

A HOLOTROPIC DISCOURSE: ANDEAN MYSTICISM AND THE TRANSPERSONAL PARADIGM

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ABSTRACT: This article offers a discussion of Andean ontology in terms of its symbiotic relationship with transpersonal psychology (TP). Prevailing concepts from the Andean wisdom tradition propagated by Q'eros, Quechua-speaking indigenous peoples descended from the Inka and the Andean highlands, are presented alongside Dr. Stanislav Grof's research on holotropic states of consciousness. Grof's theory offers a non-culturally specific context for interpreting the Andean wisdom tradition. This article presents results of an autoethnographic study that included a systematic inquiry into holotropic states of consciousness by means of Andean ceremony. The author discovered that identification with the holotropic principle (holotropic identity) enabled individual awakening and furthered an inclusive understanding of the nature/human relation. The article aims to bridge the gap between indigenous wisdom traditions and South American representation in transpersonal scholarship.

KEYWORDS: Grof, holotropic, Q'ero, Peru, indigenous, autoethnography.

Both Andean and TP paradigms have much to offer toward an evolving humanity. In the latter case Dr. Stanislav Grof has detailed a new cartography of the human psyche made accessible through holotropic states of consciousness (1985, 1986, 1988, 1998, 2012a, 2012b). In the case of the Andean paradigm, Andean *paqos* (Andean priests/initiates) exercise a tradition transferred through cultural practice from the time of their ancestors. Their tradition is complete with prophecy for manifesting a vision of humanity's potential, reminiscent of the Buddhist "Shambhala."¹

Andean methodology for psychological development is unconfined by biographical limitations and rather moves toward a paradigmatic view of transcending states of consciousness marked by levels, qualities, and ontological attainments (Jenkins, 2013; Nuñez del Prado, 2006). Psycho-spiritual development is therefore a preferred term for this article, which attempts to facilitate an inclusive and transpersonal world view.

In their comprehensive summary and analysis of 35 years of TP scholarship, Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (2007) point out that the majority of TP scholarship and growth has occurred in Europe, the United States, and Japan. They point to the "scant" representation of the Southern Hemisphere, Third World countries, and indigenous populations. This article aims to address that gap through its portrayal of indigenous world views from South America.

Definitions of Grof's theoretical concepts are followed by an introduction to Andean mysticism. In particular, the Q'eros indigenous peoples of Peru's

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highlands are discussed as purveyors of Andean ontology through their culture, traditions, and prophecy. The research method can best be described as an autoethnography: I recount my personal holotropic experiences while participating in Q'eros ceremony. My experiences validate holotropic states as ontologically real, a naturally occurring phenomenon that contributes to the developing dialectic. Grof's understanding of the human psyche is supported by this auto-ethnomethodological study and accompanying literature review. Striking similarities between Andean ontology and holotropic research are noted that facilitate and encourage the inclusion of nature-based wisdom traditions in TP scholarship.

A HOLOTROPIC PARADIGM

Grof coined the term "holotropic," which means moving toward wholeness (from the Greek "holos," or whole, and "trepein," to turn or change). He had previously advocated for a psychology paradigm that included the methodological study of non-ordinary states of consciousness (1985). He came to use the term "holotropic states of consciousness" to label a large subgroup of non-pathological, non-ordinary states that have a healing, transformative and evolutionary potential (2010).

Gibson (2008) notes that Grof's theoretical framework has advanced the work of Carl G. Jung, who was given credit for initially exposing psychology to the transpersonal.

In holotropic states, consciousness is changed qualitatively in a very profound and fundamental way, but it is not grossly impaired as in organic psychoses or trivial deliria. We experience an invasion of other dimensions of existence that can be very intense and even overwhelming. However, at the same time, we typically remain fully oriented and do not completely lose touch with everyday reality. Holotropic states are characterized by a specific transformation of consciousness associated with dramatic perceptual changes in all sensory areas, intense and often unusual emotions, and profound alterations in the thought processes. They are also usually accompanied by a variety of intense psychosomatic manifestations and unconventional forms of behavior. (1998, p. 334)

Ancient and indigenous peoples worldwide have developed safe and effective techniques for inducing holotropic states, which have been practiced regularly in social and ceremonial contexts such as initiation and rites of passage (Grof, 1998). In such contexts, methods for inducing holotropic states have been sustained through oral tradition, preserved through ceremonial cycles, and woven into cultural fabrics across the world.

For more than half a century, Grof has been researching holotropic states, including extensive studies with psychedelic substances, Holotropic Breathwork, and persons experiencing psychospiritual crises or spiritual emergency. In the latter case, holotropic states occur spontaneously with no known cause

and include a significant transformative potential (Grof & Grof, 1986; Lukoff, 2000; Walsh, 2007).

Holotropic Breathwork is an experiential, self-exploration therapy developed by Stanislav and his wife Christina Grof in the mid-1970s at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. The method involves a combination of circular breathing, evocative music, and a specific style of energy-releasing bodywork that engage holotropic states; with subsequent mandala drawing and group sharing for integration. Many of these elements of the Holotropic Breathwork process show up in traditional Q'eros ceremony².

Based on his research, Grof revised the conceptual framework of the human psyche into three domains. Like his predecessor, C. G. Jung, he did not see the psyche as a product of the brain. According to Grof, Jung saw it as the “creative and generative principle of the cosmos (*anima mundi*). It permeates all of existence and the individual psyche of each of us is teased out of this unfathomable cosmic matrix” (Grof, 2010, p. 19). In addition to the postnatal/biographical domain shared with traditional psychology, he added the perinatal and transpersonal domains to the conceptual framework of the psyche (1998).

