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## *A Short History of Sociological Theory.* Alan Swinglewood

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## Book Notes

Alan Swinglewood, *A Short History of Sociological Theory*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. \$65.00 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

Amazingly comprehensive for such a short history, this book addresses the fundamental concerns of sociological thought from its roots in Greek philosophy to current discourses and debates in the field. The first part of the book reviews selective features of classical sociology. This includes discussions of the problems of industrialization and modernization and how positivism helped sociologists address these issues. Overviews of the works of Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim follow with references to their influences and key ideas on sociological thought. Variants of Marxism that emerged after Marx's death are also examined.

The second part of the book links classical sociological thought to modern sociology. Beginning with functionalism, it reviews the key features of the discipline in the twentieth century. Included are readable overviews of ideas about symbolic interaction, structuralism, and post-structuralism. The problems of agency and structure which have been debated in the discipline since its origins are also reviewed. Singlewood also discusses the relevance of post-modern thinking to sociology. This discussion leads to a useful examination of the new social movements that currently affect the discipline.

The book's greatest strength lies in its ability to integrate classical sociological thought into a discussion of contemporary issues in the discipline. The clear writing and breadth of the book will help both beginning and advanced students of sociology gain a greater understanding of theory. For this reason, it deserves to be widely prescribed.

Ellen Greunbaum, *The Female Circumcision Controversy: An Anthropological Perspective*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000. \$55 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

It is only in recent years that the practice of female circumcision in parts of Africa and the Middle East has become generally known and predictably, it has been widely condemned. It has