CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTER AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Born of an Italian father and Dutch mother, ALFONSO MONTUORI grew up trilingual and because of extensive travel spoke five languages by age 12. He was born in Holland and grew up in Lebanon, Greece, and England before coming to the United States in 1983. In London, he worked as an interpreter for Scotland Yard and then as a professional musician (saxophone and flute), making numerous recordings with his own band and as a session-man and gigging extensively throughout England for several years. Today, he continues his passion for music in his collaboration with his wife, the jazz singer Kitty Margolis, as producer of her award-winning recordings. He is a Saybrook graduate (1991) and studied creativity with Frank Barron and Stanley Krippner. He has taught at the Saybrook Institute, the College of Notre Dame, and the South-Central University of Technology in Changsha in the People's Republic of China, where he developed and taught the first course in management and organization theory. His books include *Evolutionary Competence* (Gieben, 1989), *From Power to Partnership* (coauthored with Isabella Conti, Harper San Francisco, 1993), *Creators on Creating* (coedited with Barron & Barron, Putnam, 1997), and the three-volume series *Social Creativity* (coedited with Ronald E. Purser, Hampton Press, 1999-2004). He has written articles in publications ranging from the *Academy of Management Review* and *Human Relations* to *Journal of Management Education* and *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. He is an associate professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies and the Wiepking Distinguished Professor in the School of Fine Arts at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

URUSA FAHIM was born in Pakistan. Her first cross-cultural encounter happened at a young age when her family migrated from East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh, to West Pakistan. She grew up in a huge extended family in a multilingual environment. She received her Master's degree in applied psychology from Punjab University in Lahore and

her clinical training from the Center for Clinical Psychology in Lahore. She practiced as a clinical psychologist for several years in Lahore and Islamabad. She also worked in the field of development management for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Academy for Educational Development (AED). She came to the United States in 1995 for graduate education. Her personal experiences with intercultural issues and dilemmas enhanced her interest in the field of intercultural communication. She received her Ph. D. in learning and change in human systems from the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. Her dissertation research was on the development of cultural sensitivity in individuals. At present, she is on the adjunct faculty at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, St. Mary's College of California in Moraga, and the Center for Clinical Psychology in Lahore, Pakistan.

Summary

Cross-cultural encounters can provide an excellent opportunity for personal growth by placing us in situations where our understanding of self and world, and of how we believe things "are" or "should be," is severely challenged. In this article, the authors argue that in the United States, the cultural dimension is often overlooked in our understanding of personal growth because U.S. individualism obscures the role of culture in the constitution of the self and that understanding this dimension makes a vital contribution to self-understanding. They also view cross-cultural encounters as potentially creative and draw on the psychology of creativity to explore the implications of this view. The authors conclude by arguing that to have the greatest effect, humanistic psychology must both return to its roots in existential-phenomenological psychology and philosophy and tackle its own understanding of the self as a culturally situated phenomenon.

Keywords: *cross-cultural encounter; creativity; personal growth; existentialism; culture shock; transformation*

In an important article published in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology in 1975, *The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock*, Peter Adler, then a young doctoral student and former Peace Corps volunteer, argued that cross-cultural experiences, and culture shock in particular, can be an opportunity for personal growth. This article and Adler's small number of

ensuing articles and book chapters have been cited often in the literature on the psychology of cross-cultural encounters. It is interesting that this fascinating area of inquiry has not been followed up extensively at all. In this article, we would like to (a) reopen this vital discussion, perhaps more timely than ever because of the enormous increase in cross-cultural exchanges in the world today; (b) explore why there has been no substantial follow-up to Adler's work in the literature on cross-cultural and specifically humanistic psychology; (c) present a case for humanistic-existential psychology as the clear candidate for a conceptual framework to address the issue; and (d) address some of the factors that may have militated against humanistic psychologists taking up Adler's challenge.

