



The Sociology of Radical Commitment: Kurt H. Wolff's Existential Turn

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This edited volume presents the life and thought of Kurt H. Wolff, a Jewish refugee from Darmstadt, a student of Karl Mannheim, practitioner of the sociology of knowledge, translator of the classic works of Simmel, Durkheim, and Mannheim, and creator of the radical existential sociology of surrender-and-catch, through multiple modalities. Two interviews provide an autobiographical portrait. Testimonies by close family members, friends, and colleagues allow the reader a more intimate insight into his subjectivity. Excerpts from a travelogue journal kept by his spouse, Carla E. Wolff provide an understanding of how the Wolffs interpreted their situation and times. Several chapters devoted to explicating Wolff's place in the sociological tradition, especially in light of his work in the sociology of knowledge. Several chapters exhibit creative work in the further development of his thought, especially concerning his surrender-and-catch. The thrust of the book is to explicate Wolff's relation to the tradition and to the orientation to which he belongs while at the same time to exhibit how he develops a sociology of radical commitment. This commitment can demand great existential risk in the quest to uncover the universal in the unique?the creation of new meaning (the catch) though the surrender. Wolff's hope is to find possibilities for humankind that lead us out of the crises, to which traditional scientia has been disappointingly ineffective.

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