

Ethnoclassification, Ethnoecology and the Imagination

par

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RÉSUMÉ**

Deux trajectoires de pensée en ethnoclassification, l'une associée à l'approche de Brent Berlin, l'autre à l'approche de Ralph Bulmer, ont influencé les développements, respectivement en anthropologie cognitive (y compris en psychologie évolutionniste) et en ethnoécologie. La première approche est traitée brièvement. La deuxième est ici explorée plus en détail. Le but de l'ethnoécologie est de comprendre et d'expliquer l'écologie en tant qu'expérience vécue et, en finale, le projet devrait révéler la diversité de l'expérience écologique humaine. Il est soutenu que l'imagination est un élément fondamental de ces expériences. Dans le cadre de cette argumentation, un modèle de l'origine de l'imagination – de la capacité et des implications de l'expression figurative – est proposé.

MOTS-CLÉS : anthropologie cognitive, ethnoclassification, ethnoécologie, imagination, abduction, évolution humaine.

ABSTRACT

Two trajectories of thought within ethnoclassification, one associated with the approach of Brent Berlin, the other with the approach of Ralph Bulmer, have influenced developments within cognitive anthropology (including evolutionary psychology) and ethnoecology respectively. The former is treated briefly. The latter is explored in greater detail. The aim of ethnoecology is to understand and explain ecology as experienced and, ultimately, the project should reveal the diversity of human ecological experience. It is argued that the imagination is fundamental to those experiences. Within the frame of that argument a model of the origin of the imagination – of the capacity for and implications of figurative expression – is proposed.

KEYWORDS: cognitive anthropology, ethnoclassification, ethnoecology, imagination, abduction, human evolution.

Really new concepts, having no names in current language, always make their earliest appearance in metaphorical statements; therefore the beginning of any theoretical structure is inevitably marked by fantastic inventions.

(Langer, 1957: x-xi)

Each and every object in the world has its own history, it goes without saying, which is a result of some other history, and so on; forever continuing. It can be triggered, Ellen was told, by a name. And the unexpected can appear in small and large lumps.

(Bail, 1998: 109)

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