ADLER AND PERSONAL GROWTH

As Adler suggested, the experience of encountering cultures different from our own can make the degree to which we are ourselves the products of our own culture very visible. Precisely because within our own culture our cultural patterns are more often than not invisible to us, we often take them to be simply "just the way things are." Because, as Hall (1959) stated, "culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants" (p. 29), we don't look at our own cultural patterns, or the way we think and do things, as an external observer might. We remain unaware of patterns that are deeply embedded in ourselves and in our social environments. After years of studying different cultures and teaching diplomats to be effective in other countries, Edward Hall (1959) believed that "the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own" (p. 29). He went on to state that

> the best reason for exposing oneself to foreign ways is to generate a sense of vitality and awareness—an interest in life which can come only when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference. (p. 30)

Hall explained that the best and most effective way to learn about oneself is to learn about other cultures and the ways they are different from ours. It is by confronting and contrasting these differences that one gains a deeper understanding of what motivates

us to perceive the world the way we do, because so much of what we think of as "me" is actually shaped by our culture. What Hall describes as learning about ourselves is a movement toward personal growth and development. Adler (1975) stated that

> most individuals are relatively unaware of their own values, beliefs, and attitudes. Transitional experiences, in which the individual moves from one environment or experience to another, tend to bring cultural predispositions into perception and conflict. (p. 14)

What makes cross-cultural interactions or culture shock so confusing is the implicit or intangible nature of cultural patterns. Oberg (1960; cf. Furnham & Bochner, 1986) coined the term *culture shock* to describe the confusion and disorientation that people often experience as a result of the loss of familiar frame of references when they encounter a new culture. It is easier to notice the obvious differences, but the unspoken and tacitly accepted rules of social engagement can produce dissonance for the visitor, especially when they are quite different from or even opposite to what one is accustomed to. What makes Adler's approach so interesting and innovative is that he reframed what was up to that point viewed as a "negative" experience (disorientation, confusion, and drop in coping skills and efficacy) that one sought to avoid at all costs into an opportunity for learning and personal growth. One of the things that made this creative reframing possible was the theoretical framework provided by humanistic-existential psychology.

ENCOUNTERS, PERSONAL GROWTH, AND PARADIGMS OF INQUIRY

In his article, Adler (1975) stated that

> although culture shock is most often associated with negative consequences, it can be an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth. The problems and frustrations encountered in the culture shock process are important to an understanding of change and movement experiences, and that such transitional experiences can be the source of higher levels of personality development. Implicit in the conflict and tension posed by the transitional experience lies the potential for authentic growth and development. (p. 15)

Adler's position was that during cross-cultural encounters, individuals can become aware of their own values and cultural predispositions, and psychological movements into new dimensions and new environments of experience can tend to produce forms of personality disintegration. The reorientation of personality at higher levels of consciousness and psychic integration is based on the disintegrative aspects of personality inherent in the conflict and confusion of movement and change experiences (pp. 15-16). As Adler (1975) went on to suggest more extensively later, what he termed the transitional experience can lead to a shift from a monocultural to an intercultural frame of reference, and "paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself" (p. 22).

Psychologists are developing an increasing interest in matters of culture and of cross-cultural exchange. Several approaches to cross-cultural encounters have emerged over the years (Adler, 1975; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). The early approaches focused on the potentially negative effects of cultural encounters and developed what Furnham and Bochner called a pseudomedical model. This approach focused on the stress experienced in cultural encounters and on the phenomena of culture shock and adjustment and viewed the success of the experience as dependent on intrapsychic factors. One of the most famous constructs from this approach is the U-curve of adjustment, made up of three stages that can be summarized as *elation* (or the initial honeymoon period), followed by *confusion and frustration*, and then gradual *integration and adjustment*.

The pseudomedical or clinical model saw the cultural experience solely in terms of the sojourner's intrapsychic adjustment. Feeling bad or experiencing culture shock was considered a function of the sojourner's weak or disturbed mental health. Clinical intervention addressing psychological issues was the preferred treatment modality.

The more social-psychological model differs markedly from this orientation. As Furnham and Bochner (1986) put it, these models liken cross-cultural exposure to a learning experience, and instead of therapy for the traveler, they propose programs of preparation, orientation, and the acquisition of culturally appropriate social skills (p. 13). Little if no reference is made to intrapsychic states. The focus is primarily on ways to cope with the social environment.

In reviewing the literature, it is clear that psychological studies of cross-cultural encounters can largely be divided into these two categories, with some interesting exceptions, to be addressed later. What is particularly interesting here from the perspective of humanistic psychology is that in these two prevailing models there is no room for the concept of psychological growth. The medical model focuses essentially on therapy for the sojourner when he or she cannot handle the experience and manifests apparently pathological symptoms. Adjustment here means being able to have a cross-cultural experience without experiencing any form of psychological change at all, and indeed any deviation from the person we were before (at home) would be seen as a potential problem.

