

related fields, I will try to relate these quite different books to another as well as to draw some lines between Anglo-American and European evolutionistic⁴ thinking.

Robert Leonard Carneiro's "Evolutionism in Cultural Anthropology" (2003) is a good starting point. Carneiro gives a concise overview of evolutionistic thinking ranging from the early 19th century to the latest work. The first half of the book about this quite checkered history is organized chronologically, but internally these chapters are structured according thematic aspects. The first chapter discusses the early history of evolutionism since Herbert Spencer. Chapters 2 to 4 present concepts of classical evolutionism regarding principles of reconstruction of long-term change, forms, and stages of evolutionary change and causes of social evolution. Chapter 5 explains the arguments behind the antievolutionistic tendencies from Boas till today. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to the blossoming of evolutionistic ideas since World War II, Leslie White's work and other brands of "neo-evolutionism." The rest of the book is more organized along systematic questions. Chapter 8 gives an overview of central interests and features of social evolution (directionality, complexity increase, rating of cultures, adaptation), whereas chapter 9 is devoted to causal mechanisms, such as population pressure, trade, and warfare. Chapter 10 is about Marxist and other political economic theories of social change and their relation to evolutionistic arguments. Chapter 11 follows evolutionistic arguments in different theoretical orientations and national traditions of anthropology. The last chapter presents the current state of affairs in British social anthropology, American cultural anthropology, and in several other disciplines. Thus, despite its title the book goes far beyond cultural anthropology proper. That is a wise decision regarding the fact that most contemporary work in the evolutionistic guise is not done by cultural anthropologists but comes from archaeology or sociology. An example of such work seldom read and reviewed by cultural anthropologists are the books of the sociologist Stephen K. Sanderson, who combines historical sociology and world-systems analysis with a refined version of Harris' cultural materialism (e.g., Sanderson 2001). A particular strength of Carneiro's book is that several popular admonitions against evolutionistic positions are carefully tested. As a case

in point Carneiro presents evidence that classical evolutionists of the 19th century – totally contrary to the reception in anthropology and beyond – did not generally think of social evolution as a necessary and directed respectively unilinear process. He says, that "... the net weight of this evidence is that the classical evolutionists, although they often chose to stress the regularity of cultural development, nevertheless did not believe that every society had to evolve through the very same series of stages" (Carneiro 2003: 29). It is an often neglected difference between saying that a society at stage 1 *must evolve into* stage 2, and stating that a society at stage 2 *must have passed through* stage 1. A further strength is that not only evolutionistic theories are discussed but their critics and countermovements as well. The author presents the concepts in a clear exposition added by carefully selected quotations. His is a "critical history" as the subtitle says, but it is a critique informed by an experienced insider. The book is conceived as a history of evolutionistic thought, but Carneiro presents the themes and disputes in such a systematic way that the book can also be used as an introductory textbook.

My only complaint with Carneiro's admirable book is that truly Darwinian models of the generation and reduction of cultural variation, such as by Campbell, Boyd and Richerson, and Durham, are too important (and too diverse!) to be given only six pages (173–179). That's exactly where the carefully titled book edited by Michael Wheeler, John Ziman, and Margaret Boden fits in: "The Evolution of Cultural Entities" (2002). The volume is truly multidisciplinary and contains contributions among others by philosophers, physicists, political scientists, economists, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists. Unlike many other edited volumes with this breadth of disciplines invoked this volume has a clear focus. The central theme are models of long-term cultural change respectively history inspired by the model of Darwinian selection or epigenetic developmental change. The introduction, written by one of the editors, John Ziman, a specialist on technological change, does not relate the contributions to another but dwells on one of its central ideas: on what he calls "selectionist reasoning." He explains how Darwin's nonteleological explanation of teleonomic processes is used in models of "blind" variation and selective retention, e.g., in the tradition of psychologist Donald T. Campbell in his pathbreaking papers (e.g., Campbell 1965; cf. Cziko 1995). Sociologist W. G. Runciman in his chapter makes some important but often overlooked distinctions. First there

4 Throughout I use the term "evolutionistic" for approaches or theories, whereas I use the word "evolutionary" only for the phenomena.