

**UNIVERSITY, SCIENCE AND RELIGION: FROM THE DECOLONIAL
PERSPECTIVE OF BOAVENTURA DE SOUZA SANTOS**

***UNIVERSIDADE, CIÊNCIA E RELIGIÃO: SOB A ÓTICA DECOLONIAL DE
BOAVENTURA DE SOUZA SANTOS***

***UNIVERSIDAD, CIENCIA Y RELIGIÓN: DESDE LA PERSPECIVA DECOLONIAL
DE BOAVENTURA DE SOUZA SANTOS***



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ABSTRACT: Our aim is to reveal how Boaventura de Souza Santos (1940-) understands the role of the university, science and religion, articulating them within the epistemologies of the South, which are a set of procedures that aim to recognize and validate the knowledge produced in struggles, against capitalism by those who most suffered the injustices of this capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal dimension; because they start from the idea that whoever suffers from one tends to suffer from the other, because they are articulated. The expected results for the research were regarding responses to religion at the university and its effect and from a decolonial perspective. In the conclusions, we note that Boaventura's work brought a lot of contributions, including that religion is understood as a form of dignity and struggle; regarding research, he sought to identify the university in the conception of science and religion from the perspective of southern epistemologies; For the study, we used the bibliographic review.

KEYWORDS: University. Science. Religion. Southern Epistemologies.

RESUMO: *Nosso intuito é desvelar como Boaventura de Souza Santos (1940-) entende o papel da universidade, ciência e religião, articulando-os dentro das epistemologias do Sul, as quais são um conjunto de procedimentos que visam reconhecer e validar os conhecimentos produzidos nas lutas, contra o capitalismo por aqueles que mais sofreram as injustiças dessa dimensão capitalista, colonialista e patriarcal; porque partem da ideia de que quem sofre de uma tende a sofrer da outra, porque elas estão articuladas. Os resultados esperados para a pesquisa foram quanto às respostas para a religião na universidade e seu efeito e na perspectiva decolonial. Nas conclusões, observamos que a obra de Boaventura trouxe muitas contribuições, inclusive a de que a religião é entendida como uma forma de dignidade e luta; quanto à pesquisa, buscou-se identificar a universidade na concepção de ciência e religião na perspectiva das epistemologias do sul; para o estudo, utilizamos a revisão bibliográfica.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Universidade. Ciência. Religião. Epistemologias do Sul.*

RESUMEN: *Nuestro objetivo es revelar cómo Boaventura de Souza Santos (1940) entiende el papel de la universidad, la ciencia y la religión, articulándolas en las epistemologías del Sur, que son un conjunto de procedimientos que apuntan a reconocer y validar los conocimientos producidos. en las luchas contra el capitalismo de quienes más sufrieron las injusticias de esta dimensión capitalista, colonialista y patriarcal; porque parten de la idea de que quien sufre por uno tiende a sufrir por el otro, porque están articulados. Los resultados esperados de la investigación giraban en torno a las respuestas a la religión en la universidad y su efecto y desde una perspectiva decolonial. En las conclusiones observamos que la obra de Boaventura trajo muchos aportes, entre ellos que la religión es entendida como una forma de dignidad y lucha; en cuanto a la investigación, buscó identificar a la universidad en la concepción de ciencia y religión desde la perspectiva de las epistemologías sureñas; Para el estudio se utilizó la revisión bibliográfica.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Universidad. Ciencia. Religión. Epistemologías del Sur.*

Introduction

Currently, as a result of the articulation of capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal legacies, our universities, conception of science and religion, carry abysmal characteristics between humanity and inhumanity, present in societies.

In reflections on the student universe, the university, the understanding of education in higher education, the development of science and the connection with religion, we observe the criticisms raised by Boaventura de Souza Santos (1940-) in his works.

The aforementioned author demonstrates the understanding of the role of the university, science and religion in society and connects them to present an articulation within the perspective of Southern epistemologies. In understanding these epistemologies, it is considered that they are a set of procedures that aim to recognize and validate the knowledge produced in struggles, in confronting the meanings of capitalism by those who most suffered the injustices of this capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal- biased dimension.

These questions led to the search, in Boaventura, for answers to the effects of colonization on social and educational biases, considering, in this case, the university. The possible expected and collected results came from reading and reflecting on the considerations of his works that make connections between religion and the university, taking into account the decolonial perspective.

Religion, for the author, involves a way of existing and resisting with dignity through the struggle for ideals and in this research this bias came from the conception of science and religion from the perspective of Southern epistemologies. Thus, to carry out the study, we were guided by by using the bibliographic review methodology of the works of the author Boaventura de Souza Santos, according to the theoretical references cited in the bibliographic references.

At universities

Referring especially to public universities (the object of his studies), Boaventura explains that historically universities have always been in crisis, listing a set of facts that marked and maintain inherited characteristics of what he defines as a university that does not meet the needs of the group of our society, excluding a significant portion of the population, which is why he defends the need for it to be refounded. When reflecting on a set of “problematic” points, Boaventura points out, among others, some factors:

Historical formality, or the use of medieval and scholastic material and pedagogical methods³, of Eurocentric or centrist Western influence, based on the assumptions of a colonialist and capitalist society. Colonialist by disseminating only the knowledge produced by the winners and with capitalist characteristics, in which the individualistic instincts of human beings prevail instead of stimulating the spirits of cooperation, making the possession of individual material wealth the main criterion of merit and social value. A fragmented and unequal type of education, as it is developed equally in all societies, including socioeconomic inequalities, which spill over into other inequalities, such as: racial, ethnic-cultural, epistemic and sexual.