The social psychological model is fundamentally instrumental. The point is to be able to function effectively in the host culture and to go about one's business without suffering from social ineptitude or existential crises. This approach does not even seriously consider intrapsychic factors but focuses on the development of social coping skills. Although there is a focus on learning, it is not, by any means, transformative learning.

Taylor (1994) highlights this missing piece from the theories of intercultural competence. He points out that what is missing from the literature is what happens during the process of, or the possibilities of, cross-cultural encounters, such as "perspective transformation" (p. 394) that leads to learning and transformation. However, Taylor's focus is on the cognitive *process* of learning. Taylor (1994) suggests Mezirow's transformative learning theory to fill in the gaps in the intercultural competence theories because "transformative learning attempts to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences" (p. 395). Although Transformative Learning is an interesting alternative to the two approaches described above, particularly with its focus on "disorienting dilemmas," its fundamentally cognitive approach is still extremely limited and anemic when faced with the richness of human experience and the depth of emotional and existential responses during cross-cultural encounters.

At this point, it is clear where the gaping hole is in the present approaches to the psychology of cross-cultural encounters. None of these models accounts for the possibility that an exchange with another culture may lead to psychological growth and to a better understanding of who we are, where we come from, and where we

might want to go. It is a gap that humanistic-existential psychology is perfectly suited to fill (Bell & Schniedewind, 1989). But to take this challenge on, we feel that humanistic-existential psychology will have to take on some serious challenges of its own.

There are many reasons that humanistic-existential psychology can provide the most useful entry point for an inquiry into cross-cultural encounters as opportunities for personal growth. Transpersonal psychology has generally focused on extraordinary experiences (visions, dreams, initiation rites, shamanic journeys) in extraordinary locales (rain forests, ashrams, and so forth), but it has not to any great extent addressed the ordinary or at least common experience of ordinary people on an ordinary trip abroad, the sometimes painful or prosaic experience of immigrants, businesspersons, diplomats, holiday makers, guest workers, exchange students, volunteers, and others who have to spend some time in a different culture, perhaps renting an apartment, or staying in a hotel, and generally having to participate in the everyday life of a distinctively different culture. It is these kinds of ordinary experiences that the existential tradition and specifically the phenomenological approaches articulated by Heidegger, Sartre, and others have worked hard to disclose (Polkinghorne, 1982).

Culture shock does not always happen in the form of single intensely disorienting experiences, and the experience of psychological growth in another culture does not have to be confined to the ingestion of psychotropic substances in an exotic locale. It can manifest itself in the ordinary, mundane experiences of everyday living, when we suddenly notice that things don't work quite the way they do at home, and we find these small differences becoming progressively more unsettling (the experience of the hermeneutic "breakdown"). Part of the shock can be precisely the experience of being in places that are, in some ways, familiar, such as hotels, restaurants, railway stations, bus stops, and so forth, but where everything might be just slightly—but vitally—different. In Italy, a bus ticket is bought at a kiosk, and before the introduction of the Euro, change might be given not in the form of money, but of *gettoni* or coins that can only be used with public telephones. Sometimes the sums were so insubstantial one received candy instead of coins. In some buses in the United States, one pays the driver when one gets on. In London, one sits down first and then waits for the ticket collector to show up. Getting on the bus and waiting to pay before one sits down is typically met with howls of discontent from Londoners

queuing behind one. In London, one quietly waits in line (in the queue) for the bus to arrive and gets on single file. In the People's Republic of China (PRC), on the other hand, it is not uncommon to see groups of individuals running toward an empty bus and swinging from the door in an attempt to get in before everybody else. We have seen five people throw themselves at the door in a mad rush to get into an empty bus that contains perhaps 60 seats. Whereas for the English even brushing somebody slightly on the bus requires what amounts to an abject apology, in the PRC it is almost insulting not to touch somebody while on the bus.

Seemingly insignificant differences can add up to create an experience not unlike *Alice in Wonderland* for the discombobulated traveler. As Hall (1959) has pointed out, experiences of personal space vary radically across the planet. Infringements of one's personal space can be extremely distressing but also extremely instructive. Where personal space begins and ends is by no means the same in all cultures (Barnlund, 1975).