The biographical level of the psyche is the foundational platform recognized by traditional academic psychiatry and psychology. Sigmund Freud asserted that human psychological history began after birth through the interplay of postnatal influences on human behavior and biological instincts. However, the perinatal and transpersonal domains described by Grof challenge the framework of traditional psychology and require a radical revision of the existing theories in order to account for the new information discovered through holotropic states. Grof has compared the theoretical shift to the revolution in physics in the first few decades of the twentieth century when physicists moved from Newtonian physics to quantum-relativistic physics (Grof, 2010).

The perinatal domain is closely related with the trauma of biological birth (Grof, 2010, p. 13). “This region of the unconscious contains the memories of what the fetus experienced in the consecutive stages of the birth process, including all the emotions and physical sensations involved. These memories form four distinct experiential clusters, each of which is related to one of the stages of childbirth” (Grof, 2012a, pp. 146–147).

Grof describes the perinatal domain in terms of four “basic perinatal matrices” (BPM I–IV). BPM I experiences refer to the “undisturbed embryonal existence” before the onset of delivery (1998, p. 351) and can generally be characterized as “good womb” or “bad womb” experiences, depending on the mother’s experience during pregnancy. The stage of BPM II, which occurs at the onset of the delivery as the uterus contracts before the cervix has opened, corresponds with the first clinical stage of labor. BPM II experiences can include “cosmic engulfment,” intense anxiety, and awareness of an imminent and vital threat (1985, p. 111). The BPM III phase “reflects the struggle to be born after the uterine cervix dilates” (2012a, p. 147). This is also known as the

second clinical stage of labor as the fetus passes through the birth canal: an epic journey of struggle for survival, sensations of pressure and memories of contact with biological materials that may include feces and blood. BPM IV refers to the actual emergence into the world, the third clinical stage of labor, after birth until the delivery of the placenta. Related experiences may include reliving specific details of birth such as instrumental intervention, anesthesia, etc., that are often verifiable.

The content of the four BPMs is not limited to memories of biological birth. “Each of them also represents a selective opening into the domains of the historical and archetypal collective unconscious, which contain motifs of similar experiential quality” (2012a, p. 147). Typical experiences might include feelings of an imminent threat, “ego death,” “total annihilation” and “hitting the cosmic bottom.” These may be followed by visions of “blinding white or golden light of supernatural radiance and beauty. It can be associated with astonishing displays of divine archetypal entities, rainbow spectra, or intricate peacock designs” (1985, p. 123). The sense of emergence can be clouded if the birth included heavy anesthesia or has taken a different form, as in the case of a Cesarean section (1998).

The transpersonal domain involves experiences that transcend limitations of the individual ego. Grof has grouped them into three large categories: (a) transcendence of spatial barriers, (b) transcendence of linear time, and (c) experiences of archetypal figures and domains that transcend both spatial barriers and linear time (1998, pp. 353–354) and identification with Cosmic Consciousness, “the creative principle of the universe” (Grof, 2010, p. 13). Biological birth has become an important ground for establishing the ontological basis of the perinatal and transpersonal domains (Gibson, 2008). Individuals may successfully experience rebirth through the perinatal matrices with heuristic and healing results (Grof, 2012b).

The therapeutic use of holotropic states has facilitated a shift from talk therapies to experiential therapies, wherein the innate healing intelligence of the client’s own psyche becomes the guiding force (2010). People experiencing holotropic states in such settings can readily access deep layers of the unconscious wherein lay the roots of trauma and emotional and psychosomatic problems. Grof refers to the complex nature of the phenomena as COEX systems, or systems of condensed experience, where unconscious material forms multilevel dynamic constellations (p. 15).

INTRODUCTION TO Q’EROS

The terms “Q’ero” and “Q’eros” refer interchangeably to a cultural group in Peru and their ancestral village (Wissler, 2009). Their native tongue is Quechua, the primary indigenous language of the Andes spoken during the reign of the Inkan Empire. I have studied the language based primarily on Jenkins (1997, 2013) and Wilcox’s (2004) books on the ceremonial traditions of

Q'eros. Both authors have extensive experience training in the tradition under the guidance of renowned Andean *pagos*³.

Quechua is a phonetic language with no consistent spelling, and I have chosen to respect its ceremonial context instead of using modern-day Quechua dictionaries. Therefore a phonetic 'k' is in place of the Spanish 'c' in "Inka." Yet Wilcox's (2004) notion to pluralize Quechua words with an "s" for the benefit of English-language readers is followed; this pluralization replaced the Quechua derivative *-kuna* (p. x – xi). Throughout this article "Q'eros" is used instead of "Q'ero" for consistency (Wissler, 2009). I have italicized and explained Andean concepts throughout; geographical locations and formal names are not italicized.

According to Wissler (2009), the Q'eros community consists of around 900 people in 120 families and is spread throughout four river valleys in six village hamlets. *Hatun Q'eros*, the ceremonial center, is located approximately 200 km East of Cuzco, the site of the Inkan Empire's ancient capital, in the Paucartambo region. Q'eros use three ecological zones for farming and basic sustenance. They cultivate *choclo* (a type of corn), squash and peppers in the lowest zone (1,800 – 2,500 m), potatoes, their primary food source, in the middle zone (3,200 – 4,000 m), and they raise *alpacas* and *llamas* (South American camelids) in the highest zone (4,000 – 4,800 m) (Flores Ochoa & Fries, 1989 as cited in Wissler, 2009). Q'eros move consistently through their regions by foot that can require up to 3 days of travel (Brush, 1976).

