



The Metaphorical Society

Daniel Rigney

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This book introduces the novice reader to modern social theory through the creative exploration of eight major metaphors that have shaped Western understandings of human society. Rigney vividly yet concisely examines each major theoretical perspective in sociology, including functionalism, conflict theory, rational choice, and symbolic interactionism. He shows how each of these theories is rooted in a particular metaphorical tradition. Over decades and centuries, Rigney argues, social theorists have variously likened societies to organisms and living systems, to machines, battlefields, legal systems, marketplaces, games, theatrical productions, and discourses. Most interestingly, Rigney deftly shows how nearly all Western social theories fit with one or more of the metaphors. He emphasizes a humanistic understanding of society with an emphasis on the creative agency of social actors and communities. The book offers students a rich understanding of social theory, yet it is simultaneously concise and broad ranging, allowing instructors to further pursue detailed exploration of any perspectives they choose.

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