

# The Way of the Elder Brother

Martin Vieweg

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## Summary

This article examines four factors needed for successful group relationships: hierarchy, responsibility, group interplay, and forgiveness. It shows their interconnectedness and their mutual resonance to the will aspect that governs cyclic evolution. The “elder brother” is seen as one who recognizes the chain of living relationships that connects the world of outer happenings to the divine center.

The aim of this discussion is to make disciples more conscious of what is needed to fulfill their rightful place in building group relationships.

The Master Djwhal Khul has given us the keys to harmonious group life: alignment with divine will, putting group identity before self interest, and shouldering greater responsibility for group purpose. As disciples develop these qualities, they will begin to put will into action in their lives and significantly empower the lives of those whom they choose to serve.

## Introduction

*To err is human, to forgive divine.*  
Alexander Pope

This brief article is an attempt to share a “fleeting deep impression” which brought four seemingly disparate ideas into living relationship in an instant. These four thoughts were: hierarchy, responsibility, group interplay, and forgiveness. I read them on the printed page and in a flash of insight I sensed a wider pattern of understanding lying beneath the words. I glimpsed the reality of our shared spiritual existence as souls living in the realm of spirit. For a moment, I saw myself as a member of that great family of spiritual workers called by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul the “Guides of the Race” or “Elder Brothers.” I was on the periphery of the group, but I was a

soul, or a soul-infused self, not a separative personality. For an instant I stood as a member of a greater group of brothers on the way.

What does it mean to be a brother in the circle of light? Djwhal Khul addresses this question in a section of *Education in the New Age* entitled “The Angle of Parenthood.” I offer here a few thoughts that have come to mind as I have pondered the simple, yet extra-ordinary, idea that I, and all disciples in training, share a common experience. We are members of a single *family of souls* pressing forward together towards the light. That light is reflected in the eyes of those who have preceded us on the path, as suggested by a phrase that arose before me in meditation: *In the eyes of my father I see myself...an elder on the way.*

I was reminded of this phrase a day or so after my meditation when I saw a video clip of Austrian-born pianist, Rudolf Serkin, in his later years, playing a duet with his son, Peter. The love in his eyes spoke volumes of the relationship of the elder to his son. The return gaze was mutual. Unfortunately, not all sons or daughters see love in the eyes of their parents. For many, in fact, the lines of connection to family members are often more negative than positive in nature. As many of us know, the experience of family relationships can be a karmic crucible and a sphere of great test and trial. Karma and family are, in fact, so closely connected to one another that it is sometimes difficult to see the good in family relationships. We may even forget that there is *good*

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## About the Author

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as well as bad family karma. Happily, the Serkins offer us an example of the good that is possible.

Their loving exchange reminds us that *family* can be a symbol of great possibilities. Symbolically, on the spiritual path, the family may represent group experience and the promise of eventual group awareness. As students of the wisdom teaching, we know—intuitively—that group relations are our destiny; though those of us who have suffered family strife may find it hard at first to accept this statement. We are destined to work together in groups—outer and inner, objective and subjective in nature. We have journeyed through lifetimes together from separation in matter and form back into spirit. Through the course of thousands of lives, we have moved through stages—like spiritual siblings, interacting in diverse roles at each turn in the path, struggling to find right direction, helping one another on the way and orienting gradually towards the light—moving slowly forward towards the goal.

The plateaus that mark our ascent into greater light are familiar to us:

We are first fragmented personalities, then integrated individuals and finally soul-conscious servers of the greater good. As soul-conscious identity emerges from within us we begin to find our individual place within the whole and, by definition, begin the hard work of cultivating group relationships. Inevitably, we find ourselves engaged in group work of some kind.

