

Transpersonal Functions of Masks in NohKiDo

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This article discusses the transpersonal functions of masks in ritual and in drama therapy as expressed in the creative path of NohKiDo. NohKiDo, whose main components include the Prism of Consciousness (Personal, Transpersonal, and Universal), the Rainbow Method, Action Meditation techniques (masked meditation, etc.), and Therapeutic Noh Theater, is a therapeutic system developed by the author through the redefinition and interpretation of a set of transpersonal concepts based on Zeami's (one of the founders of Noh) original Noh formulation for Therapeutic Noh Theater. The most significant concepts of Ma (heightened energy through stillness and silence), *Mushin-no-kan* (transpersonal projection), *Ichu no kei* (projective imagination), and *Riken no ken* (transpersonal mirroring) pertain especially to the transpersonal functions of masks. The main aim of a Therapeutic Noh Theater performance is to heighten the consciousness of its actors, as well as the members of its audience, to a transpersonal level; a Therapeutic Noh Theater performance of *Born from Good Angel's Tears* is discussed as an example. The creative path of NohKiDo is introduced here as a lifelong journey to the spiritual, within and without, via masks, the arts, and creativity.

During my theater studies at the University of Helsinki in 1966, the power of masks first captured my imagination. It was our masked mime class. The masks we used were gray rubber masks, yet the illusion was total. The mask was no longer a separate artificial addition on the student's face, but a new believable character was born (Hiltunen, 1988).

In 1967, I was introduced to the authentic Japanese Noh Theater in Helsinki, Finland. In 1972, I was finally able to see Noh in its own cultural setting in Kyoto, Japan. The experience was so profound that it changed my life and career. After returning from Kyoto, I began the challenging task of searching for books in English about Noh and Noh masks, and developing my own method, called creative path of NohKiDo. After moving to Washington, D.C. in 1977, I had many opportunities to see Noh on stage, to find more literature on Noh, and to finally go to study Noh in Kyoto and Nara, Japan, starting in 1988.

After all these years, regardless of how many encounters with masked improvisations or masked performances I have witnessed, I still get the same thrill from the transformative powers of masks. In order to understand why masks are so powerful and from where their magical and transpersonal connections originate, I will look back into the history of the



functions of masks. How and why did the ancient people use masked rituals? Some pertinent history of Noh Theater and its transpersonal roots will also be introduced.

The transpersonal concepts regarding the use and the functions of masks in the creative path of NohKiDo drew their initial inspiration from the writings of Zeami (1363-1443). At first, Zeami wrote down the teachings of his father Kannami (1333-1384) and later on created and documented his own theories about the training of Noh actors (Zeami, 1970, 1975). Both Kannami and Zeami are the founders of the classic Noh Theater, as it is still practiced today, six hundred years later.

The word "transpersonal" literally means "beyond mask" or "beyond persona." Transpersonal or spiritual psychology acknowledges the reality that transcends body-ego boundaries. NohKiDo as a method and process consists of multifaceted components of the Projective Prism of Consciousness, the Rainbow Method and Therapeutic Noh Theater. The terms used in NohKiDo vary from Chinese to Japanese, thus terms such as "ki" may be replaced with "chi," "hara" with "dan tien," or "NohKiDo" with "NohCh'iDo." Both Japanese and Chinese terms can be used because NohKiDo is not exclusively Japanese or Chinese but multiethnic and multicultural. This article will focus on NohKiDo only in reference to some of the transpersonal functions of masks as they interplay in the components of the system.

The Transpersonal Functions of Masks in Ritual

The ancient people were aware of spirits, the spiritual world, and spiritual powers. Their rituals were created to connect with the spirits of animals as well as humans, and masks became the mediators between the physical and the spiritual world. Thus there is no question about the transpersonal functions of masks in the ancient rituals. In many ancient cultures, even the mask making became a ritual and followed some strict order, with its rules, and taboos.

Ritual is defined here as a prescribed order of conducting a spiritual or transpersonal ceremony, which consists of drumming, chanting, and masked dancing. In those rituals, the transpersonal functions of masks have been to evoke, honor, worship, and embody deities, ancestors, or animal and plant spirits. Masks have also been commonly used as a part of funeral rites to honor ancestors, to assure fertility, as a part of other

life-cycle rites, to cure illnesses, or to protect against evil forces and misfortune in general.

Riley (1955) and Lommel (1970) talk of the powers of masks, which were considered a magic means of protection against the dead. According to them, dead enemies, animals, or ancestors were considered a constant threat from the mysterious spiritual world. Consequently, people had to find mediators who could directly connect to the spiritual world and communicate with the spirits, calm them down, and make them favorable toward the living.

Riley (1955) describes the worldview of the ancient people as one of respectful admiration, with wonder and awe, toward the animate as well as the inanimate. Imagination guided the ancient people to see and experience life's mysteries of birth, survival, and death with fear and respect of spirits and the forces of nature. Masks and their magical powers of transformation became the ritualistic protection against the threat of the unknown. Thus the mask itself also became an instrument of spiritual magic powers.

Sorell (1973) indicates that, in order for the early men and women to transform during this ritualistic dance, they had to not only let go of their own identity, but also conceal it in order to make the illusion total. According to him, ancient persons thought of the spirit as living in the face of a person. Thus by donning a mask, one could admit another spirit into one's physical body. The mask made it possible for its wearer to become one with the mask, or at least to become possessed by it.

Immediately after donning the mask, the incantation, chanting, and rhythmic drumming magically transformed the tribesmen and tribeswomen into a masked god or spirit. Thus it created and evoked altered states of consciousness in the wearer of the mask as well as the person who was the living object of the ceremony, ritual or rite. The wearer of the mask became whatever the mask represented: ancestor, god, or spirit, and the person who witnessed the transformation was also transformed. The altered states of consciousness were a shared experience.

The Transpersonal Roots of the Ancient Noh Theater

The indigenous Japanese folk religion *kagura*, in which masks are used, has its origin and roots in the Shinto, Buddhist, and Taoist religions, the synthesis of which created this religion, both prehistoric and pro-



tohistoric. Kagura, which is still practiced in Japan, can be defined as “dance of gods,” “Shinto dance” and “ceremonial ritual dance.” Kagura has assumed regionally varying identities and practices, which can range from shamanistic ritual to the blessing of a harvest. Besides seasonal rituals, daily ritual dances are practiced in some form of kagura as a part of shrine proceedings. “Like folk religion almost everywhere, it places its main emphasis on ritual and practice rather than on ideas and doctrines, is distinctly magico-religious in character and preserves the most ancient shaman layers of the native religion. Indeed, kagura is the prototype of ancient shamanic rituals in Japan” (Averbuch, 1995, p. 3).