Q'eros are considered the "last Inkas," a "renown that began with the first academic expedition into Q'eros (1955), which consisted of a multi-disciplinary research team from Cusco University (UNSAAC - Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cusco)" (Flores Ochoa & Nuñez del Prado, 2005 as cited in Wissler, 2009, p. 41). Q'eros shared in the legend of *Inkarri*, the mythical king who founded the Inkan Empire. "Yet, the Q'eros' version of the myth often differentiates, indicating that they were the ones who were endowed with spiritual knowledge, while the Incas [Inkas] were bestowed with the political power" (Nuñez del Prado, 1958/2005, p. 201–202 as cited in Wissler, 2009, p. 41). Wissler wrote, "Indeed, they are known and have an international following for their special skill in making ceremonial offerings to the mountain spirits, and are regularly sought by outsiders (urban Peruvians and foreign tourists) for this skill, which today has become a prime source of cash earnings for them" (p. 41).

As in many indigenous wisdom traditions, prophecy is embedded within their lineage and practices and exists in relation with their environment. In order to proceed with a dialogue between TP and Andean concepts, an introduction to Andean ontology is necessary. The following overview is based primarily on Dr. Juan Nuñez del Prado (2006) and Elizabeth Jenkins' (1997, 2013) extensive investigations into Andean mysticism.

Nuñez del Prado initially approached Q'eros as an anthropologist, following in the footsteps of his father Oscar Nuñez del Prado, who had headed the initial

academic excursion to Q'eros. He was transformed after he met with don Manuel Quispe, a Q'eros *Kurak Aqulleq*, an honorary title given to an initiate of high standing that translates as “great chewer of coca leaves” (Jenkins, 2013). He became a devoted student of Q'eros masters and has since risen to international renown as foremost authority on the mystical tradition. He was a primary teacher of Elizabeth Jenkins, an internationally renowned *paqo* and teacher, who developed the Wiraqocha Foundation in response to the needs of Q'eros and as a platform for instructing Western *paqos* in the tradition. I also have drawn on Joan Parisi Wilcox's (2004) literature. She was endowed with the task of bringing the “word of Q'ero to the world” by Q'eros master don Mariano in 1994 (p. 3). Her work provides a detailed synopsis of the Andean system, along with interviews with Q'eros elders. Because the literature on Andean and Q'eros mysticism is limited, I have reviewed both academic scholarship and popular literature.

Gordon (2001) suggests that the Andean worldview includes patterns of belief, behavior, and assumptions of reality that are unavailable in Western epistemology and that would benefit Western culture. He describes three factors that make it difficult for Westerners to understand the Andes: (a) the challenge of translating one cultural paradigm into another when concepts are not always shared or there is no exact equivalent, (b) the worldviews are divided into different categories, and (c) there are “different assumptions about the basic nature of reality” (Gordon, 2008, p. 5). However, he also suggests that it is possible to translate through mutual respect.

Holotropic Methods of Q'eros

The methods by which *paqos* manifest higher states of consciousness include *Haywarikwee* ceremonies (commonly known as *despachos*), *karpay* (initiation), healings, coca leaf readings, and any situation in which they expand their *poq'po* (energy bubble/body composed of *kawsay*⁴ - “living energy”) in order to communicate with nature (Jenkins, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Despachos often begin with *akulliy*, the ceremonial exchange of *k'intus*, a grouping of three coca leaves pressed one on top of the other, and at times are fanned out. *Coca* leaves are medicinal and used daily by Andeans, often with a bit of quinoa ash. *Coca* is also used ritually as a medium of communication; *paqos* use their breath to mingle refined energies in an exchange that links their *poqpo* with the three worlds (Wilcox, 2004, p. 40), each other, and the *despacho*.

A *despacho* is a systematic offering. It takes a form similar to a mandala and is composed of natural objects that are positioned on white or wrapping paper based on their energetic properties: *apu* (masculine), *pachamama* (feminine), and a marriage of both (*yanantin*). *Despachos* differ based on a *paqo's* level of skill and intention. Objects include shells, candy, seeds, salt, *coca*, lama fetus, lama fat, string, cotton, fruit, condor feather, wine, *pisco* (a clear alcohol made from grapes), and confetti. They are infused with Quechua-spoken lineage invocations and prayers. The bundle is wrapped, and then participants' *mesas*

are piled upon it. *Mesas* are traditional cloth bundles filled with *kuyas*, power objects gifted from fellow *paqos* or discovered in moments of epiphany – usually stones or crystals. The *mesa* is central to the *paqos'* path and is a manifestation of their power (Wilcox, 2004). The sounding of small bells, conch shells, and further repetitious prayer occur over the pile of *mesas*. After some time, the *paqo* unearths the bundled *despacho* and performs a *limpia* - Spanish for “clean.” The bundle is pressed, thumped, and moved along the bodies of participants, removing *hoocha* (heavy and discordant energy) from their *poq'pos*. It is then burned or buried.

Despachos are exercised throughout the Andean ceremonial cycle, for communing with nature, healing, and transmitting *karpay*. *Karpay*, which directly translates as irrigation, is more popularly understood as an initiation or transmission of a *paqo's* personal power. It is considered to be an act of “watering” the *qosqo*, the naval center, wherein lies the “Inkan Seed” – the entire germinal potential of the Inka (Jenkins, 2013). *Karpay* can also be received from naturally occurring phenomena such as lightning (Beeler, 2003; Wilcox, 2004).