Boaventura also highlights that such teaching was not aimed at society as a whole, but at an elite, a minority of the world's population, who went to university to “prepare” to command the future of the nation, perpetuating their interests and domination. In Latin America, universities were an administrative and intellectual arm of the invasion, seeking to form the elite in two ways: in the countries of Spanish colonization, prioritizing and creating in their colonies, universities with the contents and methods already mentioned, and in the case of the colonies Portuguese, causing students to be sent to their universities, such as Coimbra, to study there. Boaventura draws attention to the fact that, currently, the globalization process has reduced the importance of universities for elites in the face of a nation project, as they were important when capitalism had a national base; For this reason, for their children, a local university, Brazilian in our case, is no longer of interest, given that today's elites go to global universities, such as those in Singapore, the United States and England. Thus, our current elite shows little interest in its improvement.

As it was historically intended for the elites, the university rejected the popular classes, a minority, or dare I say, a majority, of the world's population, such as refugees, women, blacks, indigenous people, LGBTI, among others (groups that are victims of arbitrary acts, without rights, considered sub-human).

The interests of elites have always been linked to capitalist interests, clearly identified in what the author called university capitalism, whose “relevance” from the 1980s onwards, a time of capital production crisis, aimed to meet the interests of the economy, the market, qualified labor and employment needs. This moment, of understanding itself as responsible for the economy, generated a movement with three phases: that of training professionals who are

³ Western method of critical thinking and learning, originating in Christian monastic schools, which reconciles Christian faith with a system of rational thought, especially that of Greek philosophy.

relevant to the market (obviously giving greater value to engineering, an area that generates more profit than philosophy, sociology or arts, areas that do not make a profit and were not considered as an investment in the future); the monetary dimension that determines and identifies where to invest (not overburdening the State, making students pay for their own education, leaving the university to be free) and transforming it into a company (having to be managed by administrators and not by teachers).

We can see that by transforming university education into a commodity, which can be sold, it led to ways of acting that created and stimulated the *ranking* of universities (the value of products is in accordance with *the ranking*, creating an international order), crystallizing the idea that knowledge that has value is that which has an added market value.

This idea about knowledge (that knowledge that has value is knowledge that has market value) made the university adopt the logic of accumulation production; whether simple or complex - simple when it stimulates quantity, for example, by pressuring its professors to publish as much as possible with less concern for quality, and complex when, for example, it encourages patents, that is, those inventions that generate resources for universities. This is called university capitalism, which is based on the idea that universities are a great source of resources for capital.

Another point that Boaventura Santos makes is that the university is very superior, looking simultaneously forward and backward. Being simultaneously focused on the past and the future has made it the institution with the greatest longevity in the European community, without major structural changes. When we look back to the past, the university was conquered internally. However, from 1918 onwards, gathered in Cordoba – Argentina, the student movement prepared a manifesto with a view to the future, in which they defended a university reform focused on the future, in which, among other points discussed, the idea emerged that in addition to investigation and research, they had to do outreach, approaching the population as a whole with social responsibility.

The university needs to stop thinking small. The call for small university thinking reveals itself to Boaventura Santos because it is accommodating, does not question the institution and its structure, does not question the ways of feeling, speaking and being. It is also anchored in the beliefs that capitalism, or the economy and the market (as they call it) are here forever, therefore they do not discuss it; colonialism once existed, but it no longer exists; and that patriarchy is about to disappear (all premises he considers false).

By revealing that small thinking discourages controversy and intellectual conflicts, the author invites us to think big, pointing out some procedures that, from the perspective of southern epistemologies, invite the university to review itself, acting against capitalist, colonialist ideals and patriarchists in the sphere of universities.

Autonomy is an assumption that has not been given to universities and their future. If today the democratic character is no longer threatened, as in the dictatorship, by military repression, it still prevails through self-censorship, when, for example, students are encouraged to film and take note of everything their teachers say, exposing it in the media for that control, monitor, supervise, criminalize and eventually expel all those who do not share an authoritarian ideology.

For Santos (2019-a), it can even be admitted that capitalism is legitimate in society, but, in universities, there needs to be a democratic system for choosing their teachers and managers. It is not the representatives of companies, focused on economic interests, who should have representation in university deliberative bodies. Acting from the perspective of a democratic university involves being part of its representative bodies, in addition to students, teachers and staff, a set of representative social entities, such as a residents' association, an LGBTI association, a feminist association, an environmental association etc.

Merit is certainly a value, however, the conditions of distribution to obtain merits are fundamental. Not everyone starts from the same place, there is no way for a young, peripheral black person to obtain a place at a good public university and have to work to guarantee minimum conditions for his and his family's survival. Affirmative policies, more than providing access, need to provide guarantees and conditions for qualified permanence and completion.

From colonialism, we inherited attitudes that we can identify as racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, extermination of young black people on the outskirts, still existing in our societies, based on universities through the criminalization of popular knowledge, the knowledge of women and men, of the peripheries, of neighborhoods, rural knowledge, knowledge of the countryside, knowledge of riverside populations, indigenous populations, Afro populations, quilombos, and it is this knowledge that today sparks the possibilities of the future.