Hoff (1978) bases his analysis on the Japanese classification by Yasuji Honda, Hoff differentiates more than one hundred varieties of masked kagura, giving intricate details and distinctions. For the purpose of this review, only some of the most essential spiritual features of kagura will be discussed.

Kagura, in the form of the Shinto dance rituals still performed today in Japanese shrines, has used masks in distinct ways. Essentially, the invocation of Shinto gods (*kami mukae*) through the ritualistic dance and music of kagura takes place at different levels. The *kami* may be considered truly present in the masked dancer, he may be temporarily manifested, or he may be present in the mask carried around during the performance.

In Dake Kagura, the gods come dancing to bestow their blessings of fertility, longevity, and prosperity on the people, and to infuse them with their divine vital energies. Dake kagura is famous for its energetic, often acrobatic, dancing and for its colorful performance. As a yamabushi kagura, Dake Kagura inherited the eclectic world view and the practice of Shugendo, the tradition of mountain asceticism, and is believed to possess special magical powers to ward off evil and prevent calamities. (Averbuch, 1995, p.2)

Hoff’s (1978) sources are both Honda and Yamaji, the latter of whom emphasizes the fact that in spite of being Buddhist by religious orientation, the dance rituals of yamabushi monks also contained indigenous Shinto performance elements. These ascetic monks spent their lives not only performing these sacred ritual dances but also healing, teaching, and preaching. Their sacred performances often included such ancient rituals as *Okina* and *Sanbaso*, which are currently in the repertoire of classical Noh troupes. In addition, there are *Oshiki-mai* or *Okina-no-shita mai*, in the beginning of which the mask of Okina is purified as a part of the performance before it is donned. So these Okina-centered performances were presented prior to Zeami by both yamabushi and sarugaku performers.

In kagura dances, the masks are removed in the middle of the ritual. Sometimes on stage, dancers may, after removing the masks while facing the curtain, push their masks through the curtain to the dressing room. At other times they may stick their heads past the curtains to the dressing room, to the “heavenly realm,” while changing their appearance and transforming themselves (Averbuch, 1995, p. 82).

A variety of performance elements are indicated in kagura: the use of masked performers; the use of masks as a part of the performance; the use of boiling water (*yudate*) for invocation of *kami* and purification; the use of salt for purification and objects such as a religious wand (*heisoku*) or a sword held in hand during the dance (*torimono no mai*). In the *Shishi* (lion) kagura, *kami* is present in the lion masks while the performers carry them about (Hoff, 1978). In the *torimono kagura*, *kami* is considered to be present only temporarily during the performance.

In kagura ritual, the stage setting creates a symbolic universe in which the deities commune between their heavenly abode and the human world, and on which the dancers are both manifestations of the

kami and the priests who summon them down to worship them. Thus the structure of the setting itself provides the symbolic devices that render the kagura performance magically efficacious. (Averbuch, 1995, p. 82)

In kagura, the headgear and masks are considered channeling devices for the deities who possess them via the masking. "In other words, masks depict not only humans dressed as kami, but also kami dressed as humans" (Averbuch, p. 97). Masks are sacred objects in kagura.

When searching for the transpersonal roots of the classic Noh, there are many secular roots, such as sarugaku, but kagura ritual dances are no doubt the most essential predecessor whose transpersonal influence is still so strongly seen in Noh Theater today.

In general, one could say that the emotional energy of Noh is subtle, symbolic, extremely controlled, and rhythmically paced, gaining strength from its profound contrasts and dramatic build-ups, not unlike in kagura.

The Transpersonal Functions of Masks in the Classic Noh Theater

In the classic Noh Theater, *shite* (the main or principal character) wears a mask throughout the performance. On rare occasions, after an initial appearance without a mask, the *shite* returns masked to express his/her dramatic transformation, as in the play *Tsuchigumo* (Spider Spirit). Occasionally, however, *shite tsure* (*shite's* companion) may also wear a mask. Other characters do not wear masks in the classic Noh.

Yasuo (1984) enumerates about one hundred and fifty Noh masks and categorizes them into six types: 1) Okina, the principal god mask, the oldest Noh mask; 2) fierce Shinto or Buddhist Deity masks that ward off evil forces; 3) Old Man masks; 4) Man masks; 5) Woman masks; and 6) Spirit masks.

Noh masks form their own genres. Carved from wood and painted using ancient painting methods, the masks are extremely vulnerable to damage even when barely touched. The minerals and sweat from the hands can remove the paints, which do not have any protective cover. That the masks are considered sacred objects and treated with extreme reverence is an apparent legacy from kagura dance, in which the evocation of deities could be achieved through objects or by the person performing the dance. The Noh actor puts on his/her mask in the green room as the final act before

entering the stage. This ritualistic process seems to date to the kagura dance, where an object held by the dancer or the dancer him/herself becomes the instrument or the medium of this momentary incarnation of a deity.

Noh masks are very small in size and usually expose a part of the wearer's actual face. They are not easy to wear. The holes for the eyes are extremely small. Because of this, among other reasons, there are four pillars on the Noh stage to guide the masked actor and enable him/her to navigate without falling off the stage.

Noh and its highly symbolic performance style, as well as its masks, have many interpretations among theater professionals, as well as performance theories. According to Nearman (1984), W. B. Yeats and Paul Claudel considered Noh and Noh masks sacred. Whereas,

others, like Bertold Brecht and the followers of Gordon Craig, interpreted the mask as an alienating device in accord with their own interests in anti-naturalistic and presentational theatre. The creatively stimulating interpretations of these poets of the theatre have in many ways obscured or distorted both the history and the artistic intention of No. Isolating No from its cultural setting, these writers often assume that similarities in outer appearance were due to similarities in artistic intent. (Nearman, 1984, pp. 20-21)

Zenchiku Komparu, Zeami's brother-in-law, who was a Zen Buddhist and who wrote a very detailed, spiritually focused analysis of Noh, talks of the mind and spirit of the Noh mask itself. According to Nearman (1984), Zenchiku does not refer to the projections of the actor wearing the mask but rather to projections of the mask maker's and creator's inner life inherent in the mask itself.

