundamentalist Hinduism in her work because she believes it supports the subordination of women and the untouchables. The paper argues that there is a pressing need to work with multiplicity, with differing knowledge traditions and ontologies, and also that the evaluation criteria of western science cannot provide a universal standard. But it argues nonetheless that it is essential to maintain the possibility of criticism especially in questions of sustainability and that this can be achieved by holding differing traditions in dialogical tension with one another.