

Podcast: The Andean Cosmovision
Episode 1: An Introduction to the Andean Cosmovision.
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Welcome to the audio presentation of: *The Andean Cosmovision*.

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The Andean Cosmovision is a way of perceiving and interacting with reality that has its roots in the traditional, indigenous culture of the high Andes. It provides a path for discovering new and profound aspects of ourselves and the Cosmos. Along the way it nourishes a more loving and mutually supportive relationship between ourselves, nature, and the Cosmos.

The Andean Cosmovision is fundamentally different than the Western worldview. It is not a set of concepts or beliefs. It cannot be described or encompassed by words. It can, however, be experienced and it can be explored. This exploration involves engaging in the many simple, Andean, meditations. Each meditation is like a portal for exploring new aspects of ourselves and the Cosmos.

Hi, I am Oakley Gordon. In 1984 I earned my Ph.D. in cognitive psychology, the scientific study of perception, memory, attention, and consciousness. I have recently retired from a career of being a university professor in the field of psychology. For the past 25 years I have been exploring the Andean Cosmovision, under the tutelage of my mentor don Americo Yabar of Peru, his son Gayle Yabar, and the many Andean mystics, shamans, and healers with whom they have arranged for me to work.

In 2014 I published a book entitled: *The Andean Cosmovision: A Path for Exploring Profound Aspects of Ourselves, Nature, and the Cosmos*. The book was written to be a how-to guide for exploring the Andean Cosmovision. It introduces the Cosmovision at several different levels, but the foundation of the approach involves engaging in simple, Andean, meditations. I present a large number of those meditations in the book. But I thought that it might be useful for people to have, in addition to the written descriptions in the book, an audio presentation of the meditations, something you can listen to as you sit next to a mountain stream, or in your back yard, or on the floor of your bedroom.

While the Cosmovision can only be explored experientially, through the meditations, I have also found it useful, for many reasons, for my intellect to have some idea of what's going on. It helps both in doing the meditations and in integrating what we discover, during the meditations, back into our lives here in Western society. In this first recording I will lay a conceptual framework for what this path is all about. Beginning with the second recording we will move into the meditations themselves.

The path opens up in front of us...

The Andean Cosmovision is a way of perceiving and interacting with reality that has its roots in the traditional, indigenous culture of the high Andes. It is fundamentally different than our Western worldview. If you look up the term "worldview" in the dictionary you will find that it refers to an individual's, or a society's, concepts and beliefs about the basic nature of reality. This, however, is a very Western concept of worldviews, not all worldviews are based upon the world as seen through the intellect, the part of us that works with concepts and beliefs. The Andean Cosmovision is way of *perceiving and interacting* with reality, it is not a set of concepts and beliefs, it is much more like an acquired skill. It cannot be described or encompassed by words. This, by the way, is why I prefer to call it the Andean *Cosmovision* rather than the Andean *worldview*, to help us step out of the idea that the deepest understanding of reality must be built upon words and concepts.

The basic approach of the Andean meditations is to begin by noticing what your energy is like right now, what it is like to be you right now. You then do the meditation, and when it is over you again notice what your energy is like, what it is like to be you right now. The shift in your experience from before the meditation to after the meditation is the only meaning of the meditation. That is it. It is then up to you, and you alone, to decide whether or not you like that shift of energy. If it touches something deep inside of yourself, that place of your deepest values, where you appreciate beauty and value having a meaningful existence; or if you are simply intrigued by it, then you can choose to keep exploring the meditation. If you didn't like the meditation or got nothing from it you might choose to explore a different meditation, or to move on to some path other than the one provided by the Andean Cosmovision. For no path works for everyone

When I was a young man my friends and I explored many paths, Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, the writings of Carlos Castaneda, John Lilly, Alan Watts, Ram Dass, and many other writers and paths that you probably have to be my age to have heard of. *All* of those paths have beauty. As we explored, however, each one of us, individually, found a path that best fitted who we are and what we value. Some of my friends became Buddhists, some took the path of Sufism or Taoism, and so on. For me, it was the Andean Cosmovision that resonated most deeply with the essence of who I am, what I value, and who I want to be.