Traditional Noh actors will, months prior to a performance, look at all the potential masks for their role and meditate on the masks.

He lets the mask speak to him. The particular feelings that seem to emanate from the mask as the actor turns it in various positions do not constitute simply the projections in his personal, subjective responses, but appear to rise from the mask itself, and can therefore be considered a product of the mind or spirit of the mask. (Nearman, 1984, p. 44)

This ritualistic process relies heavily on the actor's enlightened ability to see beyond the surface of the

mask. Zenchiku and Zeami alike emphasize the spiritual inner development of Noh actors. Zenchiku further explains some deeper meanings of the Noh mask with profoundly significant psycho-spiritual and even therapeutic implications (Nearman, p.45). In the ritual of donning the mask, the Noh actor will hold the mask in front of him before donning it, looking at the dark inside of the mask. When the mask is held against the light, the openings for eyes, ears, nose, and mouth total seven “portals of human perception, analogous to the stars of the North-Pointing Constellation that act as guides to the path of human travel” (p. 45). He further refers to the Buddhist tradition, which considers the sensory channels not only as the source and cause of delusions but also as guides for spiritual awakening and enlightenment.

At the technical level, the Noh masks can be manipulated with slight movements of up and down or right and left, varying the tempo. This creates a unique impression of the emotional change on the masked face from serene to sad, for example. Besides witnessing the expressive changes on a single Noh mask as a member of an audience, I have also received feedback as a performer using authentic Noh masks. For example, while I was demonstrating Therapeutic Noh Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, many viewers came to me afterwards and assured me they had seen the mask change its emotional expressions and asked me questions about it.

Nearman points out that both Zeami, as one of the founders, and Zenchiku, as the early Noh master, did make it clear that technical training and practice are essential in Noh, but more importantly the Noh actors are required to develop themselves creatively, artistically, and spiritually. Only when coupled with this total approach can the Noh actor, even today, impact his/her audience at the transpersonal level. When the technical training is pointed out, as far as the movement of the head to the right, left, up, or down is concerned, Iwao Kongoh, the Head of the Kongoh School of Noh (Teele, 1984, pp. 83–84), emphasizes the importance of imagination of what is being expressed, not just the mere movement of the head.

Kanze (1984), a Noh actor, talks of the power of masks. He indicates that for him personally as a performer, some masks have empowered him spiritually as a Noh actor on stage. Instead of the common word for mask, *men*, the word *omote* (facade) is used for Noh

masks. This clearly indicates the special relationship that Noh actors have to their masks. For them, the mask is not just a wooden artifact but a companion endowed with magical and supernatural powers. According to Kanze, besides being aesthetically superior, Noh masks are media for superhuman spirits and deities, and possess spiritual strength.

There is a special seating arrangement in Noh theaters, which uniquely connects the audience with the Noh stage. The minimalistic stage structure showing bare wood, the asymmetrical seating, the use of only the most essential props, and a small curtain located between the green room and the beginning of the bridge emulate the kagura’s ritualistic stage settings. Some costume changes regarding the outer kimonos and masks may take place on the stage itself with the aid of a *koken* (stage assistant, who himself is often a Noh master). The Noh stage is build like an open shrine or temple space. Much of the kagura’s ritualistic traditions are seen directly in the performance of *Okina*, which is, in fact, performed in shrines.

The original meaning of the word for the bridge on the Noh stage, *hashigakari*, is “suspension bridge”—that is, something aerial. Thus, the emphasis is more on the time-transcending journeys between this world and the other world of ghosts and spirits than on the daily comings-and-goings of real human beings. (Komparu, 1983, p.124)

There are two ways of seeing the symbolism of the bridge: 1) as leading from the heavenly realm to the earth, or 2) as leading from the earth to the heavenly realm. Takabayashi Koji, a Noh actor (Bethe, 1984) states that when performing *Okina*,

I walk onto the stage as my everyday self. Once I wear the mask, I am in communion with the god inside me, with the universal part that transcends the mundane. This part of me which is godlike dances and that same universal god resides in the mask: therefore both mask and performer are god. (p. 96)

Masks in Drama Therapy

Masks used in therapy function as the protection, so that the true self can be revealed. Masks in therapy are considered first and foremost a “projective device.” Masks and mask making are not used only in drama therapy and psychodrama (Moreno, 1999; Jennings, 1992 & 1995; Landy, 1986, 1993, & 1996; Jones,

1996; Scheff, 1979; Emunah, 1994; Grainger, 1995; Holt, 1992; Barrager-Dunne, 1992; Shuttleworth, 1981; Naitove, 1981), but also in arts therapy (Mills Dufrene, 1991; Gerity, 2000; Henley, 1994; Rugh, 2001). The use of masks by the cited authors seem mostly to aid in addressing the body/ego problems, needs, and shadow conflicts. For example, Landy (1996) promotes the use of masks for distancing, yet he considers them less distancing than puppets and dolls. Jones (1996) uses masks and mask making in drama therapy to provide his clients an additional means of expressing their internal and secret roles. Fryrear & Stephens (1988) use masks and video feedback to facilitate this very process of intrapsychic communication.

The Creative Way of NohKiDo

Nearman (1982, 1984), Ortolani (1983) and Pilgrim (1972) emphasize both Zeami's and Zenchiku's expectations for the spiritual and creative development of Noh actors. Ortolani and Pilgrim state that there is a "way" or "path" of Noh. Pilgrim (1972) discusses the spirituality of Noh Theater as grown from the spiritual traditions of Japan. According to him, Noh Theater does not differ from the better-known and long-established spiritual practices as paths to enlightenment, namely the tea ceremony (*chado*), the way of painting (*gado*), the way of poetry (*kado*), the way of calligraphy (*shodo*), the way of swords (*kendo*) in the martial arts, and the way of archery (*kyudo*). "Throughout much of Japanese tradition, artistic discipline, artistic form, and aesthetic sensitivity have been important ways of attaining spiritual or religious goals as well as expressing and experiencing sacred Reality" (Pilgrim, 1972).

NohKiDo is also a path or a way to obtaining higher consciousness via creativity and the artistic pursuit of expressive excellence. Like kagura, the predecessor of Noh theater, NohKiDo emphasizes ritual and practice. The vitalization of the performer, as well as the audiences, of the rituals or performances with transpersonal insight or energy, is the goal of NohKiDo practice in the Rainbow Method as well as during Therapeutic Noh Theater performances.

