



If God Were a Human Rights Activist (Stanford Studies in Human Rights)

Boaventura Santos

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We live in a time when the most appalling social injustices and unjust human sufferings no longer seem to generate the moral indignation and the political will needed both to combat them effectively and to create a more just and fair society. *If God Were a Human Rights Activist* aims to strengthen the organization and the determination of all those who have not given up the struggle for a better society, and specifically those that have done so under the banner of human rights. It discusses the challenges to human rights arising from religious movements and political theologies that claim the presence of religion in the public sphere. Increasingly globalized, such movements and the theologies sustaining them promote discourses of human dignity that rival, and often contradict, the one underlying secular human rights.

Conventional or hegemonic human rights thinking lacks the necessary theoretical and analytical tools to position itself in relation to such movements and theologies; even worse, it does not understand the importance of doing so. It applies the same abstract recipe across the board, hoping that thereby the nature of alternative discourses and ideologies will be reduced to local specificities with no impact on the universal canon of human rights. As this strategy proves increasingly lacking, this book aims to demonstrate that only a counter-hegemonic conception of human rights can adequately face such challenges.

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