To overcome such resistance and include this knowledge in our universities, it is necessary to assume an epistemological rupture, a global cognitive justice, with a post-abysal pedagogy that identifies this line that divides humanity and tries to overcome it. For Boaventura Santos, seeing the diversity that exists in democracy, especially when we leave the Eurocentric

matrix, is recognizing that there is a lot of other knowledge, some of which we have not even reached, but we are in the process, and will probably reach this knowledge. This is called ecology of knowledge, that is, the production of knowledge that combines the scientific framework with popular knowledge, favoring horizontal, collaborative and non-extractive dialogical processes alongside the struggles of communities and social movements in the Global South.

Such knowledge, produced in the struggles, against those who suffered the most injustices, both from the capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal dimensions (Boaventura Santos starts from the idea that those who suffer from one tend to suffer from the others, because they are articulated), give the university a role not limited to increasing curricula and distributing diplomas, but to preparing people to act, creating a space for free and independent thought.

The current university bias, aggravated by *fake news* widely disseminated on social media, requires a return to the informality of other forms of sociability: a return to conversation circles, reading groups, theater groups, the so-called hidden curriculum. We have to return to personal and interpersonal relationships, when we look at other people, immediately seeing that they are not automated robots, seeing their eyes, their smile, bringing back political thinking, like a return to university thinking.

From the patriarchy or heteropatriarchy, whose heritage destined us zones of sub-humanity and violence, a diversity of knowledge is absent, such as that of the feminist, ecological, indigenous, peasant, liberation theology, urban, LGBTI movements, etc. This absence concerns entering the university and showing its history and memory. For these groups, we need to give them a present, not a future because it is a struggle for the present, to achieve today what we want in the future. It is about giving them the possibility of showing their place in history, of an untold story, that is, the effort to bring the history of the defeated to the university environment, making it a protagonist in the construction of the future.

When we think about the future, it is in terms of the present that we want, therefore, the future is the struggle of the present. The struggles at the university today must all be pre-formative, we have to create the university we want in the future today. That's why the future happens now.

To make a transition between the past and the future, to realize memories and stories, we have to fight to make this memory and history less and less exclusive. To this end, the university, which currently finds itself in an endemic crisis, not knowing how to defend itself, needs allies, who will not be found among the dominant classes, elites for whom today, the

university does not have the meaning previously given, not only because their children no longer graduate from it, but because they seek free and unimpeded knowledge in consultancy companies, which prioritize, in any of the topics to be dealt with, an analysis for the client, at the client's command, to reach the conclusions that the client wants. Therefore, the universities' allies are the popular classes, the middle classes, those classes that the university has always rejected.

The popular classes are so far from the university that they have no idea that they have to defend it. The university has turned its back on them for so many centuries that now needing help is ironic on its part. The middle classes probably have more interest, because when they started to see their children enter university through PROUNI, for example, through affirmative actions, and realize that they could eventually disappear, they will have to return from where they started, otherwise, that promotion that was promised to them will not take place.

Therefore, both are socially weak allies, because buffeted by neoliberalism (pension reform, decline in public education and health services) they reveal the logic of poor service for the poor.

They are allies that can hardly be mobilized to defend the university, but they are what can guarantee its survival; To do so, the university has to show fundamental signs of resistance and get closer to them. It is not possible, therefore, to wait for them to be the ones to approach the university.

To get closer to the popular classes, whose knowledge has always been considered superstition, subjective, without any rigor, without any quality, as only university knowledge was recognized as valid, it is necessary to change. We cannot approach them looking for a dialogue based on the assumption that what they say, we can even hear, but we cannot in any way discuss, therefore, this means that this struggle requires an epistemological rupture.

What science are we talking about?

The epistemological rupture that Boaventura Santos speaks of criticizes science as a monoculture of knowledge of modernity and in the conception that he defends, that of southern epistemologies, it must come from a diversity of knowledge and experiences.

For centuries, we have become accustomed to having extreme confidence in modern science, to the point that we thought that this was the only valid thought, the only rigorous thought, and that is the knowledge that is taught at university. Although this was not a completely consensual fact, in the university environment this controversy has intensified in recent decades.

In the work of Boaventura Santos, in 2008 “A discourse on the sciences”, the author discusses the main features of the dominant paradigm, that is, modern science. The first is epistemological arrogance, given that academics, within universities, place themselves on a pedestal “of knowing all knowledge”, ending up excluding methods that are foreign to educational institutions. This can be a problem, as it distances the university from society and this distance opens up space for absurd theories, causing people not to give credit to the facts.

The second problem identified is the intense mathematization of life, as everything is explained through numerical and mathematical arguments. This question places natural sciences as superior to social sciences; In the natural sciences there is the rule of quantification, while in the human sciences subjectivity and qualification prevail. For the author, the distinction between natural and social sciences and between culture and nature make no sense, considering that we only know the universe that we create. Understanding that everything we create is about culture, at this point, everything could be an object of social science research.

In short, the prevailing belief is that the unquantifiable is scientifically irrelevant. Boaventura Santos also criticizes the crystallization of scientific methods and points out the possibility of error in these methodologies, even if it seems obvious to us. It is worth noting that the idea of the machine world appears to be powerful, as it can become a universal hypothesis of the modern era, mechanism.

Finally, the author considers that modern science brought mechanization to nature, as it transformed it into something to be rationalized instead of just natural, for him

Mechanistic determinism is the right horizon of a form of knowledge that aims to be utilitarian and functional, recognized less for the ability to deeply understand reality than for the ability to dominate and transform it (Santos, 1988, p. 51, our translation).

