1. **Describe the environmental conflict between indigenous peoples and state and corporatist actors. What is the problem with framing indigenous approaches and knowledge as culture and/ or beliefs? How is respect and tolerance of other cultures denying ontological difference?**

The environmental conflict between the indigenous people and the „state“ (happening in the Peruvian Amazon) lies in the changes of the Amazon nature (e.g. intense deforestation led mainly by cattle ranchers) that are justified as “the use of the undeveloped natural resources”. The result of the changes, together with the government responses to them, lead to a constraint of indigenous traditional living. The indigenous people do not fear the possibility of someone else entering their land itself, rather, they do not trust the way corporations approach and care for the land. As the leader of the indigenous protesters says: “If the transnational corporations would care about our soil like we have cared for it for millennia, we would gladly give them room so that they could work here – but all they care about is their economic benefit…” (p. 13)

Also, there is another layer to this conflict, as there are contradictory forces on the “state” side, too. The government and the corporations that demand access and control over natural resources for the purpose of the economic growth are opposed by environmentalists claiming the importance of the to-be-destroyed ecosystems. However, even though the ecologists bring up the question of *care* (for the land), the conversation (which usually evolves around calculations of how (much) can we pull resources out of the land to still not to destroy it) does not involve indigenous people. Nowadays, the rights of these people are more acknowledged than before, but only if they fit the dominant standards of “reasonability” (i.e. when they hold with the dominant view of what “reality” is.) The problem which arises here is: *who* determines what reality is?

The dominant discourse of the “universal science”, which differentiates between nature (“the reality”) and culture, develops exact procedures which allow it to produce “knowledge”. The aspects of reality that are not covered by this “universal science” are labeled as not real, as “culture” – a human fabrication. This means that the indigenous participants of the conflict, the ones who do not differentiate between “nature” and “culture” therefore “do not have knowledge” (according to the paradigm), only “cultural beliefs”. The problem is that the environmental conflict is not an epistemological question, it does not consist in debates of which perspective is more valid (“more or less cultural”). It questions the “world” to be known itself – it is an ontological question.

It is important to realise that the differentiation of the nature and culture is only one perspective – of the modern ontology, but there are other ontologies – e.g. the indigenous relational ontology, where all existing entities emerge from a web of relations and there is no such distinction. When we mark the indigenous knowledge as “culture”, what actually happens is that their ontology, relational ontology, is reduced and repositioned to fit in to the schema of modern ontology. This clearly shows the epistemic privilege of universal science – i.e. by framing the environmental conflict as “cultural/epistemological” and framing the indigenous claims as “claims of different epistemology = different cultural perspective”, we only reinforce the modern ontological assumptions (with the sole consideration of “culture” distinction.) The modern ontology is nevertheless the ontology central to the processes that lead to the destruction of the indigenous world.

In this way, “respecting” other cultures also means that some cultural difference is tolerated, however the tolerance only goes so far as the “universal science” determines –to some limits, the “irrationality” is respected, but beyond these limits, it is “disciplined” by the rational understanding of the universal science. The demeaning label of “irrationality” for the indigenous perspective only shows how the ontological differences are denied with this modern conceptualization.

1. **What does it mean to address environmental conflict as political ontology? How does this facilitate a pluriverse (a world of many worlds) rather than a universe?**

The political ontology considers multiple ontologies, which implies a different analysis of the world. It does not view reality as “external, independent, observable/measurable”, rather it claims that ontologies are dynamic, they interact, and the reality is made in these interactions – with participation of the ontologies themselves. Political ontology brings a notion of “political sensibility” – it helps to protect the “pluriverse” (the notion of existence of different worlds that are constantly unfolding and emerging) because it creates a protection against universalisms.

Addressing the environmental conflict as a political ontology means a careful consideration of what the conflict is about (Is it really “environment” that is the object of the stake, or is this just our point of view? Maybe there are other things at stake (entities, relations…) that our understanding of “environment” does not entail, the things that relational ontology brings up?). Political ontology shows that the modernist assumption of the world is not the only one and it encourages discussions about multiplicity that oppose the modern ontological views which contribute to destruction of the Amazon land.