



Serving Like The Mountain Stream, by Allan Watts

I was taught when I was a little boy that it was good to be unselfish and loving, and I used to think that I should grow up to serve other people. But after a while I found out that unless one has something to give people, there is nothing one can do to help them. Just because I thought I ought to help, it didn't mean that I had anything to give. Gradually, over the years, as I understood what it was that I had received of significance from the world, I realized that these things were never intended as gifts to be given in the usual sense of the word. However much one enjoys the song of birds, they are not singing for the advancement of music, and the clouds are not floating across the sky to be painted by artists. In the words of a Zen poem: The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflection; The water has no mind to retain their image. When a mountain stream flows out of a spring beside the road, and a thirsty traveler comes along and drinks deeply, the traveler is welcome. But the mountain stream is not waiting with the intention of refreshing thirsty travelers; it is just bubbling forth, and the travelers are always welcome to help themselves. So in exactly that sense I offer my ideas. Allan Watts

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