For Boaventura Santos, this is also “the cognitive horizon most suited to the interests of the rising bourgeoisie who saw society as beginning to dominate the final stage of humanity's evolution” (Santos, 1988, p. 51, our translation). This distinction between initial conditions and laws of nature is not natural but arbitrary, however, modern science is based on it.

All the problems listed inform us of the consequences we are experiencing today, that is, a crisis of facts, with few people believing in scientific research. Boaventura Santos' solution defends the total reconstruction of science and the rebirth of the human sciences, so that subjectivity and human complexity are valued, as they will bring scientific language closer to

collective sense. In short, the epistemological principles and their methodological rules that need to be broken.

Produced in the last two hundred years, in Europe and North America, under the aegis of industrial revolutions, capitalism, colonialism and imperialism, knowledge considered hegemonic, philosophical and scientific, is questioned by Boaventura Santos, through a procedure he calls *sociology of absences*, where the author aims to transform impossible objects. This change seeks possible objects and the transformation of absences into presences. For Boaventura Santos, the scientific tradition, or even the Western philosophical tradition (which he considers important), is based on five monocultures, which disregard and waste social wealth.

Monoculture of knowledge and the rigor of knowledge

How rigorous would the science be? The monoculture of knowledge and rigor considers science as the only privileged knowledge. There is no other knowledge, opinions, superstitions, barbarisms, metaphors, things considered horrible and even dangerous such as the works and thoughts of the devil are not considered, thus, denying such knowledge, science actively collaborated in the monoculture of knowledge, because everything it does not legitimizes or recognizes is declared non-existent. Non-existence here takes the form of ignorance or lack of culture.

Monoculture of linear time

Obviously, science is progress, it is about taking to the future, breaking with the past, it is all about advancement, in the Western tradition, it has been formulated in recent years in different ways: progress, revolution, modernization, development, growth, globalization, formulations whose idea is that time is linear and that ahead of time follow the central countries of the world system and, followed by the knowledge, institutions and forms of sociability that they dominate. In this logic, other times are considered non-existent, everything that in their judgment is considered delayed is not advanced. For Boaventura Santos, they disregard other times such as “the time of the peasant, the circular time of agriculture, the time of the seasons, the time of nature's life, these are times that were no longer considered. The only time it considers is linear time.” (Santos, 2022, oral report, our translation)

Monoculture of classifications (or the naturalization of differences)

It consists of the naturalized distribution of populations by hierarchical categories. In capitalism, the ones that stood out most were racial and sexual classifications. Classifications of modern science that extinguished nature and humanity. “According to this logic, non-existence is produced in the form of insurmountable inferiority because it is natural. Those who are inferior, because they are insurmountably inferior, cannot be a credible alternative to those who are superior” (Santos, 2002, p. 248, our translation).

Dominant scale monoculture

In Western modernity, the dominant scale operates in two main forms: universal and global, disregarding all other realities and their contexts, which are considered particular or national. In this logic, non-existence is produced in the form of the particular and the local, that is, realities or entities defined as particular or local lose credibility compared to what exists in a universal or global way.

Productivity monoculture (productivity criteria)

The non-existence here is revealed in the criteria of capitalist production, in which economic growth is the objective. For example, capitalist productivity wants the productivity of the land, in a production cycle where fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides are put in, and the land produces. On the other hand, it disregards the peasant's knowledge of the land that the land needs to rest, land; Peasants know that the land produces one year and rests the next.

This idea began a critique of the role that science had in colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, because it is science itself that made racism scientific. The so-called racist science of the 19th century is exactly what it is because it scientifically shows that there are superior races and inferior races, and patriarchy, which is also a sexist science, will show not only that women are inferior to men, but also that certain diseases of the women are precisely because of deviations in their behavior, as is the case with hysterias and many others, which is a form of stigmatization of women's identity. Based on scientific assumptions made by scientists, mostly men, science contributed greatly to that triad of domination by Boaventura Santos called capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.

Sciences were major agents of monocultures, responsible for the production of absences in modern societies, which made social groups and ways of social life invisible and/or irrelevant, labeling them as ignorant, primitive, inferior, local or unproductive. Such labels,

when attributed at the maximum degree of intensity, generated abysmal exclusions, and, therefore, absences.

By recognizing such exclusions, Santos (2022, oral report), used southern epistemologies to bring to light other knowledge not considered scientific, knowledge born in the struggles against capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. His intention is not to dignify such knowledge, as in his view, they do not need it, but to dignify the epistemology present in them, questioning why science has the privilege of being the only valid knowledge and why the majority of the population does not have access to it; she uses science in her life, but because she is not a scientist, we say that she does not have any valid knowledge.

Recognizing this diversity, in the light of southern epistemologies, translates into what the author calls “ecology of knowledge”, that is, from the recognition of the co-presence⁴ of different knowledge, the need to study affinities, divergences, complementarities and the contradictions that exist between them, in order to increase the effectiveness of resistance struggles against oppression, working on the idea of science participation.