THE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE, LEARNING, AND GROWTH

When I (Urusa) first arrived in the United States and rented a room in a house, I was told that if I wanted to invite anyone to the house I had to inform all my roommates in advance and make sure none of the housemates would be disrupted by my visitor. There were also rules about the duration of the visit. Even though I did not have a single friend at the time, I was quite disturbed at the thought of living in a house that, to me, did not sound welcoming at all. Coming from a culture where people pride themselves on having a home where friends and acquaintances can feel comfortable visiting at any time of the day, no matter how inconvenient to the residents, these rules felt a little bizarre to me. I jumped to the conclusion that living in this house would hinder my making friends as these rules were a negative reflection of the values practiced in my new "home."

Another example is the experience of a Danish student. When he first came to the United States and people asked him how he was, he would actually answer their question, feeling confused and rejected when the person asking wouldn't even stop to hear his response. He later decided that "How are you?" was a greeting and

not really a question in the United States. The other side of the coin is the American woman who, on her return from Germany, advised others never to say "How are you?" to a German "unless you really want to know and have the time." These differences are extremely instructive and in fact serve as pointers to the often radically different ways in which different cultures construct their social realities.

Exposure to other cultures can show us, among other things,

1. that there are many different ways of organizing reality, from food to housing to intimate relations to conceptions of the self to our understanding of space and time;
2. that we ourselves, as individuals, are shaped and influenced (although by no means determined) by our own culture, in ways that we may not at all be aware of; and
3. that the psychological destabilization that accompanies the experience of culture shock in another country can be used as an opportunity to learn about oneself.

It was Edward T. Hall who first pointed out that cultural differences based on different beliefs become manifest through social norms and behaviors that are taken for granted by those from the same culture. For instance, two persons from the same culture would know what behavior to expect from each other in social situations, and they would also be aware of any digression in behavior that is not acceptable in their social and cultural context. Two of Hall's (1959) most significant contributions in the field of intercultural communication were to point out that there are implicit rules about physical proximity in different cultures and to clarify that relationship to time varies from culture to culture depending on the importance given to the past, present, or future. Different perception of time and space influences social norms and practices according to what is valued in different cultures. These perceptions influence not only social behavior but also professional relationships, values, and work ethics as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998a, 1998b) found in their extensive research across several cultures, countries, and continents.

In every culture, there are certain accepted ways of being-in-the-world: certain ways of greeting people, customs pertaining to cleanliness, punctuality, personal space, and so forth. These are givens that a person from that culture would not typically challenge or even think about, although of course the greater the diver-

sity in any culture, the greater the heterogeneity of customs. But in general, for instance, North Americans share certain traits, customs, and so forth, such as those outlined in Stewart and Bennett's (1991) useful *American Cultural Patterns.*

Personal space and autonomy are two examples. The average American will generally stand at arm's length from his or her interlocutor. In the Middle East, it is customary to stand much closer to others, indeed close enough to smell the other's breath. In the United States, on the other hand, the combination of personal space and the considerable consumption of breath mints and other deodorizers indicates that there are in fact quite different ways of knowing others, and different ways in which one can come to know others, coupled with different degrees and understandings of social intimacy. Autonomy and privacy are also highly valued by North Americans. But in the PRC or Japan, different historical and cultural contexts have led to radically different ways of being. What Americans would call dependence, and interpret as something to be avoided, is highly valued in Japan, as the psychoanalyst Takeo Doi (1986) has demonstrated in his discussion of the Japanese concept of amae (Rotenberg, 1977). Privacy as we know it is not respected or valued in the PRC anywhere near the same extent as it is in the United States.

I (Alfonso) remember three telling incidents that occurred while I was living in the PRC, on the campus of the South-Central University of Technology in Changsha, Hunan Province. One fine Sunday morning at 7 a.m., I awoke to find in my bedroom seven Chinese men about to install some equipment for my television. On another occasion, I was reading a map at a railway station and suddenly found a dozen Chinese men, some with their arms around me, intently looking at the map with me. The third example is the Chinese tendency to stare at people, which, for the average U.S. big-city dweller, can initially be most disconcerting, particularly because staring at people in some metropolitan centers is considered not merely rude but a potential provocation and a prelude to a fist fight, or worse.