In a *despacho* ceremony, streams of Quechua lineage invocations are spoken into the objects, which are held with both hands and pressed close to the lips. Q'eros culminate their invocations by blowing onto them before placing them on the paper. During *karpay*, Q'eros blow into the crowns of participants' heads, palms of their hands, and other specific areas of the body. A subtle awareness of *kawsay* is made accessible through the breath and helps to induce what transpersonal psychologists call holotropic states of consciousness. Yet Q'eros are most always engaging their holotropic awareness through daily living. For Q'eros, all form is regarded in reciprocal exchange with the sacred, in *ayni*.

Overview of Andean Ontology

Núñez del Prado (2006) and Jenkins (2013) both detail a hierarchy of Andean psycho-spiritual development as a progression composed of seven levels. Q'eros prophecy indicates cycles of time that correspond with the manifestation of those levels. Núñez del Prado (2006) describes the Andean hierarchical system as “Transcendental Anthropology.” The “...mentor hierarchy is parallel to the hierarchy of the beings that make up the religious universe in the Andes, as well as to a series of social groups of scalar dimension [,] which constitute the Andean ethno-sociology” (p. 1–2). They are expressed through a *paqo* who has had an “experience of seeing and being a part of the power” (p. 2).

The first four levels are:

1. *Ayllu Alto Mesayoc* - an initiate with the power⁵ of *Ayllu Apu*, spirit of the mountain and guardian of a family, small village, or district;
2. *Llaqta Alto Mesayoc* - an initiate with power of *Llaqta Apu*, spirit of the mountain and guardian of a city, groups of villages, or a micro-region;
3. *Suyu Alto Mesayoc* - an initiate with power of *Suyu Apu*, guardian of an extensive region such as *Tawantinsuyu*, the Inkan Empire marked by predominant *apus* such as Ausangate; and

4. *Kuraq Akulleq* - an initiate with the power of *Apuyaya* and *Taytacha*, both names given to the guardian of the universe (Nuñez del Prado, 2006), and with *Teqse*, nature beings on earth with whom everyone has equal access like wind and water (Jenkins, 2013).

These four levels have a training and initiation process. They presently exist through *paqos* exercising their qualities and characteristics and are able to be transmitted to others.

A noted transition at the fourth level pertains to Q'eros prophecy and its present epoch of human evolution. It is characterized by life-giving qualities (Jenkins, personal communication, February 5, 2011), whereas the preceding three levels involve fear and conflict (Jenkins, 2013). Nuñez del Prado has considered most Western cultures as having attained or being on the verge of attaining the fourth level (Wilcox, 2004, p. 11). Jenkins (2013) noted that most of humanity has attained the third level but remains stuck there. Both *paqos* have conferred the *Hatun Karpay*, the fourth level rite of passage. Nuñez del Prado (2006), Jenkins (2013), and Wilcox (2004) have described it as a ten day ritual that includes a series of *despachos* and *karpays*; energetic practices that release accumulated *hoocha* (heavy and discordant energy); a practice to transform identification with the biological mother and father in exchange for identification with *Inti Taita* (Father Sun) and *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) (Jenkins, 2013); and visits to a series of sacred sites in the valleys of Willka Mayu and the Valley of Cuzco. The sites range from Machu Picchu below, to Wiraqocha Temple on top. The *karpay* culminates with a practice that translates as the “coronation of a king.”

The three higher levels are prospective; they are unable to be transferred to others because no *paqo* presently exercises them. However, their qualities are recognized and thus serve as a signpost for actualizing prophecy. They are:

5. *Inka Mallku* (male) and *Ñusta* (female) - initiates with the power to cure all ailments without exception through touch;
6. *Sapa Inka* (male) and *Sapa Qoya* (female) - initiates with the power to shine with their own light; and
7. *Taytanchis Ranti* - “God on Earth” (Jenkins, 2013; Nuñez del Prado, 2006).

Nuñez del Prado describes an occurrence called *Pachakuti*, cosmic transmutations between eras, in the Andean system of time (2006). The last *Pachakuti* occurred between 1991 and 1993. During that time the coming epoch was prepared through a “reordering of the cosmos” (p. 4). The new era is called *Taripay Pacha* and marks the wholesomeness of humanity, during which the fifth, sixth, and seventh levels are projected to manifest. Humanity is presently in the beginning stages of the new era, although fifth and sixth level beings were recorded to have existed just 500 years ago (Jenkins, 2013).

The prophecy decrees that the three higher levels come about through *Mosoq Karpay*, or “new initiation.” The *Mosoq Karpay* is transferred by 12 *Inka Mallkus* and *Ñustas* that show up in specific places and times. Wilcox (2004, p. 73–75)

relayed the prophecy according to Nuñez del Prado: once all 12 have gathered at the Wiraqocha Temple, they reenact the *Hatun Karpay* and prepare for the manifestation of the *Sapa Inka* and *Sapa Qoya*. Once the sixth level has manifested, the “golden age” of *Taripay Pacha* unfolds, and the mystical city *Paytiti* is accessible where *Inkari*, the legendary and mythical first Inka, has been waiting. Manifestation of the seventh level follows.

