Gender, Nature, Culture Week 12 Questions

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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?*** Whilst the president of Peru decrees facilitating the concession of indigenous territories to oil, timber and hydroelectric corporations in order to boost the national economy (using nature as resources), the ‘indigenous people are defending not simply access and control over nature as resources […]; they are defending complex webs of relations between humans and nonhumans’ (Blaser 2013, 14), relations where they consider natural ‘entities’ kin. The problem with framing indigenous approaches and knowledge as culture/beliefs is based on the prevailing notion that indigenous peoples are “not first class citizens” (president Garcia date, cited in Blaser…) to enforce economic power. (p. 16) Blaser argues that the state draws a line [of ontology] between the cultural beliefs that indigenous people have (are attributed) and the ‘rational’ scientific knowledge of the cooperations and the state, which suggests that they do not try to grasp the ontological issuesof indigenous people.

***How is respect and tolerance of other cultures denying ontological difference?***

When state deal with ontological difference, they deny other culture by multicultural tolerance; “(…) means to suspend the application of the most rational understanding of reality in deference to those who do not now best” (p. 21) this is again a postcolonial discourse of ‘teaching’ and ‘enlightening’ to those ‘uncivilized’ people.

***3***.      ***What does it mean to address environmental conflict as political ontology?***

Addressing environmental conflict as political ontology means to identify an conflict as a difference of ontology, what people consider to exist”. (p.19) Indigenous people have their own rationality and systems of knowing and it is reasonable politics for them, but the rationality from the point of the (Euro) modern ontology is based on western scientific epistemological knowledge and makes a clear border between nature and culture. Yes. ‘Environmental’ conflict is caused by ontological multiplicity and clashes, but more importantly, people (government or state) use the modern ontology to their own benefits by using scientific knowledge, because spirits, ancestors or kinship are totally alien s.

***How does this [the political ontological approach] facilitate a pluriverse (a world of many worlds) rather than a universe?***

The entanglement of each ontology, constitutes the grounding for the political ontology project facilitate a pluriverse. There are multiple ontologies, thus there are multiple interpretations and practices such as indigenous or disciplinary scientifiic perspectives. Those ontological multiplicity makes conflicts because each ontological approach has a different configuration of a reality. Yes, but there also possibilities of encounter (p. 25); therefore it’s important that one ontology is not completely denied (as it would be in the universe) Therefore, there is not such a clue that solves those issues with the different ontological approaches.

Reference

Blaser, Mario (2013) ‘Notes towards a political ontology of environmental conflict’, in Lesley Green (ed.) Contested Ecologies: Dialogues in the South in Nature and Knowledge, pp. 13-27, Cape Town: HSRC Press.