The place of science in southern epistemologies is an epistemological claim, for the dignity of knowledge born or used in the struggles against capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. This knowledge is often used as scientific knowledge. Boaventura cites the example of the fight against pesticides in Brazil, whose pesticides used in agroindustry are poison for our bodies and for the lungs of workers who live in that agriculture. He relied on his experience, with scientists such as geologists, anthropologists, chemists, biologists, engineers, agronomists, but also others, on the knowledge of peasants, social movement organizations, the MST (Landless Rural Workers Movement), and from other people, who knew in their communities when the insecticide, whose formation is aerial, if there was wind, obviously carried the poison into schools, into houses, that is; recognizing that science has this ambivalence. Based on this example, Boaventura Santos states that “[...] science has this ambivalence. It can be, on the one hand, a landmark of domination, but it can also be an instrument of emancipation or liberation. As long as not alone. As long as she doesn’t think she can do it alone” (Santos, 2022, oral report, our translation). With this report, he seeks to demonstrate that science has been more dangerous fundamentally because we have not known how to see the limits of contributions. Recognizing their contributions is one of the roles of southern epistemologies.

⁴ For Boaventura Santos, copresence refers to practices and agents on both sides of the abyssal line that are considered contemporary in egalitarian terms.

Such epistemologies assume that science is valid knowledge, but it is not the only one, there are others. Diversity in science is good, but in modernity it had another characteristic, its role was to define the mission between those who are civilized and those who are barbaric, savage, primitive. Recognizing such marks is conceptualized by Boaventura Santos as “pedagogy of absences”, which is the mechanism he calls the dominant knowledge that created absences, that is, did not recognize that there are things in the world that exist, but as they are not seen, produces absences, considers them non-existent. Recognizing such absences is the first task of southern epistemologies, that is, studying in social reality what does not seem to exist there.

Another fundamental concept for southern epistemologies is the concept of struggle, which in the anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist and anti-patriarchal struggle does not admit relativism, because you are either on the side of the struggle or you are against the struggle. What the role of science is, to what extent it can help us in the anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist and anti-patriarchal struggle. In his master class, he gives an example that there is a lot of science in the fight against patriarchy: he reports on the case of the contraceptive pill,

[...] she is a bricolage, she is not just scientific knowledge, she is a joint product of three things: a great feminist activist, a lady who earned a huge fortune in industry and who had a lot of money to finance research and a chemist who studied the reproductive system and who produced the contraceptive pill. Which contributed to women's reproductive and liberation rights. But it's not just a science thing, it's something that has also changed, if there wasn't women's political activism, there wouldn't be a pill. (...) So, I asked a biologist, “ How is the contraceptive pill for men?” (...) We don't know, because we continue in a patriarchal society, that's why there are contraceptive pills for women and not for men, there is no other reason. In things that seem autonomous and scientific, we see the portrait of our patriarchal society. But also, a mixture of things, science, can contribute to a struggle, but it would never have contributed if there had not been feminist mobilization. (Santos, 2022, oral report, our translation).

Science, on its own, will not solve any of the problems; It's politics, it's mobilization that solves it and science can help. And how can you help? As long as you know how far it will go, you cannot solve the entire problem, and that is where we come in with the concept of *ecologies of knowledge*.

The *ecology of knowledge* is a fundamental concept in Boaventura Santos' epistemological construction, because it is the dialogue between science and other knowledge. But it's not just a dialogue, it's an ecology, because ecology is a process of reciprocal transformation and states that

The science that wants to work with other knowledge has to be a different science from the science that does not want to work with other knowledge. And it will change because it is a science that is available to change and modify with what it will learn from other knowledge and at the same time other knowledge can also learn from it, and transform with it. (Santos, 2022, oral report, our translation).

Boaventura Santos calls post-abyssal the science that cannot solve everything and that knows it cannot solve everything, interrupting what it intended to solve at a certain point, however, he questions:

Why, whenever a scientist comes in to solve an urban or rural problem, he or she wants to solve everything, he or she immediately expels anyone else. “Why is this my area and your area of knowledge?” And in many societies there are many people with a lot of knowledge and many other societies are more advanced than European societies in this field. (Santos, 2022, oral report, our translation).

To give an example, he reports that in a hospital in Mozambique, not long ago, official medicine doctors walked side by side with traditional doctors, who had authorization to work for a certain type of more ongoing illness, they worked alongside professional doctors. An ecology of medical knowledge. In a society dominated by imperialist and colonialist values, this would not be possible, it loses the community, it loses the diversity of knowledge, as they will propagandize that traditional doctors are the devil, so that everything is dominated by pharmaceutical companies and obviously by trained doctors in medical schools. (Santos, 2022, oral report).

Therefore, science is not autonomous. It is always linked to political objectives. The ecology of knowledge thus requires a post-abyssal science, which is what southern epistemologies seek to achieve. Do science, but this science is one that must be aware of its strength and its limits and that must know how to know with and not just know about. It could be about a poem, about history, about citizens, about community, it doesn't matter. It is one thing to know about something else to know about. Because when I know about, I am preventing the other from being a subject, because I am making an object, an object does not think, when it knows with, it creates subjectivities, respect for others.

The ecology of knowledge emerges in the dialogue between knowledge, a new epistemology that acts on the way in which science can contribute to the anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist and anti-patriarchal struggle. A fundamental action in our society, and we cannot dismiss this struggle, but rather value the collection of distant cultures, in all spaces, whether in a meeting or at work, we must always know how to use our knowledge when it is useful. This is how subjects are constructed.