These relatively minor examples actually have some rather profound implications. They can lead to three interrelated reflections. First of all, these incidents are most instructive in illustrating fundamental cultural differences, which may seem either trivial or simply abstract in the context of an introductory cultural anthro-

pology or other text discussing cultural differences. But combined with the lived response (and even shock) of actually being there, these cultural differences take on a completely different light. Abstract discussions of individualism and collectivism or autonomy and dependence suddenly take on a whole new meaning as one sees them played out in one's own everyday experience. And it is precisely this lived experience that humanistic-existential psychology has validated and attempted to articulate and what places this tradition in a vital position to contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural encounters.

Second, cultural differences can lead to an opportunity to study and reflect on our own experience of what in hermeneutics is known as the "breakdown," when our tried and trusted ways of making meaning fail. As Winograd and Flores (1987) explain it,

> Because of what Heidegger calls our "thrownness," we are largely forgetful of the social dimension of understanding and the commitment it entails. It is only when a breakdown occurs that we become aware of the fact that "things" in our world exist not as the result of individual acts of cognition but through our active participation in a domain of discourse and mutual concern. (p. 78)

As Rollo May (1976) has pointed out, existentialism is a philosophy of crisis and views crisis as an opportunity for understanding and becoming. We suggest that existentialism can provide an important framework with which to study the lived experience of cross-cultural experiences. What do we actually experience in these moments? How do we react? What, specifically, affects us most strongly about the other cultures? When observing expatriates, it becomes apparent that although they may all be experiencing certain degrees of discomfort with the host culture, there are some things that bother some individuals more than others. Whereas Yasmin may find it most troublesome that Americans can pour out their heart to her one day and act almost like total strangers the next, Yannis is perturbed more by the way Americans tend to dismiss passionate discourse, and Yevgeni is particularly upset by the way Americans seem to be oblivious to history. These are symptoms of various degrees of culture shock, of differences attributable to culture and reflective of the nature of our own psychological make up.

Culture shock, and the microevents that may lead up to it, are not *experientially* trivial to the individuals who experience it. In the experience of culture shock, important ways in which aspects of the person's experience and identity are disclosed, and the exploration of the experience, can be quite instructive. These specific aspects of individual experience present opportunities for exploring values, traits, attitudes, and identity that may not have surfaced, or certainly may not have become as explicit and center stage, if the individual had stayed at home. The encounter with another culture, therefore, becomes an opportunity to understand who we are, what we value and hold dear, and what we feel strongly about. This does not imply that there may be no change in these values, for instance. It rather suggests that as they disclose themselves, they present the opportunity for critical inquiry and reflection.

Third, and in some ways most important, cultural differences offer a remarkable opportunity to reflect on something that is generally left out of North American discussions of personal growth: the extent to which we are shaped by our own cultures. This may be the most important insight for North Americans, precisely because North Americans live in a culture that ironically downplays tremendously the importance of culture while focusing much attention on individual or personality differences. In fact, research suggests that for North Americans, culture and its effect on them are perhaps more invisible than for people of any other culture. Americans simply do not know the extent to which they are American (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; Stewart & Bennett, 1991). When the cultural dimension is addressed in the context of personal growth, it tends to be referred to monolithically, along the lines of the importance of becoming a light unto oneself and not buying into the "cultural trance" or the generic values of a non-growth-oriented, materialistic society. We suggest that a much more subtly nuanced understanding of culture is important in the context of the discourse and practices of personal growth and that cross-cultural experiences provide us with the opportunity to develop such an understanding. According to Hall (1959), cross-cultural encounters "generate a sense of vitality and awareness—an interest in life which can come only when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference" (p. 30).

THE INVISIBILITY OF AMERICAN CULTURAL PATTERNS

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) has stated that the North American concept of the self strikes most of the world's population as very peculiar. The North American concept is, he argues, in many ways unique in the world. Stewart and Bennett (1991) compiled broad generalizations about White North American cultural patterns on the basis of cross-cultural research (cf. Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Marsella, DeVos, & Hsu, 1985). They argued that, compared to the rest of the world's cultures, research shows that

1. North Americans view the self as the cultural quantum in society;
2. in the North American self, there is a remarkable absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning that impinge on perception and give shape to behavior;
3. North Americans reject sociological and philosophical principles and replace them with psychological theories;
4. the nature of North Americans' self-concept prevents them from understanding the enormous cross-cultural variations in self-concepts; and
5. despite the emphasis on freedom of choice and autonomy, North Americans are subject to subtle but pervasive pressures to conform, to be free like everybody else (cf. Slater, 1970).

