1. **Diffusionism**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the cultural evolutionism of Tylor and Morgan was still popular, diffusionism began to take hold among anthropologists in several parts of the world. Diffusion can be defined as the spread of certain ideas, customs or practices from one culture to another. Diffusionism as an anthropological school of thought, was an attempt to understand the distribution of culture in terms of the origin of culture traits and their spread from one society to another. Versions of diffusionist thought included the conviction that all cultures originated from one culture center (*heliocentric diffusion*); the more reasonable view that cultures originated from a limited number of culture centers (*culture circles*); and finally the notion that each society is influenced by others but that the process of diffusion is both contingent and arbitrary . Diffusionism explained that how cultures spread from one place to another. It was also interested in explaining that why societies are at similar or different stages of development. This theory explains that cultural change occurs when societies borrow cultural traits from one another. Cultural knowledge regarding technology, economy, religious views etc. diffuses or spreads from one society to another. This may explain the similarities in cultural features between societies. Diffusionism has some validity in that it helps to explain the emergence of classical civilizations such as those in Egypt, Greece and Rome.

Diffusionists believed that people are inherently uninventive and prefer to borrow the inventions of other cultures rather than to develop ideas for themselves. There were three main schools of thought in diffusion. The British school of diffusionism, the German-Austrian diffusionist school of thought and American diffusionist school of thought. They opposed the notion of progress from simple to complex forms held by the evolutionists. They also held that primitive or modern are also a relative matter and hence comparative method is not applicable.

1. **The British School of Diffusionism**

The prominent figures of this school of thought were G.E. Smith, W.J. Perry and W.H.R Rivers. They hold the view that most aspects of higher civilization were developed in Egypt and were then diffused through out the world as other people came into contact with them. They criticized the Psychic unity of mankind of evolutionists. They believed that most inventions happened just once and men being capable of imitation, these inventions were then diffused to other places. The British diffusionists thought that independent parallel evolution of a particular cultural trait in two widely distant areas of the world was extremely rare. They believed that people are uninventive and borrow culture. This view was never accepted in United States and it was abandoned in 1970s.

1. **German-Austrian Diffusionist School of thought**

Fritz Grabner and Wilhelm Schmidth were also of the view that humans are uninventive. They said that cultural traits can diffuse as a group, as well as singly. They further added that oldest cultures can be reconstructed. They said that there is no single origin of culture i.e. cultures did not emerge from one single culture. They believed that there used to be several cultural centers and diffusion occurred from these different cultural circles. This German view of diffusionism is also known as ‘Kulturkriese’ which means cultural centers.

1. **American Diffusionist School of thought**

A separate American Diffusionist School of thought was led by Clark Wissler and Alfred Kroeber. It was similar in method to German-Austrian School. They believed that cultural centers were geographical areas where traits were first developed and from which, they, then diffused outwards. If a trait diffused outward from a single culture center, it follows that the most widely distributed traits found to exist around such a center must be the oldest trait.

**Criticism**

This theory is also considered as ethnocentric as it states that some cultures are better than others. They highlighted non-western cultures as inferior. The theory does not explain the origin of cultural traits in centers. Thirdly, diffusionism does not explain that why some neighboring societies have different cultures if culture adjacent to each other adopt traits from each other. This theory does not explain that why a culture accepts, rejects or modifies a trait that one its neighbor has.