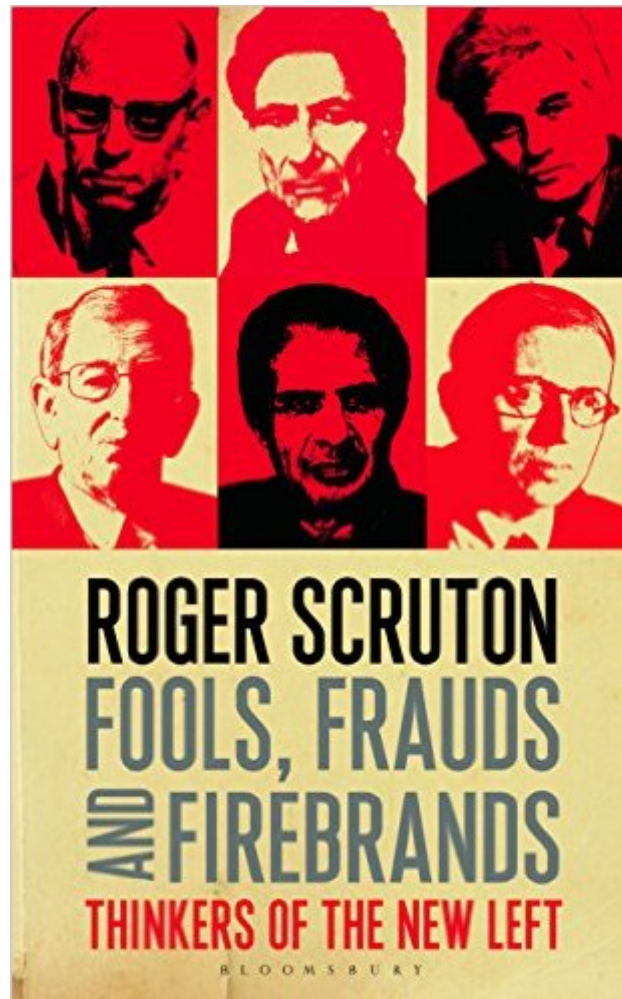


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Fools, Frauds And Firebrands: Thinkers Of The New Left



Synopsis

From one of the leading critics of leftist orientations comes a study of the thinkers who have most influenced the attitudes of the New Left. Beginning with a ruthless analysis of New Leftism and concluding with a critique of the key strands in its thinking, Roger Scruton conducts a reappraisal of such major left-wing thinkers as E. P. Thompson, Ronald Dworkin, R. D. Laing, Jurgen Habermas, Gyorgy Lukacs, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek, Ralph Milliband, and Eric Hobsbawm. In addition to assessments of these thinkers' philosophical and political contributions, the book contains a biographical and bibliographical section summarizing their careers and most important writings. In *Fools, Frauds and Firebrands* Scruton asks, What does the Left look like today, and how has it evolved? He charts the transfer of grievances, from the working class to women, gays, and immigrants, asks what we can put in the place of radical egalitarianism, and what explains the continued dominance of antinomian attitudes in the intellectual world. Can there be any foundation for resistance to the leftist agenda without religious faith? Writing with great clarity, Scruton delivers a devastating critique of modern left-wing thinking.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an impressive and important book. Roger Scruton accepts the task of investigating the thought of a number of prominent 20thc leftist intellectuals, paying particular attention to the writings of Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, Ronald Dworkin, Jacques Lacan, George Lukacs, Sean-Paul

Sartre, Slavoj Zizek, Jurgen Habermas and Michel Foucault, with shorter examination of Edward Said and a short-short mention of Jacques Derrida. This is a very difficult task because many of these writers have voluminous bibliographies and write with a lugubrious, sometimes impenetrable style (the near totalizing $\hat{\text{abstraction}}$ of which leads to a set of key points). A prominent literary critic once compared a task such as this to fighting with Joel Chandler Harris's tar baby. If you engage with the shape-shifting beast you may never come out again. On the other hand, you cannot engage with it without reading these writers' works, lest you be called a dilettante, a $\hat{\text{vulgar conservative}}$, or all manner of other ugly names. Scruton is none of these, but he is very brave and tenacious to suffer through the volume of material which is here under investigation. His bottom line is that there are many common threads here, nearly all of which begin with Marx, sometimes as adumbrated by Hegel or filtered through such a shared teacher as Alexandre Kojève. Scruton is fair in recognizing that some of these individuals' works are impressive intellectual accomplishments, even if their conclusions are ultimately antinomian. He argues, very impressively, that many of these individuals have invented new ways of saying the same old thing. They have enlisted linguistics, epistemology, psychology, sociology, communication theory, etc.

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