The various stages of unfoldment are identical for all of us who tread the way to perfection and it is no accident that with each new lifetime the ladder of ascent is first climbed through the struggles of family relationships. We who have studied the wisdom teachings know the methods of achievement exemplified by the Buddha. They are detachment, dispassion and discrimination. Each of us has strived in the course of our lives to learn to detach from form, to control desire and to discern the true from the false. We have struggled to apply

what we know in the face of day-to-day experience—within the family and within the groups in which we find ourselves. When rightly applied, the methods of liberation have helped us to stop our descent into matter, to disengage from form, to shift our identification to subtler spheres, and to reverse the course of our lives.

Symbolically, we are releasing old patterns, changing our direction on the path, and orienting gradually to the spiritual world. “Letting go” is the most difficult phase. It involves a process of purification and testing. It requires development of our minds and control of our emotions. But once we have achieved a measure

of control and have built these faculties into ourselves as spiritual habits, greater light issues forth and we catch a glimpse of the reality of the soul. At this point we begin to tread the Path of Return in earnest and orient ourselves to the spiritual kingdom as our true home. Over lifetimes of struggle we have steadily learned to seek nothing for the separated self and have prepared ourselves to renounce desire for life in the world of form. Cycles of purifi-

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**Successful disciples become masters of group interplay; they become conscious workers in the process that involves the perfecting of form. They work with will, love and intelligence to open the way to purposeful living, remove discord, and cleanse the circle of energy of all that hinders progress back to the source. They work practically for justice within the group and strive constantly for right relations. They are moving points of light within a swirling orb of light, drawing ever closer to divine center.**

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cation have paved the way for further cycles of discipleship training. It is this training in spiritual family relations that we are now engaged in.

From this point forward we must build a working relationship with the world of spirit and those who dwell therein. We must learn to treat one another as souls and let the life of spirit dominate our experience on every level of awareness. As we do so, we will discover the true significance of group relationships. We will begin to free ourselves from the Law of Rebirth.

As Djwhal Khul tells us, each of us is now becoming

... group conscious... aware of his soul group and of the soul in all forms and has attained—as Christ had requested—a stage of Christlike perfection reaching unto the “measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ.” (*Eph. IV:13.*)<sup>1</sup>

The Christlike perfection the Tibetan refers to here is a relative one. It is a vision of possibility and is achieved only after lifetimes of purification and relinquishment on the Probationary Path. In the early stages of discipleship, we may not have fully registered (in the brain) the true nature of group relations that exist in the realm of the soul. As we near the goal, however, we should find ourselves “reaching unto” a measure of perfection. As disciples we must learn to measure ourselves by a higher standard and apprehend what it means in truth to live and act as Christ-conscious, soul-infused personalities. Christ and the Elder Brothers are the patterns that stand before us. They serve as templates and living examples by which we, the careworn disciples on the way, can measure our own progress on the Path of Return.

As disciples we know intuitively (though we may not fully realize it) who we are in truth and why we have come into incarnation. We are engaged in the difficult task of bringing the recognition of shared spiritual identity into living demonstration in our lives. To the degree that our true identity is made real in our lives we stand as living symbols of will and love on the microcosmic scale, just as Christ

does to the world as a whole. As disciples, we must embody as completely as possible within ourselves a “measure of the stature of Christ” and be living approximations (to the degree possible) of the divine pattern embodied by Christ 2,000 years ago.

To walk with the elder brothers who seek to guide us on the way we must claim our identity as younger souls and take our place in the chain of spiritual being. We must learn to act in imitation of Christ, and, as we awaken to the greater group of which we are a part, like Christ, stand as elder brothers to the group which we ourselves are called to serve. We stand thus

... at the centre of a group and [hold] it in coherent and useful manifestation.<sup>2</sup>

As Djwhal Khul states, this phase of discipleship is “an expression of the Christ life in its early manifested stages.”<sup>3</sup> In familial terms we are entering the ashram of spiritual workers as “*younger Elders.*” We are juniors to those who have gone before us, but elders to “the little ones” that follow after. We are responsible for them and can help them to move forward on the way, just as the Teachers aid us in our journey.

