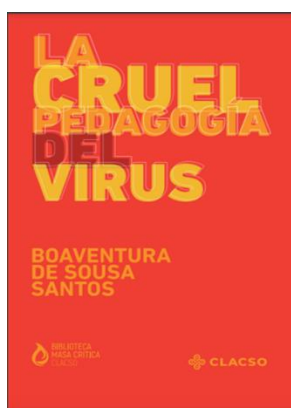




De Sousa Santos, B. (2020). *La cruel pedagogía del virus*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 86 p.

José BRAVO ÁVILA¹

jba2100380@udelasalle.edu.mx



La cruel pedagogía del virus is a primary analysis of the consequences of the health crisis caused by the coronavirus to the current economic/social model. This work is intended to be a material for reflection and criticism of the actual political and economical model, through a crisis. In the first three chapters the book presents its foundation, and in the fourth concretizes what was being prepared and set on the table the central theme of the work -lessons on the crisis-. Finally, in the last section it proposes new alternatives. Boaventura begins the Reading with the core question of his book: What potential knowledge comes from the coronavirus pandemic? The virus: All that is solid vanishes into the air and the tragic transparency of the virus.

In the first two chapters, he argues that the crisis caused by the coronavirus should not be understood in an isolated way but having its origin in the economic model –neoliberalism-. In his opinion. The pandemic emerged in a very specific historical, political, social, and economic context and, therefore, its analysis and interaction are quite specific. It is precisely because of this context that there is a distance between the academic and the ordinary

Boaventura makes an extremely essential allegory for the whole book, the unicorns, inspired by Leonardo da Vinci himself. “The unicorn is a fierce and savage all-powerful (animal)* that, nevertheless, has a weak point, it falls to the cleverness of anyone who identifies him”¹. Therefore, the three unicorns are equivalent to the means of domination: Capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.

At the south of the quarantine

The third chapter focuses on what Boaventura proposes, through his work, as “The South”. The South as a concept does not refer to a geographic place, but rather, a metaphor of the suffering caused by the “three unicorns”, an analogy of how developed countries live in peace at the expense of undeveloped countries, through political/economic power relations.

This is how those social groups are enunciated that, *per se*, are segregated and mainly affected by the pandemic, become focal points of vulnerability. The groups referred to are: women (gender quality); precarious, informal, so-called self-

¹ José Bravo Ávila cursa actualmente el segundo cuatrimestre de la licenciatura en Psicología por la Universidad De La Salle Bajío, en la ciudad de Salamanca, Guanajuato, México. También cursa la licenciatura en Ciencia Política por la Universidad de Guanajuato.

employed workers; street sellers; homeless; residents of the poor peripheries of the cities, favelas, informal settlements, *slums*, *caniço* neighborhoods, etc.; inmates in internment centers, undocumented immigrants or internally displaced populations; the elderly.

The intense pedagogy of the virus: the first lessons.

Sousa Santos' fundamental thesis are six lessons, which have been preparing us throughout the reading. The lessons focus on the deterioration suffered by the current model and how it showed a more than clear inefficiency in preventing, reacting, and containing the coronavirus pandemic. The deficiency of the capitalist model towards the pandemic became evident.

The coronavirus pandemic is an example of how the capitalist model (mainly its most recent version, neoliberalism) does not contemplate efficient responses to crises, because they do not generate income. The ecological crisis, on the other hand, is a latent problem that, likewise, has not been managed properly. As a result, the crisis has hit the right - hyperliberal- hard.

Boaventura reminds us that unicorns are alive and would not be the one without the other two. The pandemic crisis has shown that unicorns are a danger and that racialized, sexualized, and segregated subjects are a target of double quarantine (this one given by socio-political circumstances and by the pandemic) In addition, it should be noted that prevention or contention policies are selective. The role of the State and its positioning and interference in public policies is crushed by its management and civil society or community by market logics.

The future can begin today

The last chapter is a section that considers the pandemic crisis as a moment that propitiates alternatives. New alternatives will be possible through the interrelation of political processes, which will be possible with an epistemological, political, economic, and cultural change. In this sense, Boaventura invites us to think about the change - so necessary- that must arise from a rupture of the *status quo* driven by the coronavirus crisis. Such epistemological change must arise from the South. That is why.

Furthermore, the Reading promotes the personification of sociopolitical and cultural problems. Not understanding knowledge as something unattainable, inaccessible, and incomprehensible for the majority and beneficial for a few; knowledge should not be centralized in the academy. Knowledge is articulated for social benefit, working with people of flesh and blood, not abstractions of reality.