

Spiritual Rapport

~ Group rapport, individual rapport, and transmission
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Merriam-Webster Online defines rapport as "relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity." Spiritual rapport can occur when sincere, introspective people gather together, regardless of whether a Realized teacher is present. Rapport also tends to occur in various stages—or at least it has "levels" based on various first-hand experiences over the past 25 years. These levels extend from simple intuition to direct-mind experience accompanied by deep spiritual realization.

Group Rapport

Richard Rose readily established a basic rapport with his neighbors, friends, and TAT group members, and he would often change character roles so as to engage people in their own interests and language. In addition, in group settings, he frequently used humor—at times uproarious—to cohesively pull people together around a common theme.

On a more substantive level, Rose mastered the art of sensing the energy or "electricity" in a room full of people and—if he was leading the discussion, as was often the case—he allowed the conversation to go quiet at a propitious moment. Usually, these spontaneous raptors were the most intense, although "spontaneous" is misleading because he and the group *created the proper environment* for spontaneity to occur. Mysteriously, when the room fell silent, a palpable energy or electricity manifested throughout the room. And it was particularly discernable among those who were sensitive. Occasionally, Rose could see the energy, describing it as a haze that floated horizontally over the heads of people in the room. He would either direct it at someone by pointing, or sense that it was settling on someone and predict who would get hit with the energy. The recipient would be jolted, often to his or her benefit. Does this imply an external force or intelligence? He speculated, but to my knowledge, didn't indicate a firm conclusion about the energy's origin. Rose did, however, make it clear that he did not visualize or project it as *his* energy.

Notably, this energy occasionally emerged during rapport sittings without Rose in attendance. In at least one situation, Frank M. was able to point and direct the energy at another person, similar to Rose's ability. In recent years, I have experienced this electricity with intensity, even with only one other person in the room. In every case, the electricity manifested solely within the context of a spiritual discussion or gathering. Most unusually, a massive ball of electricity manifested immediately before the most profound moment in my life, while I was alone.

I vividly remember my first spontaneous group rapport in Rose's farmhouse wing (annex) during the mid-1980's. I was quite new to TAT at the time. During the discussion, Rose paused in mid-sentence, and a room full of people fell silent. I thought "This guy is masterful." And it wasn't adulation, but more like a conviction that he carefully selected the precise moment to stop talking. In the silence, I felt a deep sense of peace and nostalgia as I listened to the birds singing outside. Why is this incident important? Because it was genuine. I had no preconceived notion of rapport—up to that point, I hadn't heard or read anything about it.

Within the realm of spontaneous rapport, the most outstanding case that Rose and the early TAT group members often cited involved Jane S. and her experience during an early 1970's rapport sitting among a small group of people. Jane was antagonistic toward Rose, yet in the hours leading up to the incident, Rose said—and Jane later acknowledged—that he was "in her head all day." Rose began reading aloud *The Three Books of the Absolute* to create a mood. When Jane walked into the room, Rose's attention—and the energy—shifted to her, whereupon her mind and Rose's mind became one. She hit the floor and sobbed in uncontrollable waves. Jane experienced the "Mountain Experience," as Rose called it, and she *knew* that everything was an illusion, including her husband, who was in the room. She was ecstatic in the ensuing moments but, because she had no spiritual interest or inclinations before the experience, she spent the next year trying to push it out of her life. Jane didn't go through a mind-death Realization. However, the case illustrates an instance of rapport approaching its maximum potential.

In the book *After the Absolute*, Rose is quoted as he describes the incident:

Our minds were one. My thoughts were her thoughts, her thoughts were my thoughts. Because mine is the more deeply rooted mind, it's dominant. This is how transmission occurs. While our heads were locked I entered the mood of my Experience and she came with me as far as she could. I tried to take her farther but she couldn't go. She saw the world as a shadow but she never saw what is real. After two hours I could see she was wasn't going any farther, so I just turned my head away—my internal head, I mean, of course—and she came out of it.

Like Rose, any presenter or facilitator who is leading a spiritual group session must be outwardly sensitive and tuned to the electric-like energy. For example, if a person is presenting or otherwise has the floor in front of a group of seekers, he or she can tune in and allow for silence at the right moment. But it is the *intentional* rapport that has the most potential. And for this to occur, a person—Realized and non-Realized alike—who gravitates in this direction must practice and develop a skill to improve the frequency and intensity of the rapport.

Traditionally, an intentional rapport sitting is prearranged at a specific time and among those who feel drawn to participate. Those who feel especially tired, dissipated, or in a negative mood should voluntarily refrain from joining in. Regularly sitting with the same group of people, perhaps weekly, will have the greatest results. The group sits in a small circle, usually on chairs. After everyone settles in, the facilitator may read a short, spiritually-related inspirational piece, such as poetry. All should remain silent after the reading for about 20 minutes. Most close their eyes. It's best to ignore coughs, sniffing, shuffling feet, or other sounds, as these are rarely detrimental to the rapport. Participants should remain at attention and aware rather than lost in their thoughts, and gently turn their mental head back to center or a neutral position rather than allowing thoughts to drift in endless strings. Rose spoke of the attention as being focused neither on the self nor outward, but "between." Simply remain in that which witnesses. If the participants aren't "lost in their thoughts," if they maintain an attitude of openness and acceptance and "put their feelers out there," it's more likely that some degree of rapport will develop. An environment is created where people tend to let go of self-conscious thinking, which opens up the possibility that a non-ordinary state of perception may occur. Afterwards, a truer mood will reveal itself. Harmony, camaraderie, and friendship may pervade the group. In fact, individuals may even feel a weighty gravity, unwilling to move in their comfort with the atmosphere. Indeed, those who feel the rapport will know their fellows in a way that thousands of words can never convey. But if this mood or a grand energy doesn't manifest,

the group shouldn't despair, as trial and error will lead to greater success during future sittings.