This sense of responsibility is a recognition of “the relation of the older to the younger, of the wise to the ignorant.”<sup>4</sup> It is an integral part of group life and is one of four factors involved in successful group relationships—including both family life and discipleship-group experience. These four factors are given by the Tibetan as part of a discussion of the true significance of the place of the family in the community. As stated above, they are “hierarchy, responsibility, group interplay, and forgiveness or sacrifice.”<sup>5</sup> Each of these is essential in building a line of connection between members at the center of a group (the elders) and those on its periphery (the younger brothers and sisters).

Let us look at each one of these in turn.

## Hierarchy

Students of the Alice Bailey teachings think of masters, arhats and initiates when they hear the word “hierarchy;” but the term has a much more universal application. There is a

hierarchy of kingdoms in nature: minerals, plants, animals, humans and spiritual beings. There is a church hierarchy of popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests. There is, as well, the family hierarchy of father/mother, eldest child and younger siblings.

This family lineage is alluded to in the story of Abraham, Isaac, Esau and Jacob in the scriptures. This tale of struggle for the birthright of the eldest son highlights the importance of the place of the elder in group life. Esau symbolizes the natural man, the form or personality nature. He is the mask (the hairy mask) that veils the soul. Jacob is the soul or spirit behind the persona. He is the seeker behind the veil claiming his spiritual birthright—the power of free will. The story of Jacob and Esau describes the clash of wills (higher and lower) that we each must encounter in our journey. When reflected upon, this tale of family strife can provide useful insights into the struggles that we face for right relations in the chain of hierarchy prior to absorption of the separated self into group life.

Another symbol worth pondering is the image of the circle with a line of force connecting the circumference and the center. Symbolically, the elder can be placed on this line of approach near the center of the orb reflecting the fact that those who dwell near the center of a group are closer to the purpose of the wheel of which they are a part than those who dwell near the periphery.

The metaphor of the wheel holds great significance. The wheel, like the spiral, is a symbol of cyclic evolution. Form evolves through cycles; consciousness unfolds cyclically; life (or spiritual energy) emerges into fullest expression when the “end approacheth the beginning”<sup>6</sup> in the turning of the wheel. In each of these instances the purpose of the revolving fields of consciousness and of energy is found at the center of the wheel where the Elder Brothers dwell.

The universe itself consists of wheels of energy and force locked in eternal, dynamic living relationship. Wheels turning upon themselves:

Wheels within wheels, spheres within spheres. Each pursues his course and attracts or rejects his brother, and yet cannot escape from the encircling arms of the mother.<sup>7</sup>

*Mother universe* contains within herself many circles of brothers, each endowed with its own unique purpose and intent. The purpose of each is stored at the center of the wheel symbolically, just as the jewel in the lotus holds hid the secret of the circle unfolding through its petals. Wheels, lotuses, groups and families are all of a single type. They are circles of relationship, spheres of purposeful expression. Those who dwell near the center of a sphere are the elders in a family of brothers. They are responsive to the hidden purpose that emanates from the center of the group of which they are a part and they are responsible to the other members of the circle. They are senior disciples near the central tier of purpose.

## Responsibility

Responsiveness to the purpose of the group is a hallmark of the disciple, as is a growing sense of responsibility to one's fellow travelers. “We are all in this together,” we are told. “I am my brother's keeper,” says the teacher. What does responsibility entail and why is it so central to group relationships? Perhaps the image that best helps us to answer these questions is that of the *seeker on the way* transforming from “a point of light within a greater light”<sup>8</sup> to “a way by which men may achieve.” These two phrases from *The Affirmation of the Disciple* describe two distinct levels of achievement.

The first portrays the successful shift from form to spirit. “I am a point of light within a greater light.” Souls proclaiming these words affirm that they are no longer the body in which they dwell; they are points of energy within a sphere of energy. They are souls, units of consciousness within a greater consciousness.