The 12 *Ñustas* and *Mallkus* are responsible for infusing once more the three worlds into one cohesive whole (Nuñez del Prado, 2006). *Hanaq Pacha* is the upper world that consists of *sami*, or pure and highly refined energy; *Kay Pacha* is the world of spirit made manifest, the physical world; and *Ukhu Pacha* is the lower world that consists solely of *hoocha*, heavy and discordant energy (Wilcox, 2004, p. 36). The higher levels are achieved through collective collaboration between humans and nature (Jenkins, 2013). Wilcox explains:

During the Taripay Pacha, an intricate web of interaction will be rewoven between the human and non-human, the physical and metaphysical, and the natural and supernatural, an interaction that was once the ordinary state of being in the dim recesses of history. Thus, the Taripay Pacha is not so much the creation of a new form as the remembering of an ancient form, when we lived in sync with the pulse of the cosmos instead of, as we do now, with the artificial rhythms of manmade time. (Wilcox, 2004, p. 76)

Lesser known is the Q'eros myth of the female sacred city *Miskayani*⁶. According to Jenkins (2013), “This etheric sanctuary is described as a place of infinite peace and prosperity ruled by highly evolved female priestesses possessing profound wisdom and knowledge of the healing arts, as well as unparalleled beauty and a deep sensuality” (p. 199). *Paqos* of past had been known to enter the city, a place of a warm tropical climate in the midst of the glacial mountain Ausangate.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article reports on and is written as an autoethnography, a personal narrative. According to Maréchal (2010), “Autoethnography is a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing” (p. 43). Likewise, Ellis (2004) defined it as “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (p. xix). It blends autobiography, whereby the writer reflects on past experience, and ethnography, which utilizes familiar tools such as interviews, journals, and participant observation (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Personal narratives denote the researcher as the phenomenon under study (Ellis et al., 2011). They enable readers to “enter the author’s world” and use what they learn to reflect on and understand their own lives (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 6).

For example, Anderson (2004) developed a heuristic inquiry on eco-harmony and her experiences with Q'eros. She followed Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic

guidelines as a premise for her autoethnography. She stated that her research is valid only within the context of her own self as participant, yet it benefits readers inspired by their own like experiences (p. 3).

In placing myself under the lens of study, I intended to minimize Gordon's (2008) aforementioned challenges, along with the pitfall of ethnocentrism frequently noted in cultural analysis and comparative studies (Kalweit, 1984). Likewise, Harner (1980) pointed out that traditional academic psychology has an ethnocentric bias (wherein Western materialistic science supersedes all worldviews) and a cognicentric bias (wherein researchers ignore information concerning non-ordinary states of consciousness). Therefore I used personal narrative so that I could articulate Andean notions as insight from experience rather than posing myself as an Andeanist. My additional methods included journaling and self-dialogue. The theoretical framework used in this article was based on interviews, observation and a literature review.

I originally began this research while in Peru, and at the time I had intended to use it to benefit the Q'eros people. But due to life circumstance I am no longer in Peru and suspect that my research has veered from its altruistic intention. Perhaps this article can only benefit myself, and, by extension, fellow Western academics and transpersonal psychologists (Wissler, 2009, p. 41). Yet it offers a way for readers to become informed of holotropic states of consciousness as gleaned through Andean ontology. Jenkins contended that the empirical approach of TP to direct experiential knowledge opens a door to traditional Inkan knowledge (2013). She noted that the integration of Eastern with Western frameworks in TP scholarship remained "human-centric" and pointed out the lack of integration with nature-based wisdom traditions (p. 172).

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

I met don Humberto Sonqo Quispé, doña Bernardina Apaza Florez and their extended family in December 2008 when I was visiting Peru. In October 2009 I relocated to Cuzco and later to Urubamba until February 2011. I worked closely with the Sonqo family through traditional ceremony while pursuing a low residency M.A. in transpersonal psychology from Naropa University. I kept detailed records of my initiatory experiences which often involved holotropic states of consciousness, dreams, and conversations with Q'eros. The following personal narrative describes selected experiences of holotropic states of consciousness. Each entailed a familiar pattern, an archetype termed "birth-death-rebirth" (Gibson, 2008, p. 3).

The archetype refers to the ontological and transitional moment of death (a "baby dies to the maternal universe of the womb") and birth ("and is reborn in the world") (Gibson, 2008, p. 4). "The archetype of birth [birth-death-rebirth] not only is grounded ontologically in the birth process, but the intensity of the process manifests in the force and power of archetypes under its panoply. Those archetypes range from light to dark, from liberation to shadow" (Gibson, 2008, p. 4). The archetype denoting death and rebirth has been

countlessly acknowledged within literature on initiation and indigenous rites of passage and ritual worldwide (Diaz & Sawatzky, 1995; Eliade, 1964, 1994; Henderson & Oakes, 1963; Kalweit, 1984; Narby & Huxley, 2001; Peters, 1981, 1989; Walsh, 2007).

“Inkan Doorway of Amaru Muru,” December 2010

The “door” is made of red stone in a large outcropping near Lake Titicaca. The stone was smoothed to a flat surface over 20 feet long, with a T-shaped alcove about a foot in width. It has smooth contours with two columns more than twice its height on either side. There is a small circular indentation in the center of the door.

I was with a group of Westerners and don Humberto’s sons Rolando and Guillermo. After a *despacho* ceremony, one of our Western group members began drumming. I was sensing *kawsay* (also “spiritual nectar” (Jenkins, 2013)) accompanied by ordinary perception. I walked to the doorway and placed my *mesa* on the ground to serve as an umbilicus. I prayed to unite my psyche’s opposing forces. I moved over and into one column and faced the rock wall. I sensed *kawsay* pulsing, entwined with my body’s circulatory rhythms and neural pathways, clarifying my *poq’po*. I turned and faced out over the landscape. My attention was no longer focused on the group or drum, but on *kawsay*. In the next column a spiral of energy opened my heart. In congruence my perception also opened in a luminous display, like a translucent rainbow mandala. I continued to perceive the world around me. I approached the door and knelt before it, touching my *mesa*.