While writing this essay, I pacified my curiosity about the Quakers' practice of sitting in rapport. Their "worship" on quakerinfo.org is described as follows:

The practice of sitting together in silence is often called "expectant waiting." It is a time when Friends become inwardly still and clear aside the activities of mind and body that usually fill our attention in order to create an opportunity to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not a time for "thinking," for deliberate, intellectual exercise. It is a time for spiritual receptivity, so it is important not to clog one's mind with its own busy activities. Nonetheless, thoughts will occur in the silence. Some thoughts will be distractions and should be set aside. But some thoughts or images or feelings may arise that seem to come from a deeper source and merit attention. If you are visited by a spiritual presence, if you seem to experience perceptions that are drawn from a deeper well or are illuminated with a brighter light, then let those impressions dwell in you and be receptive to the Inward Teacher. Each person finds his or her own ways of "centering down," or entering deep stillness during [the] meeting. You are encouraged to explore ways to center down, until you discover what works for you.

In his Quaker essay titled "Friends and Worship," Douglas V. Steere writes "Our meetings are made up of a group of people gathered together in silent prayer. The first thing that I do is to close my eyes and then still my body in order to get it as far out of the way as I can. Then I still my mind and let it open to God in silent prayer, for the meeting, as we understand it, is the meeting place of the worshipper with God. I thank God inwardly for this occasion..."

To me, the energy or Holy Spirit, as the Quakers say, is not a peculiar manifestation of the Absolute. In fact, rapport indicates a commonality that connects all of us in the mind dimension. It is a "one-mind state" wherein a wordless conveyance of *being* can transpire. But I would quickly emphasize that the manifesting energy or electricity is not a prerequisite for rapport to occur, and conversely, the energy may arise but not lead to a one-mind state between two or more people. Incidentally, I speculate that a Realized person can—for lack of better words—magnify the depth and the electricity of the rapport. Holding the head on dead center, holding a state of no-mind, allowing nothing to pervade the mind, allowing the false "you" to fade away or disappear—however you wish to describe it—somehow this state affects the atmosphere.

One-on-One Rapport

In contrast to a group setting, the locking of minds can occur between two people. One especially prominent incident among TAT members occurred in the early years of the group. Seven or eight members sat in a group rapport. Prior to the sitting, several members discussed a comment made by Rose that acted like a koan, and they discussed it with intense interest and curiosity. Their minds raced to understand. The sitting was unremarkable, however. As the concentration of all relaxed, and as several in the group arose to disperse, two members who had earlier engaged in the koan with intensity—Mike G. and Dan P.—spontaneously experienced a singular, undifferentiated awareness. The intense experience lasted several minutes as they sat unmoving, eyes locked. Each man knew that the other knew that he knew. This singular awareness was all that was; a roiling dimension

of thought existed in the periphery—out there—ignored. Neither knew from which mind came drifting thoughts. The singular, undifferentiated awareness belonged to no one. Thoughts belonged to neither. Then, as suddenly as it occurred, the singular awareness separated as a mind identified with a passing thought, and the two individuals sat stunned silently for perhaps ten or twenty minutes more, experiencing a stream of feelings and thoughts without certainty as to whose mind they originated. To this day, the experience remains a strong memory.

At least three times, I've experienced a locking of minds with utmost certainty, one of which occurred with Richard Rose in the early 1990's. A group rapport developed as a number of us were sitting in his farmhouse living room. Fearing that something profound was happening to me, I fought against the rapport. When I attempted to slow down my racing thoughts, Rose immediately confirmed my efforts out loud. Later, during a brief conversation in his kitchen, he reaffirmed that I fought him tooth and nail.

The other two instances of one-on-one rapport have occurred more recently at TAT gatherings. Each instance was preceded by a locking of eyes, and each was spontaneous and not contrived by either person. In these spontaneous raptors, awareness was within, around, and betwixt us both (as it always is). Thoughts and activities—which were not "us"—were arising, happening, and falling of their own accord in awareness. One identical set of thoughts between two. None of the thoughts took hold. They arose and fell as we synchronously turned our internal heads away from each of them. After one of these events, we compared notes, listing each of the shared thoughts with precision. The mutually-witnessed thoughts, while remarkable, served only to confirm the direct-mind experience. The entering of rapport within awareness is the preeminent outcome of these cases.