Chi (energy)

The essential energy flow in Noh dance radiates from the *dan tien* (energy center below the navel). Ancient roots connect the three styles of meditative movement

of Chi Kung, Tai Chi, and Noh dance. The ancient Chi Kung breathing methods refer to "heaven, man, and earth." There are breathing techniques that directly refer to the triad and localize them in a body through mentally focusing on the specified body parts: 1) breathing from the top of your head (heaven); 2) breathing through *dan tien* (man); and 3) breathing through your feet (earth). This method was also taught to me by my Noh Master in Japan.

Zeami (1970, 1975) talks of chi in relation to movement and voice. Chi is considered the heavenly energy, which can be seen in a person's movement. My Tai Chi master, Sifu Chao Chi Liu, demonstrated the use of chi when we were touring Taiwan. He had each of his five black belt students hold an iron spear against his throat and push it until the spears bent. None of the spears pierced the skin on his throat or damaged it in any way. The secrets of chi have been known to the ancient cultures for millennia, but we in the West have just recently become reacquainted with it and with the belief that Energy is a transpersonal reality.

Talent

This term is used to replace the term "shadow" in order to widen it and make it inclusive of a positive component. "Talent" was a unit of money in ancient Greece, Rome, and the Middle East. Coins have two sides; consequently the word "talent" is used to amplify the two-sidedness. "Shadow" is defined as the repressed and denied part of one's psyche; whereas "talent" is defined as consisting of both the repressed negative failed lessons from one incarnation to another and the positive inherited skills and talents brought from one incarnation to the current one.

Creativity

I consider creativity to be a divine gift inherited by all human beings. The major components of everyday creativity are flexibility, feasibility, and originality. The ability to synthesize and create a new combination based on the existing components is also a part of creative processes. Inspiration and intuitive knowing can lead to transpersonal creativity. I have developed a method of Meditative Vail Painting using deliberately the variant "vail" for "veil" in the term. As an example of intuitive knowing leading to transpersonal creativity, I painted a meditative vail painting entitled "Healing hand opens the heart chakra" six years before

I had the actual experience in Brazil. As creativity can also create a pathway to the Divine, one must be careful, because it can also lead to the unholy side of spirituality. The choice is ours, to use our gifts in the service of humanity or for our own personal gain.

NohKiDo

The Creative Way of NohKiDo as a method consists of the Projective Prism of Consciousness, The Rainbow Method, and Therapeutic Noh Theater training, practice, and performances. The Prism of Consciousness identifies from where one is projecting (e.g., Personal, Transpersonal and Universal; Hiltunen, 2001, 2003a, 2003b).

All of the previously listed components of the method are interwoven as categorized by the Projective Prism of Consciousness and the color/chakra spectrum of the Rainbow Method. Creativity is the essence of the way. It connects via intuition and inspiration to one's higher self. The Finnish mythological epic of *Kalevala* and many ancient Finnish traditions have inspired the use of lamenting (Hiltunen, 2003a) and the creation of the Seven Stages of Womanhood Ritual (Hiltunen, 2001), which are also a part of NohKiDo. In addition, NohKiDo is centered on many "Action Meditation" and creative arts practices, some of which utilize masks. The term "Action Meditation" refers here to meditative practices that do not require sitting still as in *Zazen*, but rather aim to reach a meditative stage through engagement in some form of action such as the movement meditation forms of tai chi, chi kung, Noh dance, Zen dance, walking meditation, Masked Meditation or haiku meditation, and eating meditation. NohKiDo draws its spiritual foundation not only from Zen and other ancient spiritual approaches, but also from mystic Christian concepts and practices. This article will not address the latter, as it is the topic of another article.

The awareness of our contemporary minds varies as far as spiritual reality is concerned. Thus my own acceptance and acknowledgement of transpersonal reality is based on a lifelong search for the spiritual and on actual experiences in it, for example, encounters with my deceased grandmother's spirit and some of my mystical experiences with Christ. The scientific validation of personal and spiritual or transpersonal experiences is not easy. It is up to the reader to accept or reject them. It could be said that for those who have experienced transpersonal or mystical realities, no

explanation is necessary; and for those who have not, no explanation will do. This is to say that the examples of the transpersonal concepts presented in this article are based on inspiration, intuitive knowing, and personal experiences.

Transpersonal Functions of Masks in NohKiDo

I have been developing my creative arts therapy approach for almost four decades. Since 1966 (Hiltunen, 1988) I have had an increasing interest in the use of masks as a major projective therapeutic device. I have witnessed the transformative power of masks both in training professionals and as an intricate part of my therapeutic theater, which consists of an integrated ensemble of artist volunteers (actors, visual artists, musicians, writers) and actors with mental retardation and developmental and multiple disabilities.

I can still recall vividly many of the improvisations in my workshops all over the world (Finland, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, Russia, Lithuania, and the USA). The projected imagery created by masking is like a film strip which I am able to recall, not in detail, but by its powerful emotional energy and expression projecting from deeply personal, sometimes transpersonal, conscious or unconscious, inner sources.

A collection of my earlier *papier-mache* masks were designed to depict the four major races of the world: white, black, reddish brown and yellow. In my workshop in Canada, at the University of Calgary in 1983, a student of the creative arts therapies selected the yellow mask, which also has a tragic emotional expression. She was able to get in touch with her own suppressed grief, yet among the viewers her expressions transcended the projection of her personal pain. They created associations, among other things, to the Vietnam War and its burn victims caused by napalm bombing. Her five-minute improvisation consisted of a simple set of mimetic self-expressions, noncreativity. I have developed a method of Meditative Vail Painting using deliberately the verbally connecting honestly and mercilessly to her own inner pain and mediating this powerful moment not only for her but also for us in the audience. It exemplifies profoundly the power of masks to enable not only the wearer, but also the members of the viewing audience, to project from a transcended perspective.