The second statement proclaims the role of elder brothers transformed from the earlier phase of spiritual identification to living em-

bodiment. “I am a way by which men may achieve.” Souls such as these are disciples, standing now as living examples to the younger travelers who follow after them on the journey from the rim of the group to its center. They sound a note and proclaim by living example a higher purpose. They are resonant to those who have gone before them: I am a way by which men may achieve... a living example to others. I am magnetic *to* and *for* spirit. I am a doorway through which others may approach the source. I stand as a representative of the hidden purpose at center and I accept responsibility “to prepare men’s minds and hearts”<sup>9</sup> for revelation of that purpose.

A sense of responsibility is a call to help others to learn and to grow as we have. This truth is reflected in Djwhal Khul’s advice to one of his chelas on how to meditate:

Picture... yourself as standing before the electric blue disk, having traversed the golden path and there meditating upon the following words:

“I am the Way myself, the door am I. I am the golden Path and in the light of my own light I tread the Way: I enter through the door. I turn and radiate.”<sup>10</sup>

The teacher was clearly preparing his student to take the stance of the elder brother who serves as a living example to others.

## Group Interplay

The recognition of group interplay that dawns upon the disciple is a “sense of right relations, carried forward consciously and harmoniously developed.”<sup>11</sup> Right relations are an expression of goodwill and are related to the will aspect. The traveler on the path who approaches the center of the circle comes in contact with the will and comes to realize over time how the will aspect controls all expressions of life within the circle. At the same time, the disciple begins to shoulder some of the responsibility for establishing and maintaining control within the group through the right expression of will.

He or she also learns to wield *right magnetism*, which involves the fusion or synthesis of both

will and love within the Self and invokes (when rightly done) resources both inner and outer.

Love is the foundation upon which disciples stand. Will is the energy to be made manifest in the new age. The challenge is great: first to *submit* to the divine will and then to *acquiesce consciously* to divine intent and finally, acting in the will divine in loving cooperation with the divine Plan, to achieve *illumination*. Conscious cooperation with the will of deity is thus achieved, step-by-step, through diverse methods such as esoteric alignment and practicing the presence.

Esoteric alignment is a mysterious phrase offered by the Tibetan that may refer to the magical fact that the centers of all circles are mystically interconnected. Those who are striving to master the Technique of the Presence are coming in touch gradually with the boundless, self-engendering energy of life itself that transcends time and space. They are, in their highest moments, touching the center of the circle that stands in living resonance and blissful at-one-ment with the central energy of all lives within the Greater Life. They are learning to respond to the divine Presence and to consciously direct the builders (the devas) that bring form into manifestation.

Such is the nature of *group interplay* in the grand process of divine manifestation. It involves the perfecting of forms. The divine Thinker at the center of Life and the band of Thinkers that are Custodians of the Plan wield “ray forces” in interaction with “atomic forms.”<sup>12</sup> We who are disciples in training for initiation are preparing to take our places in this creative drama. We are learning to “think in the heart” and master the dynamics of group interplay through which form comes into perfection. We are learning to participate in the Hierarchy’s plans. Through this process, through group interaction, we are awakening the mind and quickening the intuitive perception of group purpose over time. This method of activity is related to the fourth ray and the buddhic aspect and it is significant that the ashrams—the inner spiritual groups of the masters that we are seeking to join—are located on the buddhic plane. Here we are learn-

ing to work with the builders and to wield fourth ray energy.

Yet group interplay is also an expression of first ray energy related to the *destruction* of forms. In addition to right building, we must learn right destruction through revelation of the indwelling life. This involves the elimination of all that blocks the light and is one of the key challenges that disciples face. Disciples in training must learn to work responsibly with the destruction of forms—thought forms and desire forms within their own auras—as well as hindering forms within the sphere of influence of the group as a whole. Disciples learn through experiment and experience how to clear the path for fellow seekers by awakening the life within.

As the Way clears, group interplay stimulates the hidden Self or egoic principle in all members of the circle of experience and the disciple or “elder in the midst” learns gradually how to put love into action through right expression of the will to good.