A separate group of tourists began walking toward the door from the main road. I sensed their intense approach. I began to resist “entering” the door. Regardless, my awareness began spiraling swiftly into it. I relaxed into the surge, moved closer to the stone, and held my *mesa*. I recalled a memory of a spiral tunnel and light with an immense glow that gained clarity as I neared it, a great spiraling sensation, and then I awakened in another world. It was filled with luminous beings composed of space and translucent hues of light. The world from which I came was no longer perceptible - yet there was memory of having arrived; I was aware of my *poq’po*. The beings were compassionate and joyous and celebrated my arrival. Their touch felt smooth as silk and I experienced great bliss! My sensory perception again spiraled, this time out of that realm, and I became aware of my physical body still kneeling. The spirals were fast, and I had no control of them save for my choice to relax.

Afterward I began wandering the grounds envisioning hellish realms filled with beings and situations in great anguish. I became anxiety ridden as images of rape and murder flashed through my mind. I sensed an overwhelming rejection and settled on a stone that looked over a distant town. I was dismayed with myself for choosing such a view of society, and yearned to return to a place of natural stillness.

Lightning, January 2010

I was in a hot bath at night when a lightning storm began. I felt a terrifying fear of death and turned within for understanding. My fear echoed the thoughts of my mother and teachers who educated me that water and electricity result in death. Yet I recognized an intense yearning to know lightning⁷. I left the bathhouse and walked to my hut, lay down and focused on my breath.

I relaxed and my perception heightened, sensitive to the lightning each time it shone. I sensed *karpay* nearing my being and entered a state of serenity. One strike of lightning danced around the outer perimeter of the hut, and I sensed *kawsay* pulsing – the space within and around the hut inseparable from the space of my own being. Lightning came a second time into the hut, filling the interior space with luminous orbs that appeared like eyes. I entered a state of lucid dreaming to witness a timeless, nonverbal conversation between myself and a radiant, cosmic being composed entirely of white light. Our communication was purely telepathic - my identity was absorbed into her and our inseparable connection. My sense of self as I had known prior quieted into an essential silence. Lightning shone a third time and entered my body, awakening me through its power and precision. I opened my eyes and remained still, witnessing the sensation of lightning traveling through my body and its neural pathways. My perceptual field filled with clarity. That night, I became a new being - I was reborn.

Healing Ceremony, June 2012

I was in New York City with don Humberto and doña Bernardina where I received a *mesa* healing. From a holotropic perspective, the healing couple, *yanantin*, unbound me from static sense perceptions of time and space (*hoocha*). My awareness spiraled into a cosmic sense of being where I encountered a celestial energy, who appeared as a radiant star composed of white light. Humberto and Bernardina used their *mesas* to restore my sense of identity with the cosmic being and spiraled the sense deep into my body. After leaving the location site of the healing, I desired to lie down but was driven by an indistinguishable force. Against my better judgment, I drove a vehicle and was sideswiped by a taxi cab.

Consistent experiences of *karpay*, received from don Humberto, doña Bernardina and their family, included expanded sensory perception and tranquility; apparitions of openings through space/time often appeared as a door or threshold, accompanied by a sense of letting go of don Humberto in order to cross. Joy, celebration, and new growth were on the other side, and often a sense of reunion with don Humberto. It was common that immediately afterward, or during time between initiations, I experienced great anguish, anxiety, and depression amidst conflicting life circumstance.

A HOLOTROPIC DISCOURSE

This discussion attempts to extract the essential ingredients of Andean ontology and view them within the context of the emerging transpersonal paradigm.

Here I consider both culturally significant contexts as well as content removed from culturally-specific meaning. Grof's imperative to label the holotropic subgroup of non-ordinary states helps preserve the integrity of the psyche's potential; Q'eros may not comprehend their direct experiences in the same way.

My approach was to view identity and its expansive process from the standpoint of an initiating *paqo*. According to Nuñez del Prado, Andean levels of consciousness, their distinct qualities, and ontological attainments provide a hierarchy similar to C. G. Jung's process of individuation (2006). Grof (2010) says that the individuation process leads the individual toward a higher order, organization, and highest unity (p. 19). The culturally distinct significance for Andeans is their explicit progression of a *paqo's* spiritual career. Their psychospiritual developmental process is catalyzed by *kawsay* and achieved through an intimate identification with the *paqo's* primary forces.

Holotropic Identity

The geographical location of a Q'eros' birth is a segue to their personal power through their *Itu Apu* and *Paqarina*, the presiding male and female nature spirits of their birth location (Jenkins, 2013):

The Inka masters tell us that we arrive to this world through an energetic door in the sky. Our spirit is attracted to this door, and that door is literally a star in the sky. From our "star door," our spirit (our sacred or energetic self) looks down upon this earth and chooses two human parents to supply our DNA, as well as two Nature parents who will provide us the requisite living energy to accomplish our destiny. (p. 175)

The *Itu Apu*, *Paqarina*, and guiding star are essential composites in a *paqos'* identity; they correspond to the individual's connection with the three worlds. The guiding star is in relation with the *Hanaq Pacha*, the *Itu Apu* with the *Kay Pacha*, and the *Paqarina* with the *Ukhu Pacha*. The hierarchical progression occurs through the dynamic interplay of receiving *sami* from the *Hanaq Pacha* and releasing *hoocha* to the *Ukhu Pacha*; a reciprocal exchange of *ayni* that harmonizes opposites (*yanantin*). The primary *yanantin* (which also signifies marriage) in the life of the *paqo* is their *Itu Apu* and *Paqarina*. Don Humberto Sonqo Quispe says it is not possible to put the healing power of their lineage to use without an established connection with the primary forces (Jenkins, 2013). In turn, their expanding identification with the progression of nature beings cultivates the *Inka Muju* and propels the increase of a *paqo's* energetic capabilities.