Solving problems, for example from a planetary point of view, will require a solution made up of knowledge, technical knowledge and informed knowledge. Knowledge implies solutions; there are several concepts of liberation, of emancipation, that need to be articulated in the struggles, even recognizing that there is no way to articulate them all for the same struggle, be it the anti-capitalist struggle, be it the anti-sexist struggle, be it the anti-patriarchal struggle, be it the anti-colonial struggle, it is I need to watch all the fights, even if it's out of the corner of my eye. Always be aware of other fights, because this articulation is fundamental in fights.

Religion

From the perspective of southern epistemologies, religion is one of the topics least explored in depth by Boaventura Santos.

In the work “*If God were a human rights activist*” (2014), written from the perspective of human rights, he addresses God's “activism”, he portrayed a God closer to humans than to nature, however, considering that human rights were a recent thing, at the end of the book he questioned who God was before the existence of human rights, pointing out that God is for those for whom human rights were designed, those on this side of the abyssal line, and which left out the victims of historical colonialism, which continues in other forms (neocolonialism, racism, xenophobia, undocumented immigrant workers, ordinary citizens victims of rigid policies dictated by financial capital, etc.) and metaphorically pointing out that if God If he were a human rights activist, he would be polytheistic, Gods, acting in a counter-hegemonic conception, in favor of the oppressed, in social and political struggles.

Currently, the researcher questions his certainty that God may be closer to humans than to nature, questions that for him cannot be answered completely, but as a construction and elaboration that continues. Boaventura Santos considers that the political instrumentalization of religion is an absolutely present theme in our time.

He sees religion, especially conservative religion, being used politically to polarize social conflicts, citing as examples Christian Europe against the enemy of Islam and Christian values against abortion and homosexuality. Religion as a battlefield and an instrument of domination and perhaps also an instrument of resistance, an element of resistance, therefore, not accepting, in any way, discarding the fundamental role of religion in our time. For the author, this is new, especially because the dominant idea in the 17th century, of progress, of linear time, forced everything that was not dominant to become in the process of extinction,

that is, the idea that religion, the peasantry, indigenous peoples, were residues of the past, predestined to disappear. Today he states that religion has not only not disappeared, but on the contrary, it is increasingly present, just as indigenous peoples and peasants have not disappeared.

In the search for the relationships between religion and southern epistemologies, Boaventura turns his gaze to monotheistic religions and elaborates some reflections.

Is the knowledge produced by religion true or illusory?

A student of the epistemological thought of Ibn Khaldun, an Arab and Muslim intellectual from the 14th century, Boaventura Santos seeks through this scientist to present a vision ignored by the Western world, and developed at a time when the Eurocentric paradigm of progress and linear time did not exist for that society. Boaventura Santos explains that Ibn Khaldun classified science into two categories: religious and non-religious science.

For Ibn Khaldun there is a science of observation, which is spiritual, the science of religion, which concerns the Quran, and is articulated to the prophet Muhammad and another, the science of revolution, or traditional science, defined as the intellectual sciences encompassing the logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, etc., and auxiliary sciences such as language, literature, poetry, etc. (suggesting that possibly more divisions will appear in the future with different societies).

Ibn Khaldun experienced both forms of science intensely in his life. A contradiction? Not for Boaventura Santos, it is a demonstration that the rationality of science is limited, as Ibn Khaldun is extremely secular when analyzing human societies and a preacher and judge of Islamic and Cairo laws. According to Boaventura Santos, we were trained in the idea that there is no contradiction, he cites the example of Newton, who at the same time discovered the law of gravity, was the man who made horoscopes, lived off astrology, believed in the stars and the influence of stars, with his knowledge he mixed medieval science with modern science. Such a contradiction is not usually exposed when teaching about Newton, because it was always believed that other knowledge was not valid, so we do not see our contradictions, because they are so familiar that we do not see them. Therefore, Boaventura Santos sees that Ibn Khaldun's thought helps us to see the limits of the rationality of science, the limits of our capabilities to analyze societies, but also to see, effectively, that the instruments we have are not only those of the West, there are others, who were present in other societies.

Readings from a non-Eurocentric vision, such as that of Ibn Khaldun, should not be interpreted through European conveniences, but under an intercultural bias, it is not about abandoning Eurocentric knowledge, but ensuring the diversity of knowledge, contextualizing it in a much broader field. For Boaventura, perhaps this way we can become more aware of things that we see today in contemporary societies and that we do not understand, do not understand in the light of our concepts, do not understand in the light of our theories, but if we change theories and concepts, perhaps we understand. In other words, the example of Ibn Khaldun's epistemological thought should be read not as a relic of the past, but as an author who seeks to face problems that, elaborated in Africa, are not so distant from the problems we experience today, and which he considers as these are problems that mix great turbulence with great social stagnation. An author like Ibn Khaldun, with this complexity, helps us understand our problems, not only in North Africa, but ours here, and in this sense, open our eyes.

Such a view, in the Eurocentric world, especially after the 19th century, was “invalidated”, identifying religious knowledge as illusory, that is, not true, a fact that Boaventura Santos considers an interesting topic and that invites us to investigate scientifically whether this is so, fundamentally, because we live in a reactionary, extremely conservative and far-right cycle, in many countries, in which religion “is being bandited”, a weapon in which, by choice, it is being used, by some religious currents, actively as a support of the forms of domination in our society. And the big problem identified by the author is that this religion can have two readings: the religion of the oppressors and the oppressed.

