



The Gift of Thanks: The Roots and Rituals of Gratitude

Margaret Visser

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Known as an ‘anthropologist of everyday life,’ Margaret Visser has, in five award-winning books, uncovered and illuminated the intriguing and unexpected meanings of everyday objects and habits. Now she turns her keen eye to another custom so frequently encountered that it often escapes notice: saying ‘Thank you.’ What do we really mean by these two simple words?

This fascinating inquiry into all aspects of gratitude ranges from the unusual determination with which parents teach their children to thank, to the difference between speaking the words and feeling them, to the ways different cultures handle the complex matters of giving, receiving, and returning favors and presents. Visser illuminates the fundamental opposition in our own culture between gift-giving and commodity exchange, and the similarities between gratitude and its opposite, vengefulness. *The Gift of Thanks* considers cultural history, including the modern battle of social scientists to pin down the notion of thankfulness and account for it, and the newly awakened scientific interest in the biological and evolutionary roots of emotions.

With her engaging combination of curiosity and erudition, Visser once again reveals the extraordinary in the everyday.

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