My intent, therefore, in these recordings, in my book, in my blog, and in my experiential workshops, is to give you enough information and experience for you to decide whether or not this path into the Andean Cosmovision is something you would like to explore. And if it is, to give you some guidance and some resources for how to explore it further. This Andean Cosmovision has no defining beliefs, no dogma, and thus there is no moral imperative within in that everyone *should* explore it. The decision of whether or not to explore it further is completely up to you. No path works for everyone.

This reminds me of a quote I would like to share, it is from the writings of Carlos Castaneda, relating the words of his mentor, the Yaqui Native American don Juan Matus. It ties into the idea of our selecting the best path for ourselves, and also the idea that for any path we take, the value comes from exploring the path, rather than from an imagined and never reached destination.

I have edited the quote a tad to make it shorter:

“[There are] a million paths. Therefore you must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if you feel you should not follow it, you must not stay with it under any conditions. Your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question....Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere...In my own life I could say I have traversed long, long paths, but I am not anywhere... Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you.”

Before we move on to the meditations, I would like to introduce a couple of basic concepts concerning the Andean Cosmovision. These concepts don't define the Cosmovision, for it is not a set of thoughts or beliefs. These concepts simply help you have the experiences that the Cosmovision makes possible, and it is those experiences that make up its heart. In our Western culture, science and religion are defined by their concepts and beliefs. In the Andean Cosmovision the concepts and beliefs are like scaffolding that helps us build certain experiences; other than that the scaffolding has no value, once we have the experiences the scaffolding becomes unimportant.

The two concepts I would like to share concern: 1) the basic nature of the Cosmos; and 2) the nature of consciousness.

Let's begin with an image of the basic nature of the Cosmos. Imagine that the Cosmos consists of a vast three-dimensional network or web of interconnected filaments of energy. When I make this point in front of other people I usually wave my fingers around as if I can display these filaments. Where these filaments of energy come together to form a bundle (a node) is what we experience as an object. I am a bundle of filaments in this vast network of filaments, as are you, as is the planet earth, and the computer on which I am typing in my thoughts about this topic. Everything that exists is a node in this vast web of interconnected filaments. This has two important implications:

- The first is that as everything is a node in this vast web of filaments, everything is ultimately connected to everything else.
- The second implication of this concept is that the Cosmos can be thought of as one thing, the vast web of filaments. And it can also be thought of as many things (the various nodes or bundles within the web of filaments).

You might know that this conception of the basic nature of the Cosmos is similar to that of modern day physics. I just bring this up to make the following point, that this conception of the Cosmos as a network of filaments is being proposed, and has its value, outside of any consideration of whether or not it is true. For me, scientific or philosophical or religious verification of this concept is irrelevant.

I would like to share a thought from the anthropologist Gregory Bateson. In addition to being an anthropologist he was also one of the founders of cybernetics, a branch of systems theory, and he was my favorite 20th Century thinker.

The following thought comes from the chapter "Why a Swan?", from Bateson's remarkable book "Steps to an Ecology of Mind". I will be paraphrasing it only.

Our intellect is a very important part of our existence. Its main task is to determine what is true and what is false. This is the goal of both science and Western religion, although they approach this task in different ways. There are, however, times when the determination of what is true and what is false is irrelevant, and even gets in our way.

Let's consider a performance of the ballet Swan Lake. A ballerina appears on the stage dressed as a swan. This is not the appropriate context for the scientist to leap up and shout, "Don't be fooled, that is not really a swan!"; nor is it appropriate for a priest to stand up and exclaim, "Look, a giant swan. It's a miracle!" On the other side of the relationship, the ballerina does not stop upon entering the stage to announce, "Please do not be fooled, I am not really a swan"; nor does she announce, "It is important that you believe that I truly am a swan." These considerations are appropriate in the correct contexts, but there are times when something of value is going on and the judgments of the scientist and the priest are simply not relevant. There are times, in other words, when being either skeptical *or* gullible gets in the way: for example, when listening to a symphony, or watching a stunningly beautiful sunset, or staring for the first time into the eyes of your newborn child. Deep down I have always known that these are the most important moments of my life.

It is within that stance that we can pursue the Andean Cosmovision.

The second concept that I offer as scaffolding for doing the meditations has to do with the nature of consciousness. Here in our Western worldview we have, essentially, two options for what to think about consciousness.