During therapy sessions and the masked improvisations, an ability to select the mask that draws our attention is the first and most crucial step in successful

masking. Our honesty in responding spontaneously to the associations, memories, and emotions elicited by that very mask is a prerequisite for the creation of a moment of seeming unity with the mask and the wearer. Finally, the power of the improvisations will rely on the directness of the connection with our unconscious—our suppressed and denied ideas, thoughts, memories, and feelings (Hiltunen, 1988). The masked improvisations are an essential part of the training in both the Rainbow Method and Therapeutic Noh Theater. It may start at Personal level (guilt, fear, or anger) of the Prism of Consciousness, yet transcendence and transformation to forgiveness, courage, faith, or love will enable the wearer to transcend body/ego needs and perceptions and reach the transpersonal in his or her projections.

Ancient men and women believed that one's face was the gateway to the transpersonal. Consequently, when a mask was donned, the passage from the personal to transpersonal took place almost automatically. Chanting and dancing were also an important component for the final transformation. In NohKiDo, masks still have the same potential to create the passage from personal to transpersonal. When the "baggage" of the personal body/ego is unresolved and too heavy, the masked person is unable to transcend personal problems, and the "take-off" is not easy, or may not even be possible. The content of the baggage may be assessed by using the Prism of Consciousness tool.

In the overall process of NohKiDo, masks do not always function at the Transpersonal level. In the beginning phases of the Rainbow Method, when the chakras that are considered to function at the Personal level (base chakra—red, sacral chakra—orange, and solar plexus chakra—yellow) are the focus of the intervention, it is essential that plenty of time be given for the participant to explore their body/ego needs and issues. Initially, rainbow-colored masks and scarves representing each chakra are used to identify the needs of participants. However, since the Rainbow Method as a whole is still being developed further, no detailed description of the use of the rainbow-colored masks is given here. When the participants are ready and will have an opportunity to perform with the Therapeutic Noh Theater, the Transpersonal will become the focus of the intervention. Even after engaging in the Therapeutic Noh Theater, only the main characters wear authentic Noh masks.

Masked Meditation

Transpersonal communication does not always need language, because it is able to step above and beyond ordinary perception and comprehension. When the "higher self" is receiving information through intuition and not through the ego, the perception and comprehension transcend the ego's demands for intellectualization, analysis, and reasoning. The language needs of the higher self (transpersonal) may directly be met through mythology, dreams, and images, rather than by linear, logical reasoning.

Masked Meditation as a technique has evolved over the years. Actually, two years ago, when I was teaching a summer course in a college in Finland, my international students began acting with the masks in such a wide range of busy activities, accompanied with a lot of verbal expressions, that I decided to invite them to stop totally and begin to meditate on the essence of their mask. When they had an opportunity to slow down, through stillness and silence, they were able to discover most amazingly simple but powerful expressions for their own personal growth. I used the same basic steps and the technique with a mirror as with the masked improvisations (Hiltunen, 1988). With Masked Meditation, however, the focus shifts from activity to nonactivity.

The appeal of a specific mask and the reasons that the student chooses it are often caused by unconscious identification with a specific quality, emotion, or characteristic of the mask. The Masked Meditation gives an opportunity to excavate and bring to conscious awareness that special chosen quality. The stillness and silence will enable the masked person to own it, accept it (even if the quality is not acceptable for the conscious mind), and transcend it. The Masked Meditation as a process may take only five minutes but, depending how deeply students are willing to dive into their own being, it can also take up to thirty minutes. It is potentially a very powerful method, and as in all methods, the outcome depends on the willingness of the students to explore their inner life, and their strength and security in their own vulnerability.

In the Masked Meditation, the focus is on only one isolated aspect of the mask. Projective Imagination is used to mediate the aspect through nonaction and awareness of the here-and-now moment. The term Projective Imagination will be defined later on in this article.

The Projective Prism of Consciousness

The Projective Prism of Consciousness is used for the Ritual of Seven Stages of Womanhood (Hiltunen, 2001), for lamenting (Hiltunen, 2003a), and as an intuitive assessment tool for poetry therapy (Hiltunen, 2003b). In general, the Projective Prism of Consciousness identifies the source of projections as Personal (ego/body concerns), Transpersonal (beyond ego/body concerns via transcendence and transformation), and Universal (unity, or no-self consciousness via transcendence and transformation). This article examines the functions of masks in NohKiDo as projections from the Transpersonal side of the Prism of Consciousness. All of the previously listed applications of the Projective Prism of Consciousness may be used for the assessment of the functions of masks in the Rainbow Method as well as in Therapeutic Noh Theater. The three sides of the Prism of Consciousness (Personal, Transpersonal, and Universal) in poetry therapy are as follows: Either actively or more passively projected through five major domains, the first three of which are the different modes of thinking: 1) Intuitive, 2) Contemplative 3) Rational/Analytic, 4), Affective and 5) Somatic. The therapeutically significant roots, content and outcome of the poetry can further be divided into the following categories: 1) Pathological, 2) traumatic 3) negative, 4) realistic/naturalistic, 5) socially conscious, 6) humorous, 7) metaphoric/symbolic 8) imaginative, 9) insightful, 10) creative, 11) authentic, 12) courageous, 13) visionary, 14) positive, 15) inspirational, 16) nurturing, 17) compassionate, 18) cathartic, and 19) purgative. Via transcendence resulting from acceptance, understanding, forgiveness and love, transformation may take place and consciousness shifts from a personal to a transpersonal perception. The transpersonal or universal contents and outcomes differ in degree and are identified in the checklist, which is presented after a basic model is introduced.

In addition, the Bereavement Prism of Consciousness (Hiltunen, 2003a) will be useful when assessing the use of masks as transpersonal projective devices. Masks and masked rituals were a means of reaching altered states of consciousness for ancient men and women. In NohKiDo, masks are treated with respect and awe, because of their sacredness.

There are, however, masks that are used exclusively for training in Therapeutic Noh Theater or as a part of the Rainbow Method. These masks do not have the

same ambiance as the authentic Noh masks, some of which are termed “universal.” These non-Noh masks may have been collected from all over the world—from Finland, Italy, China, and Indonesia. In most cases the non-Noh masks represent so-called character masks, which are used in the Rainbow Method as well as in the early phases of the Therapeutic Noh Theater training. The Rainbow Method and the early phases of Therapeutic Noh Theater training use many masking exercises, most of which address the Personal side of the Prism of Consciousness, namely the issues of body, ego, or talent. Occasionally, a transcendence and transformation may lead to Transpersonal perception, which can be assessed by the Prism of Consciousness tool. When an actor or a participant in NohKiDo training has evolved and is ready to participate in the Therapeutic Noh Theater rehearsals and performances, the Transpersonal side of the Prism of Consciousness is the aim of all of the experiences. Later on in this article the Transpersonal concepts will be defined and discussed.

