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Review of 'Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences" by Lewis A. Coser

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Refugee Scholars in America

Their Impact and Their Experiences

Lewis A. Coser

What were the contributions to American scholarship and culture made by European refugees from Nazi persecution? How did these emigrés react to the experience of being strangers in the land of their refuge? In this engrossing book, Lewis Coser examines the impact of refugee intellectuals on the social sciences and the humanities in America, painting a collective portrait that sheds light not only on the accomplishments of the Europeans but also on the development of the several disciplines in America that either welcomed or rejected them.

Coser explains, for example, why the emigrés had more influence in the field of psychoanalysis than in psychology; why Austrian economists were more successful in America than were German economists; why only a few European sociologists made significant contributions in America. Discussing such luminaries as Bruno Bettelheim, Jacob Marshak, Hannah Arendt, Thomas Mann, Vladimir Nabokov, Roman Jacobson, Erwin Panofsky, and Paul Tillich, Coser describes their backgrounds, personalities, and careers

in America, providing revealing anecdotes that help to bring these figures to life. His accounts of those who were famous in the country of their birth but never achieved eminence or a feeling of adjustment in America provide a poignant contrast.

Coser concludes that the refugee intellectuals were most influential in areas of study where they filled a perceived need not previously met or in fields where they could build on already established traditions. His perceptive analysis of the European-born men and women who altered American intellectual history is an absorbing and memorable story.

Lewis A. Coser is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. The author of numerous books, he is an editor and founder of *Dissent* and past president of the American Sociological Association.

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UNIVERSITY IN EXILE OPENS FIRST SEMESTER IN NEW YORK.

German professors at the New School for Social Research. From an article in the *New York Times*, October 1933.