Disciples who reach the goal turn on the pedestal of light and radiate light magnetically to others. As stated earlier, they become living examples, but they are more than this. They are actively engaged through dynamic, radiant love with the welfare of the group of which they are a part. They recognize the sins of their brethren, so to speak, but realize as well that *perfecting* is a process that takes time and calls for the expression of forgiveness. They are in touch with the center and aware, at the same time, of those who follow behind. They serve as a bridge between two worlds. Towards this end they cultivate patience, tolerance, humility, group love, compassion, a sense of identification with others, along with all of the other virtues of the soul.

Successful disciples become masters of group interplay; they become conscious workers in the process that involves the perfecting of form. They work with will, love and intelligence to open the way to purposeful living, remove discord, and cleanse the circle of energy of all that hinders progress back to the source. They work practically for justice within the group and strive constantly for right

relations. They are moving points of light within a swirling orb of light, drawing ever closer to divine center. They wield the energy of spirit and work with the energy of harmony through conflict. They know through personal experience that death of the old must precede emergence of new life. Unity comes through group interaction, but it is only achieved through the resolution of opposites.

## Forgiveness or Sacrifice

The resolution of opposites and the achieving of unity through conflict are terms used to describe the energy of the fourth ray. Harmony through conflict is the keynote of human experience. The fourth ray governs the human family. All in our family group are expression of ray four. We are all subject to conflict.

But another attribute of the fourth ray should be taken into account if we are to understand how conflict is to be resolved. That attribute is *forgiveness or sacrifice*. Does it surprise us to learn that these two are the same thing?

Forgiveness is sacrifice, and is the giving up of one's self, even of one's very life, for the sake of others and for the good of the whole group.<sup>13</sup>

Forgiveness is sacrifice and forgiveness is the attitude of the elder brother who has come of age as a spiritual being. It is the prime directive, in a sense, *held to* by all who register the purpose of the whole (even if only in small measure). Forgiveness or sacrifice is “the impulse of giving”<sup>14</sup>—*giving for* as Djwhal Khul says, not pardoning the sins of others, but giving for the greater good. Giving comes from identification with the whole and identification with others within the group. The urge to *give to the whole*, for the *welfare of the whole*, through *identification with the whole*, in order to *make whole* or holy is the constant refrain of the elder brother or sister on the way.

Sacrifice does not mean giving up, but “‘taking over,’ through identification”<sup>15</sup>—identification with the central group purpose and with all who struggle to embody it. Sacrifice by disciples on the way provides an opportunity for others to see love in action and to witness elder

brothers and sisters committed to the greater good. Disciples, elder brethren who make sacrifices for the group, provide strong incentive for individuals to *put others before themselves*. The transforming power of forgiveness is a powerful, life-changing energy and, like group interplay and right relations, is an expression of the energy of will. It emanates from the center of the wheel and the Elder Brothers nearer to the center are moved by its transfiguring power, extending the dynamic power of love to all who can respond. They, like the Lord of the World Himself, are silent watchers, observers of the storm and strife that lead over time to stillness at center and to balance. They are loving elder brothers on the Path of Return, who have traveled a little further on the Way – living sacrifices who have gone before us to make the crooked places straight and make a place for those of us who follow after.

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- <sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, New York, Lucis, 1948, p. 119.
  - <sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and Initiations*, New York, Lucis, 1960, p. 205.
  - <sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, New York, Lucis, 1951, p. 380.
  - <sup>4</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, New York, Lucis, 1954, p. 129.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.
  - <sup>6</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, New York, Lucis, 1927, p. 209.
  - <sup>7</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, New York, Lucis, 1951, p. 1084.
  - <sup>8</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age – Volume II*, New York, Lucis, 1955, p. 175.
  - <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.
  - <sup>10</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Volume I*, New York, Lucis, 1944, p. 303.
  - <sup>11</sup> Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, p. 130.
  - <sup>12</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 1223.
  - <sup>13</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, New York, Lucis, 1957, p. 165.
  - <sup>14</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Volume II*, New York, Lucis, 1942, p. 88.
  - <sup>15</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Volume II*, p. 288.