As applied in NohKiDo, transpersonal psychology transcends extensive focus on negative values, weaknesses, problems, and pathology and, without ignoring challenges, draws its strength from positive values, wellness, and creativity. It does not focus only on the shadow or pathology, but on talent, previously defined as both the strengths and weaknesses of each individual. It raises questions about the true purpose and meaning of one’s life on earth. Furthermore, it aims to connect participants via creativity and intuition to their higher selves, simultaneously aiming to strengthen their ability to be present in and aware of each moment.

The Rainbow Method

This method consists of the use of the rainbow colors as identified in Chakras, or the seven sacred centers in a human body. One of the methods, which I developed and use as a part of the Rainbow Method, is Meditative Vail Painting. Mandala painting also accompanies each color/chakra. (Since this article focuses on the use of masks, further examination of the painting components is beyond its scope.) As the color/chakra spectrum is central in this method, masks, and vails of colors representing each chakra are used.

The Rainbow Method is divided into the components of the color/chakra spectrum, starting from the

Personal: 1) base chakra, red (body); 2) sacral chakra, orange (ego); 3) solar plexus chakra, yellow, including black and white (related to talent, metaphorically taken from an ancient coin's sides with heads referring to gifts/skills and knowledge brought from one incarnation to another on one side and tails to lessons to be learned in this incarnation on the other side); 4a) heart chakra, green (heart; body/ego/talent), the "gatekeeper" to the Transpersonal projections; *Transpersonal:* 4b) thymus chakra, turquoise, not always included in lists of chakras (acknowledged as the transitory chakra and color from green to blue and from heart to throat chakra); 5) throat chakra, blue; 6) brow chakra, violet (third eye); and *Universal:* 7) crown chakra, magenta.

When transpersonal functions of masks in NohKiDo are discussed, the Prism of Consciousness creates the framework and provides the assessment tool. The Rainbow Method provides the chakra/color framework for the training, practice, and therapy to enable the participant to work from Personal and then transition to Transpersonal, and eventually to the Universal perception of life.

Therapeutic Noh Theater also offers training, rehearsing, and preparation for the actual performances, which aim to operate at the Transpersonal level. The three components of NohKiDo interweave and cannot be totally discussed as separate practices.

Poetry writing is also an essential component of the Rainbow Method. Both haiku and renku poetry, as well as free form, are used. This eventually leads to playwriting or dramatization of stories for Therapeutic Noh Theater. The poetry itself may also be used for Noh kata recitals as it is chanted to accompany the dance recital at the Personal level of training. Mask making is also a part of the NohKiDo training, and masked improvisations are a very significant method at the same level. The masks are prepared so that emotions, negative and positive, are expressed in their colors. As this portion of the method is currently being developed further, this discussion of the transpersonal functions of masks will mostly focus on the Therapeutic Noh Theater.

Therapeutic Noh Theater

Therapeutic Noh Theater, a form of transpersonal drama therapy developed since 1966, synthesizes ancient theater, rituals, mythology, and spiritual traditions of Japan, Finland, and other ancient cultures with contemporary theater and healing practices to

produce catharsis, positive change, personal and transpersonal growth, and healing. A Therapeutic Noh Theater performance is actually a ritual, with its previously defined components.

The aims of Therapeutic Noh Theater are to teach discipline, physical self-control, stillness of one's mind, and expansion of one's awareness from the Personal to the Transpersonal through connecting and communicating with the audience. It culminates in theater productions that consist of ancient music and chanting, basic and expressive sacred dance and movement forms, and mime, and utilize glamorous costumes and masks. It aims to touch deeply and transpersonally not only its participating actors but also its viewing audiences.

In 1996, after the Therapeutic Noh Theater performance of *Good Angel's Tears*, the audience was asked to respond in writing about their experience. Sean Schultz, a young man who gave permission for his name to be used after seeing the performance, commented: "The last time I was moved in this way was when my son was born 2 months ago. The feeling was so similar but different in many ways. But since I have been asked to describe this is the only way I can." This is an example of the transpersonal impact.

The reference to birth is remarkable, since birth rituals were honored in many ancient cultures. "Thank you for opening my heart" was another response to the same performance. However, oftentimes, the audience members reported that they could not find the exact words to describe what they had experienced.

The Use of Masks to Create Transpersonal Impact on Participants and Audience

In the Therapeutic Noh Theater, unlike in its classic counterpart, masks are used by most of the actors. However, in the Therapeutic Noh Theater, only the main character or his or her companion may use the classic Noh masks. Others may wear masks from all over the world—from China, Indonesia, or Italy.

Therapeutic Noh Theater training begins at the Personal level of the Prism of Consciousness. Body-centered training begins with relaxation, tai chi, chi kung, Zen dance, walking meditation, masked improvisations and basic Noh kata. Chanting, mask making and the introduction of the Expressive Noh kata will culminate in masked dance recitals.

The Creative way of NohKiDo is founded on the spiritual aspects of not only Noh but also other ancient

and spiritual traditions. Some of the following concepts were inspired by Zeami and Zenchiku, who introduced many important concepts: *gassho*, donning of the mask, ritual of mask removal; *ma*, *mushin no kan*, *ichu-no-kei*; and *riken-no-ken*. No English translations for the Japanese terms are given here, because I have specifically defined them and will introduce and define the terms later in this article. Other transpersonal concepts of NohKiDo, such as talent and the mystic spiritual connection of the practitioner of NohKiDo, are concepts not necessarily based on or inspired by Noh. Combinations of Buddhist and mystic Christian concepts are inherent in NohKiDo as well (Hiltunen, 2003b). For the sake of the short format of this article, not all of the concepts will be discussed in depth.

The impact of Noh masks or the masked actors on their audience plays an essential part in the often non-verbal and even transpersonal communication that takes place between the actor and his or her audiences. The profound catharsis I experienced as a member of the audience at my first Noh performance in Japan and the experiences described by a spectator at a *Good Angel's Tears* production seem similar. My recollection of my initial cathartic experience in Kyoto, Japan, in 1972 at a Noh theater (Hiltunen, 1988) was rekindled not only by the written evaluative comments on *Good Angel's Tears* but even more profoundly by the verbal comments made by the spectators after the performances. Their deeply and positively felt emotional comments made me understand that Therapeutic Noh Theater has been able to capture some of the original sacredness of the ancient Noh Theater.