These experiences throw a wrench into our superficial assessment of how life operates. Our conviction of our self existing as a stand-alone entity apart from others comes into question. Although unrecognized by most, we always live in a collective consciousness. Rapport demonstrates that two or more minds are capable of sharing identical thoughts, which are simultaneously captured in a mutual "mind-awareness net."

As an important side note, the recognition of the turning of our internal head away from thoughts and feelings and not allowing them to take hold is an amazing ability that is usually only achieved after substantial introspection and effort. It brings into focus the phrase, *neti neti*: "neither this, nor that." The watching and turning will directly lead to a seeker's objective of Know Thyself. It is the mechanism for recognizing and acting on intuition. Or, conversely, the mechanism for moving away from distractions and tangents on the spiritual path. *And it is the key to Rose's system of backing away from untruth.*

Transmission

An important quality of teacher-student transmission involves a long-term conveyance of the Perennial Philosophy through words. But another form of transmission is referenced in some Zen teachings. In his 1981 lecture titled "Introduction to the Albigen System," Rose cited Bodhidharma's four principles of Zen, one of which was "a special transmission outside the scriptures." Rose goes on to say, "A special transmission outside the scriptures means that there's a way of putting this inside another person's head. There is a way of realization, by being associated with a person who has reached the goal of knowledge of Self."

Rose said that he learned transmission from his correspondence through the mail with Alfred Pulyan. Pulyan and Rose corresponded in a series of letters over a nine-month period in 1960 and 1961. Posing as a seeker, Rose wrote to Pulyan, who apparently never learned that Rose himself had a Realization in 1947. In one of his letters, Pulyan said "My mind 'contains' yours actually, although you could reach the same position of course & we were trying to do this. We are not unlike a man & quite a young child."

In rapport, can a seeker experience the same No Thing that a Realized person knows and has *become*? If a Realized teacher locks minds with a student, and allows only awareness to *be*, will the student's teetering mind lose its underlying scaffolding in one final collapse?

In *Psychology of the Observer*, Rose wrote:

When the day comes that you have something of importance to convey or transmit to another individual, which cannot be conveyed in words even though many words of wisdom are available, you may be able to transmit that state of awareness or being, by the singular process of direct-mind contact, and a skillful control of your own mind so that nothing else but nothing will pervade your mind...and his. Men have traveled thousands of miles, and sat in monasteries for decades to learn this.

Those who are Realized have directly experienced a *becoming* of Nothingness that has no boundaries. I do *not* believe it is possible to download this state of understanding from the teacher to the student. However, rather than downloading or transferring an awareness that is already at the core—the True Nature—of each person, transmission removes the seeker's last shred of conviction that he or she is the holder of a *personal* awareness. A prelude or doorway may be established by conveying the mood of the "larger mind's" Realization. For those whose resistance to Truth is nearly burned out, direct-mind contact with someone who holds a state of "nothing else but nothing" may remove the final conviction of owning or powering a personal awareness. In short, the seeker's conviction of a personal awareness surviving death is removed. Perhaps it is akin to pushing someone over with a feather's touch...

In his book, *Energy Transmutation, Between-ness and Transmission*, Rose cautioned against prematurely or mechanically attempting to elicit transmission. In the chapter on "The Mechanics of Transmission," he says "Sahaji Nirvakalpa Samadhi, or Enlightenment can occur in different ways. To be an authentic experience however it should be a spontaneous event. If it is planned or if detailed expectations are drawn up in our mind, then we run the chance of creating or synthesizing an experience. ... Spontaneous Samadhi is usually the result of several if not many years of intense effort, and direction of the whole being to self understanding." The last sentence is particularly important: the student must be ripe. And the teacher must know the proper time for transmission. Essentially, a cook-book formula on transmission will forever remain elusive because of the numerous variables at play.

Conclusion

From a spiritual or direct-mind standpoint, rapport allows fellow seekers to know each other. We simply must know each other to help our fellows burn out their own resistor to Truth. The electricity felt during a group rapport sitting is undeniable, as is the feeling of camaraderie afterwards. The electricity is mysterious and warrants more exploration. Lest anyone be concerned, it is utterly safe. All rapport—arranged or spontaneous, between two

individuals or among a group—is ripe for great discovery, a discovery beyond anything imaginable.

Before ending, I offer several notes of caution: it is counterproductive to coast on the day-to-day spiritual path and then rely on a rapport sitting for a deeper spiritual experience. Likewise, setting high expectations of phenomena, such as experiencing grand electricity or deep rapport in each encounter, may distract attention and nullify the potential for a productive outcome that might otherwise arise with an attitude of indifference. And finally, relying on transmission as a substitute for personal introspective work is without question doomed to failure.

In summary, it's important for both seekers and Finders to learn the skill of getting inside another's head and to consistently put out feelers during spiritual meetings. And if the moment is ripe for spontaneous rapport, a Realized person can allow nothing to pervade except awareness. Those who are sensitive will be shaken to a greater degree and may get a glimpse of their True Nature if the mind accepts what they See. This, I believe, is the maximum type of transmission. Nothing is transmitted; rather, the student realizes they are what already *Is*, which is an infinite, non-individualized No Thing.

~ In Gratitude To All Explorers Of Heart And Mind