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0521651344 - Explaining Human Origins: Myth, Imagination and Conjecture

Wiktor Stoczkowski

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EXPLAINING HUMAN ORIGINS MYTH, IMAGINATION AND CONJECTURE

In this revised version of the French original, Wiktor Stoczkowski, an anthropologist, argues that the theories of human origins developed by naturalists, archaeologists and physical anthropologists from the early nineteenth century to the present day are structurally similar to modern popular theories, and to the speculations of earlier philosophers. Reviewing a remarkable range of thinkers writing in a variety of European languages, he makes a convincing argument for this case. Even though the book highlights the paucity of development in scientific explanations of human origins, it ends with an optimistic conclusion about the power of the scientific approach to deliver more reliable theories – but only if it is conscious of the baggage it carries over from popular discourse.

WIKTOR STOCZKOWSKI trained as a prehistoric archaeologist and ethnologist, and, later, as a historian of science. He is lecturer in anthropology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris, director of Groupe de Recherches sur les Savoirs and research member of Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale. His publications include *Anthropologie naïve, anthropologie savante* (1994), *Aux origines de l'humanité: anthologie* (1996), *Des hommes, des dieux et des extraterrestres* (1999) and numerous articles.

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