***Gassho* (Honoring)**

Gassho is the general greeting by the students of NohKiDo and the members of the Therapeutic Noh Theater. When practicing Zazen in a Japanese Sanshoji temple, I was given a handout that defined *gassho* as follows: "Hold the palms and fingers of both hands together. *Gassho* is an expression of respect, faith and devotion. Because the two hands (duality) are joined together, it expresses the One-Mind." Hands are raised in front of the chest while stopping to bow. When one enters the space for the Keiko Komatsubara Noh Stage at the Art and Drama Therapy Institute in Washington, D.C. for training, rehearsing, or performances, one honors the space and everyone in it by *gassho* at the door. This ritualistic honoring is done also

at other times, when respect is expressed toward a member of the group, as a thank-you or an excuse-me.

Donning of Masks

The importance of the ritualistic donning of a mask, especially a Noh mask, cannot be overemphasized in Therapeutic Noh Theater. In classic Noh Theater, a Noh actor bows before the mask before donning it in the green room, which is just behind the entrance curtain. The adjustment of the mask to the correct angle on the face is also very crucial in maximizing the impact of moving of the head while on stage.

Ritual of Mask Removal (Acceptance)

Sometimes masks are removed in kagura during the ritual. Sometimes in Classic Noh Theater, *shite* may change his mask during the performance, when his back is turned or he is otherwise not directly in view. The Ritual of Mask Removal is authentically created for the Therapeutic Noh Theater and it has proven to be a powerful means of awakening for at least one audience member to a different perception of reality. The mask may be removed as a part of the performance, particularly with actors with mental retardation, in order to illustrate to the audience the importance of acceptance. It is easier to accept a person behind a mask without judgment or prejudice. When the mask is removed, the reality is revealed. This enables the audience to become aware of their prejudice and reassess their perception of persons with mental retardation.

One of my professors, after viewing the video of *Good Angel's Tears*, expressed her initial shock when she realized that the part of the Angel was not performed by me, as she assumed, but by an actress of Therapeutic Noh Theater with Down's syndrome. She became acutely aware of her own prejudice. Transpersonal mirroring had taken place.

***Ma* (silence, stillness, and heightened awareness)**

According to Pilgrim (1972), "the development of one's own inner vision and mental/spiritual/emotional (*kokoro*) resources," the transcending of the "functional, intending, object-oriented mind... in attainment of no-mind or true Mind (*mushin*)," and "an art rooted in spiritual power and vision or in an experience of the Great Nothingness (*mu*) and expressing the ultimate mystery of depth of reality" (p. 142) are prerequisites

for the expression of “*ma*.” *Ma* is the moment of no action, the stillness and silence, which is filled with more powerful energy than the moments of action on Noh stage. Komparu (1983) talks of stillness and emptiness, or quiet stillness, when referring to *ma*.

In the Therapeutic Noh Theater, the “*ma* moment” on stage is experienced by the audience when a masked actor/dancer is able to be totally present in stillness and silence and projects transpersonally beyond his or her body/ego consciousness (*mushin-no-kan*).

***Mushin-no-kan* (transpersonal projection)**

For a masked actor/dancer, moments of total silence and stillness that occur in between the dance movements gives an opportunity for transpersonal projection. It is a powerful moment, which cannot be measured easily. The written audience feedback after the performance has been the only measurement used. When the actor/dancer on stage is able to be totally present in stillness and silence and transcend body/ego awareness, it is an empowering moment, during which a sense of peace enlarges the space of awareness around the dancer.

***Ichu no kei* (projective imagination)**

Iwao Kongoh identified in classic Noh the importance of the use of imagination by Noh actors, when technically moving their head down, for example, to express looking at a river. It is not enough to perform the technical movement; the actor must accompany it with the imagination. In Therapeutic Noh Theater, this has been termed as “projective imagination” (*ichu no kei*). In projective imagination, the actual scene is visualized in the actor’s mind’s eye and projected in his or her dance kata. Both Noh and Therapeutic Noh stages are bare, and a limited number of realistic props are used during performances. Thus the masked actor/dancers’ use of projective imagination is essential in order to transmit visualized images to the audience.

During the Therapeutic Noh Theater training, rehearsals, or performances, projective imagination has been tested through audience feedback and, based on their written or stated comments, it seems to work. The audience can visualize what is being chanted better if the actors are able to use their projective imagination during the scene. In Therapeutic Noh Theater, fans are used not only to accompanying the dancers’ kata as indicated in the basic dance kata, but also in

the expressive Noh kata in which fans stand for a variety of props, from vessels to rakes and swords. Thus it is most essential that the projective imagination by the masked actor/dancer be used to reinforce the unusual functions of fans.

***Riken no ken* (transpersonal mirroring)**

Riken no ken was actually initially used by Zeami only for transpersonal detachment. In Therapeutic Noh Theater, *riken no ken* has been defined in more expanded ways as a reciprocal process between the masked actor/dancer and his or her audience consisting of multiple facets: transpersonal detachment, transpersonal projection, and transpersonal intromission. The initial term came from Zeami. Yet this is actually an expanded term drawn at first in practice from my work with persons with mental retardation and then applied to Therapeutic Noh Theater. I realized that Zeami’s initial term expressed very well what was observed in the actual therapeutic interventions with clients with mental retardation. Later on, it became apparent that in Therapeutic Noh Theater, the term translated into the exchange between the masked actor and his or her audience.

I have written a symbolic story about persons with mental retardation called “Born from Good Angel’s Tears.” It indicates that persons with mental retardation are our teachers of patience, compassion, and love. I have personally been the recipient of their teachings through transpersonal mirroring. Many times, when I have tried to correct their behavior in public, they have turned it into a learning experience for me. Instead of my being able to teach them some behavior or skill, they have been able to set a mirror in front of me and show me my weaknesses.

I have encountered the perception and notion, even among professional therapists, that working with persons with mental retardation requires very little skill or intelligence owing to their limited intelligence and skills. Because of their limited verbal communication skills and lack of ability to rationalize, it is more challenging to decipher the roots of their problem behaviors. It is my experience and philosophical stance that persons with mental retardation are our teachers and that they have chosen to incarnate as persons with mental retardation. Furthermore, they have chosen to learn the ultimate lessons by taking humiliation, ridicule, disrespect, and treatment “as invisible members” of our society. Yet I consider them my humble

and generally unacknowledged spiritual teachers.