- The first option is to view consciousness as something that arises from a sophisticated nervous system.

- The second option is to view consciousness as an aspect of a transcendent soul that resides within our material bodies.

The Andean Cosmovision, however, offers a third option, that consciousness is an inherent attribute of the filaments that make up the Cosmos. This means that everything is conscious since everything is made up of those filaments. I am conscious, you are conscious, my cat is conscious, the tree outside my window is conscious, the sun is conscious, the planet earth is conscious, the stones in the rivers are conscious.

The Cosmos as a whole is conscious (the Cosmic consciousness). Rather than having a God who stands outside of creation, the Andeans see the Cosmos itself as a conscious Being with a creative impulse that organizes itself and changes over time.

Consciousness exists independently at all levels of the network of filaments that makes up the Cosmos. The Cosmos itself is conscious, as are the various nodes within the Cosmos. The most important node in our neighborhood of the Cosmos is the **Pachamama**, the conscious entity who is our mother, the planet earth. She is not a transcendent spirit who lives in the planet earth, she is the conscious planet earth herself. She may be only part of the Cosmos but she has her own consciousness. The **Apus** are the great conscious Beings who are the majestic mountain peaks. While they are but part of the Pachamama, they have their own consciousness. And so on down the line. **Chakras** are the cultivated fields in the high Andes. They are daughters of the Pachamama, and while they are but part of the Pachamama, they have their own consciousness. When the villagers want to plant a field, a chakra, they consult with the chakra to see if this is the right time to plant and to honor and thank her for accepting the seeds. When they leave the field after working it for the day, they turn and give an offering of thanks to the chakra.

Other important conscious Beings are **Tai Tai Inti** (the sun)...also sometimes called Inti Tai Tai, **Mama Killa** (the moon), and **Mama Tuta** (the dark, the void, who holds the stars in her embrace). Then there are the stars themselves, and the trees, and the river that tumbles down the side of the mountain. They are all conscious, and we can connect with them, and when we do our relationship with the rest of the Cosmos begins to blossom.

Once when I was at don Americo's home high in the Andes, "salka wasi" the "house of undomesticated energy", some young women from the local village came to visit us. They sang to us some of their traditional, sacred, songs. One of the songs began as follows:

*I walk without shoes in the mountains.
My bare feet touch the mountain side.
The mountain takes pleasure in knowing my body.*

The Andean people experience a reality where the mountains, the trees, the stream are as aware of the people as the people are of them. This is the territory that the Andean Cosmovision opens up for us to explore.

The idea that stars, trees, and even stones are conscious is so far from how Western society views consciousness as to make the idea hard to entertain for many people in our culture. From the perspective of the intellect, however, consciousness is and must remain the ultimate mystery of the universe. Consciousness is the knower, and thus cannot be the known. When we try to understand, to know, the nature of consciousness we are trying to turn the knower into the known, and that simply cannot be done. It is like a knife trying to cut its own edge. It is not a matter of not being clever enough, but rather a matter of logical impossibility. Consciousness exists beyond all of our concepts about it. Our thoughts, and our experiences, are the *contents* of consciousness, what we are aware of, not the part of us that is aware. Consciousness exists beyond all of our concepts of space and time and

matter and energy and individual self (the ego).

The concept that everything is conscious is not a fact to be believed. It is an idea that opens up space between our beliefs, allowing new information to flow in from reality as we engage in the meditations.

Again, the Andean Cosmovision is not a set of concepts or beliefs. These two concepts--that the Cosmos consists of filaments of energy and that everything is conscious--are just ideas that I have found useful, as a child of the West, for understanding how to do the meditations. It through our ineffable *experiences* in the meditations that we actually learn the Andean Cosmovision.

In the next episode, with our first meditation, we will begin to explore the Andean Cosmovision. As we move through the meditations there are three important terms to which I will repeatedly refer. I would like to briefly introduce them now, and then develop a better understanding of them as we move along. These terms are "intent", "ayni", and "salka".

Intent is the first term and it is fundamental to doing the Andean meditations. *Intent* is the active ingredient of the meditations, it is how we actually do the meditations. In this context *intent* doesn't mean exactly what you would find in the dictionary. The word *intent* is just the closest word in English to what we are looking for and so it has been recruited for our use.