Is there a religion of the oppressors and a religion of the oppressed or is every religion one?

In 1963, Vitorio Lanternari published a book called “The Religion of the Oppressed”, it was this book that directly inspired the title of Boaventura Santos' doctoral dissertation, “The Law of the Oppressed”, Yale University (1973), inspiration still coming from recurrence of the theme in the 60s in works such as: Paulo Freire with the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968) and Augusto Boal, with the Theater of the Oppressed, productions that spoke of the oppressed and oppression, inspired by the context of the time in Latin American countries of dictatorships, a lot of misery and suffering. For the author, the theme remains necessary and current in our time; Talking about models of oppression is a theme of southern epistemologies, which are interested in forms of resistance, whose methodological procedure aims to strengthen struggles and resistance against oppression, thus, religion is interested in identifying that there is a religion of the oppressed and not just one religion which is simply an instrument of the oppressors.

For Santos, the religion of the oppressors emphasizes the abyssal line, the religion of the oppressed helps to eliminate the abyssal line, which is why it is necessary to distinguish the religion of the oppressors from that of the oppressed. Recognizing this allows us to see how our society continues to use religion both as an oppressor and eventually as a weapon of resistance. For southern epistemologies, it is interesting to see this side of the religion of the oppressed.

To situate the distinction between both religions, Boaventura Santos (2019-b) argues: “the human being is finite, that is why he creates God, who is potentially infinite, that is, the human being aspires to finitude without ever being able to achieve it, but it oscillates between two extremes, one of the extremes is the success of infinity and the other is the success of finitude”.

In other words, there are social groups that feel so powerful that they start from the premise that they are infinite in their power, therefore there is infinite success, they are those who only have hope, no fear, one percent of this world can be of those who have the success of infinity. Practically the world is at your disposal, you can do whatever you want, pollute the city, buy an island in the Pacific, you need to feel safe to protect yourself from all the future risks of the next generations, you have money to buy everything, there is a success of infinity.

At the other extreme, there are many people today who live with the success of finitude, lives that are truncated, mutilated, tortured, marginalized, oppressed, discriminated against, without much hope, without much idea of the power of infinity, without much idea that they can overcome this finitude, there is a success of finitude to the extent that there is such a great smallness in the face of power that it does not deserve to change, does not deserve to exchange.

Therefore, we live in a society that is very unbalanced, due to all the inequalities created by forms of domination, there are social groups that have infinite success and social groups that have finite success. And they live differently, the life experiences of these beings are different. Those who have a success of finitude live in permanent finitude, today they are alive, tomorrow they may be dead, they are insecure, they cannot obtain any insurance. Those who have the success of infinity live obsessed with safety from danger, therefore, they practically obtain total insurance against all possible dangers, and they live obsessed with this idea, that's why they defend themselves, that's why they create feudal castles, create condominiums closed, that's why they arm themselves, because everything is a weapon against danger and they have money to make. While a large part of the population lives in danger, there is a small part that can hold itself against danger. What does religion do in these two cases?

According to Boaventura Santos, for those who live in danger, religion is in fact an opium, it is a way of adapting, it is a way of living in misery, of being able to adapt to so much mistreatment and alleviate this evil in some way, at the same time continue talking, eating a meal, etc. Religion is adaptive for those who live in danger; therefore, it can alleviate this danger a little.

Those who live obsessed with security and have the right to be safe from dangers, use exactly the religion of the oppressors, to guarantee more security they put religion on their side. That's what today's conservative religion is, its ministers are put in place to have political power and religious power, that's why today we say that we are in a post-secular era. Religion is increasingly present in the public space, as they are even ministers, therefore, and religion increasingly provides a legitimization of extraordinary security, because they are on the side of God, you cannot be on a more certain side, you are- if on the side of the one who is, omnipresent, omniscient. The religion of the oppressors today plays a fundamental role in providing security to those who live obsessed with security, against all dangers.

But there is a third group, the one that is of interest to southern epistemologies, it is a group that can be large or small, formed by those who live dangerously, those who are in resistance and against domination, and then yes, these use the religion, and they can use religion precisely to strengthen this same resistance, because, for those who live dangerously, religion has an additional task, which is that they have to fight against the secular power of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, and against religion of the oppressors. Thus, today, from the point of view of southern epistemologies, religion can only have a vision of fighting against domination if it is effectively that force that helps to live dangerously, to live against the current, to live against domination, and then Yes religion can play a role.

To exemplify this religion that resists, Boaventura Santos seeks inspiration from a Latin American Marxist theorist, Mariátequi. Mariátequi was a Peruvian, who intensely experienced the religiosity of the indigenous people, identifying that a large part of the indigenous population is a deeply religious population. Their religion is a mixture, not only imposed by the Catholic church, but also because the Incas had extremely lavish rituals, very similar to the lavish rituals of the Catholic church, so they easily adapted to them. The religiosity experienced by indigenous people reflects what we call spirituality, not only an asocial good life, but essentially a relationship with nature, another way of relating to nature, is the Spinozian idea that God is closer to nature than us, because we are inside nature and can be contemplated by God, it is not because we are outside nature, it is because we are inside, we are part of it, this is

Spinoza's idea⁵, appropriated by Mariátequi when defending that revolutionary struggle in Latin America has to be an act of faith, it cannot be just rational. It has to be scientific rationality, but legitimized by faith and courage; Boaventura Santos concludes that the hard core of the religion of the oppressed is the religion that guarantees those who live dangerously, additional strength, therefore, it can be used for exactly this reason.

