



Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context

Lewis A. Coser

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For today's readers to understand the history of sociological theories more is required than a knowledge of formal propositions and theoretical structures. In this impressive and enduring text, Coser elucidates his examination of the ideas of fifteen influential sociological thinkers with a discussion of the social and intellectual circumstances that surrounded them. Each of the first fourteen chapters follows a parallel organization. The first section is a capsule summary of the scholar's work—his main orientations, ideas, and contributions. Next is a short sketch of his life—his struggles and successes; the influences of his family, peers, and superiors; and his involvement in community affairs. The third section locates him and his work in the texture of a particular moment in intellectual history. The concluding section addresses sociological questions such as: What were the social origins of the theorist? Did crucial events (e.g., war, depression, revolution) help fashion his orientations in ways similar to those of others in his generation? The final chapter presents a less-detailed discussion of major American theorists whose theories emerged between the 1940s and 1960s.



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