Although Q'eros do not comprehend holotropic states in the same way as transpersonal psychologists, the results of individuals undergoing psychospiritual transformation through Q'eros ceremony and experiential therapies like Holotropic Breathwork are remarkably similar.

In this discussion, I have chosen to call identification with the three primary forces a “holotropic identity,” of which holotropic states represent a natural occurrence.

The Andean primary forces may correspond with the three domains of Grof’s cartography - perinatal, postnatal/biographical and transpersonal. When the culturally specific ontology is removed from the collective process outlined in Andean prophecy, it is apparent that the present epoch points at the potential for humanity to recognize the transcending principle: namely, holotropic states and their potential.

A Consciousness Map Infused with Potential

Grof came to understand his present cartography of the psyche by researching holotropic states (1998). Likewise I arrived at my present understanding through my own self-exploration with holotropic states. When I received *karpay* from Q’eros *paqos*, I often experienced death and rebirth. Identification with my personality, and at times my physical body, were of a less priority.

The process of transformation could be subtle as I witnessed subconscious ideas about myself and relation in the cosmos become obsolete. At other times it was intense and loud, like a great leap, where I faced my forthcoming death and embraced transmutation. Simultaneously, expanding consciousness phenomena enabled a grander sense of identity, birthing into dimensions of seemingly infinite potential.

Even so, my experiences also included visits with demonic beings and discarnate entities, intense archetypal struggles, identification with human and planetary suffering, visions of intoxication by anesthesia, and deluded sexual representation. These experiences, whether positive or negative, were linked through COEX systems. I recognized these systems as organizing principles of my psyche, and the holotropic states provided the requisite energy to break through and regenerate a new identity. As a Westerner experiencing holotropic states through Andean ceremony, I found don Humberto Soncco Quispe’s verifications of my experiences invaluable. Training with don Humberto and doña Bernardina offered me an opportunity to integrate and put into practice the healing aspect of their lineage.

While my initiatory experiences did not result in a linear progression through the perinatal stages, I noticed a pattern. As I resolved dense thoughts and emotions linked with the perinatal domain, I became more aware of the transpersonal domain. As my transpersonal experiences deepened, my dense thoughts and emotions dissolved. Holotropic states catalyzed movement through domains/realms. My body served as the experiential vehicle, its cognitive process enabled integration (biographical/postnatal domain). The pattern is akin to Gibson’s notion of the “birth-death-rebirth” archetype (2008). Clearly a relation between Andean ontology and Grof’s theoretical framework can now be drawn.

The perinatal domain is analogous to the Andean sense of *Ukhu Pacha* – a realm of *hoocha* habited solely by beings composed of density. The biographical and postnatal domain is consonant with the Andean sense of *Kay Pacha* – the living, tangential world where humans and their potential for progression reside. The transpersonal domain corresponds with the Andean sense of *Hanaq Pacha* – a realm composed solely of *sami*, where encounters with cosmological beings result in great spiritual insight and capabilities for assisting humanity in its progression. Holotropic states of consciousness are similar with the Andean sense of *kawsay*, living energy, and *Kawsay Pacha* – a realm of living energy and purely un-manifest potential. Through ceremony, such as *despacho* and *karpay*, *kawsay* propels the *paqo* in their progressive manifestations.

Q'eros treat *kawsay* as a subtle, inherently interwoven dimension with all form in their daily cultural practices. Perhaps *kawsay* is what C. G. Jung came to refer to as *anima mundi* (Jung, 1938). It would suffice to say that Q'eros are innately aware of their holotropic potential and live that potential on a daily basis sustained by culture and tradition. This observation implies that Westerners who expand their identity to include the perinatal and transpersonal domains would be functioning within the necessary requirements for accessing holotropic states. Furthermore, the Andean progression likened to Jung's process of individuation (Nuñez del Prado, 2006) can be envisaged as a map within a map: a fractal-like similarity gleaned through a holotropic identity.

Map Within a Map

The relationship between Andean ontology and Grof's theoretical framework is striking in light of Grof's compelling research concerning the "birth-death-rebirth" archetype evidenced through perinatal voyages of Holotropic Breathwork and psychedelic research participants. In particular, an experience of BPM IV can result with the "termination and resolution of the death-rebirth struggle" (Grof, 1988, p. 30) and a sense of triumph (Grof, 2012b). It also entails an ego-death counterpart (as in Alan Watts' "skin-encapsulated ego") experienced systematically throughout the self-exploration process (Grof, 1988, p. 30). The death-rebirth component has been observed widely in indigenous traditions and initiation (Eliade, 1964, 1994; Henderson & Oakes, 1963; Kalweit, 1984; Narby & Huxley, 2001; Walsh, 2007). The *Hatun Karpay* has culminated in participant death-rebirth on an individual level, as noted by Jenkins (1997) and in the course of my personal experience. Yet in consideration of Andean prophecy, the *Hatun Karpay* contains within it the catalyst for collective rebirth.

Accordingly, Grof's four perinatal matrices may be related to the first four levels of Andean development. The transition from the third into the fourth level through the Great Initiation (*Hatun Karpay*) enables a cycle of planetary and collective rebirth. The three higher levels experientially correspond with Grof's three categorical interpretations of the transpersonal domain (transcendence of time, transcendence of space, and identification with cosmic

consciousness) (1998). Through repeated initiation, the *paqo*, the postnatal and biographical equivalent, transcends time and space in order to manifest the higher levels for the benefit of family and community, planetary being, and citizenship in the cosmos.