Transpersonal mirroring in Therapeutic Noh Theater will take place when audience members are able to receive from an actor/dancer some deeper messages about themselves or their lives, to intrude into their consciousness and awareness something that was not acceptable before. Often, however, audience members do not even have words to express what they have experienced. When transpersonal mirroring takes place, it can be said that Therapeutic Noh Theater has retained some of the original transpersonal power of ancient Noh Theater.

When an ancient man wore his mask in a ritual, he became the spirit or the deity he was dancing as. When kagura dancers or Noh actors performed a dance of a god or a spirit, they became that deity or that spirit. When an actor/dancer in the Therapeutic Noh Theater puts on his or her mask and enters the Therapeutic Noh Stage, he or she descends from the earth and enters the sacred and the transpersonal. Thus *hashikagari* (the bridge between the curtain and the Noh stage) provides the transitional time and space for the actor. While on stage, it is the aim of actor/dancers in Therapeutic Noh Theater to be able to first detach themselves from their body/ego awareness, from the Personal, and project from the Transpersonal to see themselves in the eyes of an audience. This transpersonal detachment is an essential component of *riken no ken*. If and when the audience members are open and ready to receive, they can participate in the process of transpersonal mirroring by their own transpersonal intromission. It is not easy to describe or prove if and when that happens. That is why the audience is often asked to provide written feedback after the performance. They may do it anonymously or may state their names.

Because of the small size and placement of the eyes in Noh masks, I have experienced, while in a Therapeutic Noh Theater performance on stage, a type of seeing as if through only one eye of a Noh mask in the middle of my forehead—which has created a spiritual sense of seeing the world through a third eye. This refers to the brow chakra, which is considered the transmitter of the Transpersonal in the prism of Consciousness. This is my personal experience and I believe worth reporting. Noh masks create an additional meditative and centering effect on the wearer because the wearer does not experience the general feeling of being protected, which is typical of other

types of masks. As a result, Noh masks seem at first to redirect the wearers' awareness toward their inner sight. After the initial meditative period, the attention seems to be redirected away from the body ego awareness, which makes transcendence and connection with the audience at a transpersonal level possible.

Conclusion

Transpersonal reality was present in the masked rituals of numerous ancient cultures. In drama therapy, masks are mostly used for the personal or the body/ego and shadow healing. Ancient Noh Theater emulates many aspects of its spiritual predecessor, kagura, and has retained up to the present many transpersonal ritualistic dimensions in its performances. The Creative Way of NohKiDo consists of the Prism of Consciousness tool, which lends itself as a useful assessment tool both for the Rainbow Method and for Therapeutic Noh Theater processes and practices.

In the Creative Way of NohKiDo, as was the case in classic Noh, the spiritual development of the participants via artistic/creative training is the essence. The experience of an actor of Therapeutic Noh Theater may vary greatly depending on the actor's ability to be present. In Therapeutic Noh Theater, meditative dance accompanied with ancient music and chant can be a powerful experience both to the actor and to the members of an audience. The numerous Action meditation methods imbedded in the NohKiDo all prepare the participants for their engagement in the Therapeutic Noh Theater training, rehearsals, and public performances.

The spiritual transformative powers of masks vary, depending on how they were made and how they are used. Ancient men and women, as well as Zenchiku, believed that the spiritually evolved mask maker would leave his or her spirituality imprinted into the masks he or she carved. Masks are made mostly from *papier-mache*, carved wood or molded leather. Compared to masks made of other materials, the carved masks seem to have more power onstage, yet there are no absolute distinctions between the seeming powers of carved masks and those of the others.

Therapeutic Noh Theater performances take place mostly once a year, owing to time limitations as well as the performers' need for extended rehearsals. NohKiDo as a method is my lifelong pursuit. All of its concepts and methods are being developed further. I

dream of the day when I can dedicate my full-time attention to NohKiDo, teaching and practicing it as well as performing in Therapeutic Noh Theater.

When I consider functions of masks in the masked ancient rite and ritual dances and then compare them with the functions of masks in NohKiDo, I realize that both NohKiDo and Therapeutic Noh Theater have received the heritage of the ancient sacred masked dance traditions. This heritage is not complete nor inclusive of all the different functions, but bears the unique premise that masks are sacred objects and the potential transmitters of their wearers' consciousness from personal to transpersonal realities. Contemporary actors of ancient classic Noh Theater are still today holding onto the spiritual traditions. They accept the high demands of the actor/dancer's personal growth as an artist and as a creative individual on the path to the enlightenment through creative/artistic pursuit, laid out by Zeami and Zenchiku. Similarly, the Creative Way of NohKiDo is a path with multiple components focused on the spiritual growth of the participant, via the path of creative and artistic excellence.

The roads to enlightenment or to mystic Christ consciousness are endless. It is my belief that a street sweeper can reach enlightenment of mystic Christ consciousness through true, sincere, and dedicated service through his or her vocation. It is also possible to find Christ consciousness through the sincere, dedicated, and humble pursuit in the arts and creativity as offered in the Creative Way of NohKiDo. At first, we as spiritual beings need to find a way to communicate with the higher self or the transpersonal within. Through that higher self or the transpersonal—through inspiration, creativity, and intuition—we are able eventually to communicate with God. Creativity is the divine gift given to us all as a birthright of human beings, and via creativity we can also be directly inspired by the Divine within.

It is also my premise that all masks are not created equal. I agree with Iwao Kongoh, who talks of the power of some individual masks, as well as with Zenchiku, who saw masks as sacred media empowered by their maker.

Ancient men and women protected themselves with sacred masks and masked rituals against the threats of unknown spiritual forces. In NohKiDo, the masks aid the participants to connect and reconnect with their denied or unknown spiritual selves.

Whether or not the masked dances or masked ritual performances of Therapeutic Noh Theater enable the participating actors to connect with their transpersonal selves and see themselves with the eyes of the audience depends on each individual and his or her ability to be totally present and to detach transpersonally. It also depends on the individual's total dedication to his or her path.

Author Note

"NohKiDo," "The Creative Path of NohKiDoh," and "Therapeutic Noh Theater" are the trademarks of Sirkku M. Sky Hiltunen, Ph.D., Ed.D., RDT-BCT, ATR, LPC, MT.