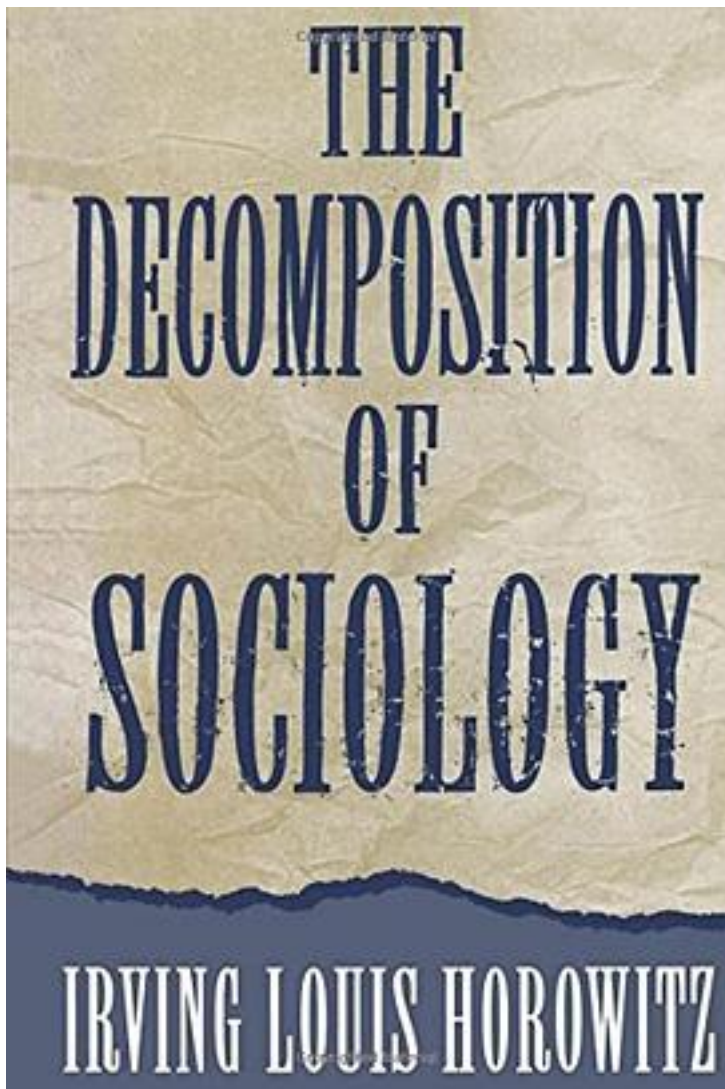


# The Decomposition of Sociology



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著者:Irving Louis Horowitz

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Sociology, writes Irving Louis Horowitz, has changed from a central discipline of the social sciences to an ideological outpost of political extremism. As a result, the field is in crisis. Some departments have been shut down, others cut back, research programs have dried up, and the growth of professional organizations and student enrolments have been either curbed or atrophied. In *The Decomposition of Sociology*, Professor Horowitz, for four decades a leading social scientist, offers a frank and full account of the maelstrom engulfing this field. Horowitz pulls no punches in this provocative volume. He charges that much contemporary sociological theory has degenerated into pure critique, strongly influenced by Marxist dogmatism. Such thinking has a strong element of anti-American and anti-Western bias, in which all questions have one answer-the evil of capitalism-and all problems one solution-the good of socialism. In criminology, for instance, he shows that high crime rates are seen as an expression of capitalist disintegration, and criminal behaviour a covert expression of radical action. Indeed, in one area after another, Horowitz shows how this same formulaic thinking dominates the field, resulting in a crude reductionist view of contemporary social life. At a time when the world is moving closer to the free market and democratic norms, he concludes, such reductionist tendencies and ideological posturings are outmoded. Horowitz offers an alternative. He urges a larger vision of the social sciences, one in which universities, granting agencies and research institutes provide an environment in which research may be untainted by partisan agencies-where policy choices will not be hindered by the prevailing cultural climate. He counsels sociologists to move away from blind advocacy, to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century by incorporating the knowledge of other times and places, and to take into account the shrinking globe-in short, to develop and maintain a new set of universal standards in this era of a world culture. Here then is an eloquent plea for a revolution in sociology, written by one of the field's foremost figures. It offers as well a cautionary tale about the potentially devastating effect of ideology on scholarly pursuits.

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