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'This is a priceless addition to the oeuvre of one of Britain's best known anthropologists. Who would have imagined that a lifetime of writing between the lines could be brought together as something so uniquely powerful, wicked and charming as this book? Richard Fardon has found Mary Douglas's words in all kinds of places, in all states of preparedness, enrolling many audiences and sometimes none – and from the informal to the outrageous, from feelings to convictions, from wit to sarcasm. Running like a commentary alongside her major publications, it is as much an illumination of her world as of herself.'

Professor Marilyn Strathern, Former William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, UK

The range of Mary Douglas's interests had few parallels amongst the leading social anthropologists of the 20th Century.

Although inspired by the classics of the discipline of anthropology, her theories were idiosyncratic and her applications of them never predictable.

By bringing together writings in different genres that she composed over the entirety of her career, this volume demonstrates her distinctive style of thought and expression. The topics she addressed ranged freely between family and friends, the demands of domestic routine, her belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, and cultural similarities and differences on a global scale. In her method and style, as much as in her explicit arguments, Mary Douglas constantly invited her readers to reflect on the inextricable intertwining of the personal and the theoretical in her thought.

More than any previous collection of Mary Douglas's work, *A Very Personal Method* reveals a mind restlessly reworking her enduring preoccupations and finding echoes of them in the new concerns she continued to draw from life.

Mary Douglas was one of the most widely read social anthropologists of the 20th Century. She is celebrated both as a literary stylist and an anthropological thinker who challenged common presuppositions and understandings of religion, economy and society. As a cornerstone of modernism in social anthropology, and a precursor of 21st Century interdisciplinarity, her work remains highly influential both within and outside the social sciences.

Richard Fardon is Mary Douglas's Literary Executor and Head of the Doctoral School and Professor of West African Anthropology at SOAS, University of London, UK.

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Mary Douglas A Very Personal Method

Edited by Richard Fardon



Mary Douglas

A Very Personal Method
Anthropological Writings Drawn from Life

Edited by **Richard Fardon**