If there is a religion of the oppressors and a religion of the oppressed, what knowledge do they produce, false and illusory knowledge or produced knowledge?

In the tradition of the dominance of the Eurocentric world over the non-Eurocentric world, religion played a role as an agent of colonization, evangelization was an agent at the service of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, and, therefore, this Eurocentrism is implicit in the way we today conceives religions, and from there, we find the roots of a non-Eurocentric reading of religions.

There are two ways to analyze this, if sacred texts really are true knowledge, and this should normally be left to theologies, or if it is not true knowledge, but exists in the social reality in which one lives, which is there, then, this knowledge is false, it is illusory, but it is there, and as such it requires an epistemology of knowledge. Therefore, on the one hand, theology and, on the other hand, another epistemology.

In southern epistemologies we saw that there are three major forms of domination, capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy (or heteropatriarchy), therefore, we have to know whether religion, insofar as it contributes to domination and oppression, is a form of autonomous domination or is it a form of satellite domination. In other words, if it is a fourth form of domination, cite Israel as an example, questioning whether what occurs in that country is an autonomous form or a form of satellite domination? For Boaventura Santos, it is a form of domination that serves the interests of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy and reinforces them.

According to the author, these are the three modes of modern domination and religion is used as a satellite, supplementary, complementary, reinforcing, multiplying form of these forms of domination, a kind of driver of the three forms of domination. Having said this, he argues that if religion is a form of satellite domination, it can also be an additional instrument

⁵ Baruch de Spinoza, was a thinker born in the Netherlands in 1632, educated in the Jewish tradition, he moved away when he received influences from dissident currents of Judaism. He defended the separation between State and Church, and was a great critic of superstitions, both religious and political as well as philosophical. For Spinoza, God was not a superior being separated from everything, but nature and God were the same thing. For him, everything that exists is a form of God.

in the fight against domination. In resistance struggles against capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.

By leaning towards recognizing that religion is an additional instrument in the anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist and anti-patriarchal struggle, he questions how it is possible to make an intercultural translation between religious knowledge and profane knowledge.

Can an intercultural translation be made between religious knowledge and profane knowledge?

How to bring together in a fight someone who believes in a divinity and it is by order of that divinity that he fights, with another who does not believe in that divinity and for an order of reasons and causes that he fights for. By identifying the value, whether to believe or not to believe, the challenge of an intercultural translation becomes greater.

If the struggles against oppression are largely struggles for popular, secular knowledge, how does the knowledge of religion integrate with this. How is it possible to translate religious knowledge with profane knowledge? And this is one of the fundamental tasks.

From Boaventura Santos's point of view, what we have to find are points of contact that do not in any way allow total transparency, but also avoid incommensurability, and for him, this intercultural translation of religious and profane struggles is in the concept of dignity, respect.

Dignity because it is an absolute value for being human. And what is a human being? Today we have a broader position than that of the indigenous people themselves that everything that exists is worthy, because for the indigenous worldview, feeling and thinking are not exclusive to humans. Rivers think, forests think, animals think and feel, we can say not knowledge, but cosmos knowledge. Something inhospitable, this, forces us to give the possibility that these concepts can be found in concepts that are intelligible to a non-believer. The concept of dignity is radical equality. The concept of respect is the guarantee of difference. Respect for difference. Therefore, dignity and respect are two fundamental concepts of the indigenous worldview.

Final remarks

For southern epistemologies, which seek out those who were most outraged by colonialism, capitalism and modern patriarchy, it may be from there that we can find a way to give dignity to the struggle and include religion in them. This would be, for Boaventura Santos, a way of doing intercultural translation, which obviously also has to be a translation between different religions, which is not problematic in this case, as different religions have many things in common, and, therefore, these can be translated.

When acknowledging that he did not do the necessary research to confirm whether dignity and respect would be the necessary concepts, Boaventura Santos states that, in Buddhism, it may be the concept of harmony, the holistic concepts of harmony, or it may be other concepts, but they are the ones that lead to this idea that it is possible to translate what for some is a belief and for others is just a fight for a profane cause in this world.

Deep down, he considers that the religion of the oppressed is always a salvation for this world. It operates as a religion of the oppressed insofar as it contributes to an improvement in life in this world, regardless of the fact that many of those who are religious think that they are therefore guaranteeing eternal life, but as a religion of the oppressed, in the fight against oppression, it is fundamental.

The work of Boaventura Santos therefore brings many contributions. We look at some of them, aiming to identify how the university, with what conception of science and how religion, can, in the light of southern epistemologies, diminish the vision of an elitist university, expand the vision of science centered on a single model and how religion, currently strongly focused on maintaining the domination of a minority, can, with its knowledge, produced in struggles, against those who have suffered the most injustice, produce an epistemological rupture, which considers their knowledge, acting in the fight against oppression academic, scientific and religious.

The research does not account for the intrinsic understanding of the entire structural process that religion brings to education in higher education, even because the outcome of this consideration would be for the study to start from basic education in Brazil and bring within Educational Policies and the educational process, the identifications with what was guided by decoloniality or not. The scope of the study is in universities and focuses on science, where we understand and demonstrate the author's understanding, which contributes to the reflection on the importance of perceiving decolonial processes also in education to act in the implementation

of educational policies that speak to the new realities in which these paradigms are being broken.

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