From a transpersonal perspective, where time and space are permeable, Andean psycho-spiritual development parallels Grof's cartography and points at the catalyzing agent in transformation. Andean prophecy is focused on harmonizing all tensional forces whether individual, collective, or macrocosmic; rebirth occurring in one area has the simultaneous potential of catalyzing evolution in other areas. Thus the dawning of the *Taripay Pacha* marked humanity's movement toward higher levels of consciousness based on a *paqo's* (and/or group of *paqos'*) progressive identity. The *Pachakuti* was the process of arriving to that dawning on a planetary level. This marked the collective opportunity for rebirth through *Hatun Karpay*, the crowning of a queen/king. The fifth, sixth, and seventh levels are intended to come about as individuals recall and sustain their holotropic identities.

Nature-Based Wisdom Traditions

In 2006 His Holiness the Dalai Lama met with a group of Q'eros in Cuzco and publicly discussed the "increasing role of American indigenous traditions in rebalancing the earth" (Garrigues, 2006). The limited yet prevailing Western worldview, backed by historically inaccurate scholarship and scientific understandings, regards indigenous traditions as symbolic in nature. This outdated view is dangerously dissociative and far more pathological than its opposite – experiencing nature and the psyche as living components in an integrative worldview.

Q'eros teach that establishing a relationship with the primary forces, or with the three domains of the psyche, is necessary in order to progress. They "feel great empathy for the pain we experience due to our loss of identity" (Jenkins, 2013, p. 174). Excluding the holotropic dynamic from traditional understandings of the human psyche and its role in society and culture has undoubtedly contributed to our modern-day crises, and the collective dissociation has disastrous consequences on a planetary scale.

Including nature-based wisdom traditions in transpersonal scholarship offers hope for advancing our present understandings of the human psyche. The parallels noted here between indigenous wisdom and transpersonal studies can help the transpersonal paradigm to emerge in full, validating holotropic states and their heuristic and healing potential. The cultural particularities of nature-based wisdom traditions can open new pathways of identity that contribute safe and effective methods for evolving consciousness. Fresh insight on the nature of identity broadens understanding on the human/nature connection and gives meaning and role to evolving members of society. This movement in turn may advance human society toward a harmonious co-existence. A transpersonal-oriented society and culture support wisdom and integration.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have discussed how Andean ontology relates to Grof's theoretical framework of holotropic states of consciousness and his cartography of the psyche. I have postulated that Grof's cartography offers an experiential pattern for collective evolution as witnessed through the multi-fold process of Q'eros prophecy and psycho-spiritual development. I have also suggested that the nature-based wisdom tradition informs individuals to assume a holotropic identity inclusive of all three of the psyche's domains, in order for the natural occurrence of holotropic states to transpire and catalyze the evolutionary process.

Opening the door between traditional Inkan knowledge and transpersonal psychology leads to many important questions. For example, what happens to the intensity of experience that transpires during holotropic states when a substantial amount of humanity is moving closer toward wholeness? When the three worlds represented in Andean prophecy are infused into one, will Grof's symbiotic cartography further evolve? Is it possible to reverse the effects of planetary crisis through dynamic identification with the wisdom aspect of nature-based wisdom traditions, such as that offered by Andean mysticism?

Further research of both ontologies and their relationship is necessary to deepen the unique perspective they offer when considered together. Including the Andean nature-based wisdom tradition in studies of transpersonal psychology scholarship will further our understanding of holotropic states and Dr. Stanislav Grof's cartography of the psyche. Moreover, expanding the scholarship of transpersonal psychology to include nature-based wisdom traditions will bring fresh insight on the nature of identity as a dynamic process in human evolution.

NOTES

¹ Shambhala is a mythic city or dimension shaped by external, internal, and spiritual levels that correspond with *Kalachakra*, or cycles of time (Berzin, 2010).

² Breath, meditative concentration, sound, mandala-like constructs, touch, group process, holotropic states.

³ Their teachers include Q'eros-born don Manuel Q'espí (deceased), don Andreas Espinosa (deceased), don Mariano Apaza and his wife doña Augustina Apaza, don Humberto Sonqo Quispé and his wife doña Bernardina Apaza Florez, Waskar *paqo* don Benito Qoriwaman (deceased), and internationally renowned mestizo *paqos* Dr. Juan Nuñez del Prado and Américo Yábar.

⁴ *Kawsay* is the fabric of space-time and the essential element that animates the material world, said Peruvian anthropologist Washington Rozas Alvarez (as cited in Wilcox, 2004, p. 122).

⁵ According to Nuñez del Prado, power is the essential component of the Andean path (Wilcox, 2004). It is the force with which *paqos* "push" the *kawsay pacha*, world of energy, to manifest their level of skill.

⁶ *Miskayani* refers to a female sacred city, while *Paytiti* is its male counterpart. Elizabeth Jenkins first heard of the myth from don Manuel in 1996 during the 25th International Conference of the Association of Transpersonal Psychology. Stanislav and Christina Grof had invited don Manuel to attend (Jenkins, 2013).

⁷ According to Yabar, "If the first ray of lightning hits near you and doesn't kill you, it breaks your etheric body into pieces and spreads it out. The second lightning strike brings the etheric body back together; the third produces ecstatic contemplation and returns you to an incorruptible unity" (Beeler, 2003, p. 14). He said, "The elements are in charge, producing a *karpay*, or initiation" placing one into "the dimension of lightning" (p. 14).

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