

The Powers that Be and The Powers that Are:
Exploring the Fluid Nature of Rank
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Rank and Privilege

a. Definitions

- i. Rank refers to the power we have relative to one another in relationship, groups, community and the world
- ii. Some kinds of rank are earned, while others are unearned. Unearned rank we acquire through birth, or by membership in a particular race, class, gender, etc
- iii. Privilege refers to the benefits and advantages that come from one's rank.

b. Effects

- i. You can't hide your rank. Others identify you with your rank because of your signals and communication style. Other people react to you as though you are aware of the rank communicated by your signals.
- ii. Each of us has an inner sense of our own rank that is determined by a variety of factors.
- iii. Most of us are more aware of the areas in which we feel we lack rank and less aware of areas where we are full of rank.

c. Kinds

- i. We talk about 4 types of rank: social, psychological, spiritual and contextual rank.
- ii. In Consensus Reality people have high and low rank in different areas. In Dreaming, everyone is equal and rank balances out.

Types of rank

Social Rank.

One's social rank is based on consensus reality factors such as: race, gender, age, class & economics, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, education, health & physical abilities, language.

People with social rank are rarely aware of it. It is mostly unconscious; it is like the air one breathes.

Contextual Rank.

Every group has its own rank structures. The power ascribed to an individual changes depending on the specific group or culture. For example, the CEO, managers, staff all have different powers because of their roles. A male CEO may have a great deal of power at work, but at home he may feel powerless. A spiritual organization may value those who are meditative and inward while a psychological group values those who express feelings openly.

Contextual rank is fluid. We notice our contextual rank when we move to another context, and are seen and valued differently.

Psychological Rank.

Psychological rank is acquired through life experience. It comes from many sources including:

- having your perceptions validated as a child, having a loving parent
- surviving suffering and coming out stronger and more compassionate
- having worked through the abuses of childhood
- self-awareness, knowing oneself
- receiving love and positive feedback from friends, colleagues, community
- living in a community that supports who you are
- wrestling with the ally; confronting your greatest fears

People with psychological rank are able to use their awareness and have confidence or esteem that comes from their inner work. They are able to express themselves even in the face of great social powers. They are fluid in their ability to relate and to tolerate tension.

Spiritual Rank.

Spiritual rank is independent of culture, family and the world. It comes from a variety of sources:

- being connected with something divine or transcendent that keeps you centered even in the midst of a storm and conflict
- a sense of great conviction; especially having "justice on your side"
- having had awesome and uncanny experiences
- being in a culture that recognizes or supports spiritual experiences.
- transmitted by a guru-- shaktipat
- drug experiences and altered states of consciousness
- loss, failure, death of loved one, trauma, having suffered and survived
- having a sense of your "calling" in life

People with spiritual rank are community builders; they have an uncanny ability to bring groups together. They radiate a sense of well-being.

Unconsciousness of Rank

People are generally more aware of the areas where they feel disempowered or “downed,” than they are of areas where they have power. When we are comfortable or we have received benefits, we rarely consider how it feels to be without those comforts or powers. For example, a man might be unaware of his sense of safety walking down a dark street. A person with white skin may be unaware that it is a privilege to go grocery shopping without being followed and suspected of being a thief.

It usually takes someone in a lower rank position to awaken those with higher rank. Those with lower rank are acutely aware of their lack of power. Those with higher rank might notice their privileges and then go unconscious again, whereas those with lower rank are constantly reminded of their plight.

When rank remains unacknowledged (whether it is social, psychological, spiritual or contextual) it inflames those with less rank. When people assume that everyone has the same access to power, those with less access to power become furious. This assumption escalates conflict. The facilitator can help the system become aware of its rank differences.

The Dreaming Potential of all Rank Experience

We tend to view power from the perspective of high and low—we have it or we don't. Viewing rank from a consensus reality perspective only, has its limitations. Let's begin to look at rank through a new lens. Rank is neutral, not high or low, good or bad. Every rank experience is a doorway into our dreaming process. Every rank experience can help us access our deepest personal powers.

From this perspective, no one is only a victim. All of our interactions are opportunities. This viewpoint can help us get beyond the experience of blame, shame, guilt and victimization. When a person who lacks social rank expresses herself passionately and truthfully she exhibits an awesome power that might not be accessible to the individual who is socially privileged. When a person who is financially rich but psychologically poor, admits his vulnerability, fear and loneliness, he opens a door for deeper connection.

Let's learn to be deeply democratic towards every rank experience. Consensus Reality rank is important and must be equalized. Every society should work towards that. Dreamland experiences are as important. We can get to dreamland experiences by amplifying and unfolding rank signals. Working with the essence level allows us to connect with the spirit of unification behind all rank. Our emphasis is on the deeper powers hidden in every experience.

Rank in Relationship

Rank is a fluid experience in relationship. The healthy confident person suddenly becomes a student of life at the bed of a dying friend. As we explore ourselves in relationship, rank shifts. Working with rank enriches relationship; it is a way to learn about each other, and to bring out different parts of ourselves.

The way we view rank can either support a polarization or encourage a deeper connection. By finding the hidden powers in each person's rank experience, differences can benefit the overall connection. The facilitator should acknowledge the importance of consensus reality rank but not let it become hypnotic. Concepts like right and wrong, high and low are less useful than the ability to celebrate the power of each parties' experiences.

Inner Work Exercise

Our premise: everyone has access to the psychological rank of being a learner. Therefore we are emphasizing the ability to learn and grow from any rank experience

1. When and where at the seminar have you felt challenged by the complexity of your own rank experience? It could be any of the ranks: social, contextual, psychological, spiritual.
2. How did you notice it: did you feel attacked and criticized, guilty, ashamed, afraid, looked down on, not heard, angry? Did you feel proud, suddenly generous, whole, lucky, superior, inspired? Did you go numb? Feel distant or detached?
3. Imagine a world or an inner atmosphere where each of your experiences were welcomed.
4. Pick one of those experiences. Feel into it. Feel the hidden powers in that experience.

Small Group Exercise

1. Choose a facilitator(s) and focus on whatever needs to happen in the group, whether it is the group experience itself or talking about what happened in the large group process.
2. Use all of your facilitation skills learned thus far and add rank awareness to your tool kit.
3. Make an attempt to be deeply democratic about all the rank experiences. Try and find the power and learning potential hidden in every strong interaction.
4. Name and frame the fluid nature of rank as it switches in interaction.