



A Philosophy of Material Culture: Action, Function, and Mind (Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy)

Beth Preston

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This book focuses on material culture as a subject of philosophical inquiry and promotes the philosophical study of material culture by articulating some of the central and difficult issues raised by this topic and providing innovative solutions to them, most notably an account of improvised action and a non-intentionalist account of function in material culture.

Preston argues that material culture essentially involves activities of production and use; she therefore adopts an action-theoretic foundation for a philosophy of material culture. Part 1 illustrates this foundation through a critique, revision, and extension of existing philosophical theories of action. Part 2 investigates a salient feature of material culture itself—its functionality. A basic account of function in material culture is constructed by revising and extending existing theories of biological function to fit the cultural case. Here the adjustments are for the most part necessitated by special features of function in material culture.

These two parts of the project are held together by a trio of overarching themes: the relationship between individual and society, the problem of centralized control, and creativity.

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