What the word *intent* refers to in the Andean Cosmovision is a fascinating and rather mystical thing and we will explore it more deeply as we move along through these recordings. For our purposes at the beginning of this path, the "training wheel" understanding of intent, is that *intent* is simply *sincere pretending*. That is how we do the Andean meditations, we simply sincerely pretend to, and that is all it takes. As part of the first meditation I will cover--the Touching Pachamama meditation--we place our hands on the Pachamama (the great being who is our mother the planet earth) and then we connect our energy to the energy of Pachamama. The way we actually do that is through intent, we simply, sincerely pretend to do so. That is all it takes to get an effect from the meditations. If sincere pretending evokes an effect, that does not prove that what we are pretending is literally true, it simply demonstrates that sincere pretending works. We will take a deeper look at *intent* in later recordings, I find it quite fascinating, but understanding intent as sincere pretending is all we really need.

The other two terms, *ayni* and *salka*, come from quechua, the language of the Andes. They are really best explained in the context of doing, or having done, the meditations. Mainly because I don't know if you will be going through the recordings in order, and might skip the episodes where they are explained, I would like to at least mention them now.

Ayni is a quechua term that can be translated as *reciprocity*. With ayni, if you receive something you give something in return, and if you give something you receive something in return. This principle informs the lives of the indigenous Andean people. It shapes their relationships with each other, with their land, and with the Cosmos. Beginning with the meditation Releasing Hucha I will discuss how ayni, when introduced into the meditations, can nourish a more loving and mutually supportive relationship between ourselves and nature and the cosmos. It is within that *relationship* that the Andean Cosmovision can really help us blossom into the essence of who we each uniquely are.

Salka is also a quechua term. *Salka* can be translated as *undomesticated energy*. The dog has domesticated energy while the wolf has salka. The chicken has domesticated energy while the condor has salka. The sheep has domesticated energy while the deer has salka. Actually, all beings have salka, it is just that in domesticated beings, the domestication is like a veneer that the light of salka has to shine through. Our social, political, and economic systems inform and nourish our domestication. We in Western society tend to be very domesticated beings. Domestication is not bad, it is how we survive in our Western world. But we are also salka beings, salka is our birthright as human beings.

The biggest picture of what the Andean meditations do for us, of what we find when we explore the Andean Cosmovision, is that we get in touch with our beautiful salka energy, the energy that exists outside of the "us" that our society has shaped. Then, we have a choice, we can access our domesticated energy when we go shopping, and we can enter into our salka energy when we are standing in awe, under the dome of stars in the beauty of the night sky. By knowing both, our salka and our domesticated energy, we become more of *all* of who we are.

In closing, I would like to mention that there are many paths that wind their way into the Andean Cosmovision. Perhaps as many different paths as there are mystics, shamans, and healers in the Andes. Some of these paths are available for us learn here in the West, not just the path that I can share. These paths differ in assumptions, techniques, and focus. Some are paths of power, some paths of healing, and others paths of heart. When I speak of the Andean Cosmovision I am speaking *solely* from my experiences of exploring, for the past 25 years, the path shown to me by don Americo Yabar of Peru, his son Gayle Yabar, and the many indigenous mystics, shamans, and healers with whom don Americo has arranged for me to work. I only want so speak from experience, this is the path I know, it is a path of heart.

This is the end of episode one of the podcast: The Andean Cosmovision. The podcast covers some of the material presented in my book: The Andean Cosmovision, available in both printed and electronic formats, and which can be ordered through your local bookstore, as well as through Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Please consider supporting your local bookstore. The podcast is being made available so that those of you who want to play with the meditations can listen to an auditory walk-through of the meditations while you are meditating. I found, in designing the podcast, that I just *wanted* to also include the conceptual information that I have found so useful in exploring the Andean Cosmovision. Many more meditations, and supportive conceptual information, may be found in my book (The Andean Cosmovision) as well as for free in my blog. For more information on the book, my blog, and other supportive material, please visit my web site at: www.SalkaWind.com. That is salka with a k, salkawind.com. This is Oakley Gordon. Thank you.