



# On Garbage

*John Scanlan*

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## **On Garbage** John Scanlan

This is the first work to examine the detritus of our culture in its full range; garbage in this sense is not only material waste and ruin, environmental degradation and so on, but also residual or 'broken' knowledge, useless concepts, the remainders of systems of intellectual and cultural thought. In this unique and original work (a kind of intellectual scavenging in its own right) the author shows why garbage is, perversely, the source of all that is valuable. The author considers how Western philosophy, science and technology attained mastery over nature through what can be seen as a prolonged act of cleansing, the disposal of incorrect, outmoded or superseded knowledge. By detailing the waste, ruin and nonsense that we have discarded, the author argues that we can learn new things about the accepted truths and basic building blocks of our culture; he throws new light on our modern condition by examining not what we have kept, but what we have thrown away. On Garbage shows that disposal causes not only the mountains of rubbish that we occasionally believe threatens to overwhelm us; it also creates a host of other 'garbage', particularly in the dead ends of useless knowledge and the often abject reality of our disposable lives. It turns out that we ourselves have become the garbage of our times. This bold and thought-provoking work will be of interest to readers in areas as diverse as cultural studies and social theory, the histories of philosophy, public health and the environment, as well as those interested in the aesthetics of contemporary art.

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