The above summary gives an indication why North Americans may be more inclined than most to be unaware of the effect of cultural forces in shaping who they are. Fundamentally, North Americans' overriding emphasis on the self at the expense of culture has created what amounts to a blind spot in their understanding of cultural factors and cultural differences. Our own culture is typically invisible to us, but for North Americans, culture may be even more invisible, precisely because North American culture downplays the importance of culture and abstract categories such as society in favor of the individual. In social-scientific terms, North Americans are methodological individualists.

The following question then arises: To what extent do those attributes that I consider mine, my personality traits, my way of thinking, feeling, and being in the world reflect my own cultural background? In other words, to what extent am I socially constructed, a product of my culture? If, as research suggests (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; Stewart & Bennett, 1991),

North Americans are largely unaware of the extent to which they are not just unique individuals but also North Americans, unaware of the extent to which their cultural background is part of them, then a cross-cultural encounter offers an invaluable opportunity to discover dimensions of who we are that may otherwise go completely unacknowledged.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXISTENTIALISM AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Because this is an exploratory article, intended largely as an invitation to explore a subject rather than an extensive attempt at theory building, we will simply present a few concepts and attempt to demonstrate their relevance to the development of different conceptual frameworks for understanding cross-cultural encounters (Greening, 1997). The humanistic-existential tradition has developed a conceptual vocabulary that can address the cross-cultural experience in a way quite different from either the medical or social psychology models.

We will begin with the time-honored idea of the human potential and the effort of humanistic psychologists to increase our understanding of human nature. What is clearly lacking in the pseudomedical, social psychology, and transformative learning models is a developed concept of personal growth. There is nothing particularly mysterious about this, in the context of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, of course. The medical model addresses dysfunctional behavior and personal distress (such as culture shock) in an attempt to normalize the person, and the social psychological model presents what may be thought of as preventive, learnable skills to avoid socially inappropriate behavior. But the notion of psychological growth goes beyond this, adding a new element. It suggests that it is possible to do more than simply survive a cross-cultural exchange intact or simply to learn social skills. It posits the potential for psychological learning and for experience that can transform the sojourner. In other words, it suggests that an exchange with persons from other cultures can be used as a vehicle for changing oneself in a potentially desirable manner.

Existing research (Fahim, 2002; Hall, 1959, 1976; Stewart & Bennett, 1991) already shows that persons who have studied or worked abroad can develop a greater interest in international

issues, become more cosmopolitan, less ethnocentric, and more tolerant of differences or relativistic, aware that there are different ways of being-in-the-world that are not necessarily better or worse than our own culture's. They are simply different. Somewhat trivial examples include such obvious things as different cuisines, different forms of artistic expression, daily customs, and so forth.

These kinds of attitude changes are interesting and perhaps predictable. They do not strike one as unexpected and make up the bulk of what one may find in mainstream texts under the usually small section devoted to the beneficial effects of cross-cultural encounters. A perspective drawing on the humanistic-existential tradition can go beyond this and suggests some far more radical implications. One of the main contributions this tradition can make is, through an articulation of the process of change itself, to develop a framework for understanding cross-cultural encounters in such a way that these changes do not appear as an afterthought but actually present themselves as the major opportunity one can find in such encounters. In other words, one of the reasons that the discussion of the beneficial effects of cross-cultural encounters has been an afterthought is that the two presently dominant conceptual frameworks are fundamentally incapable of addressing personal growth. The concept itself does not feature prominently in their conceptual vocabulary, if at all. In humanistic psychology, it takes center stage.

As an example, let us take the concept of anxiety. In both of the other approaches, anxiety is viewed as something that needs to be eliminated. It is viewed as a dysfunction. In humanistic psychology, and particularly in the work of Rollo May, which of course drew extensively from the existentialist tradition of Kierkegaard and Heidegger, anxiety is considered an integral part of being human. But more important, anxiety is viewed as intimately connected to creativity, the ability to make something new of oneself and to transform oneself (May, 1976). Anxiety is therefore not something that should immediately be eliminated, medicated, or avoided. It is, fundamentally, a source of learning and creativity.

The concept of breakdown, borrowed from Heidegger, can illustrate this. For Heidegger, we are not Cartesian observers of the world, standing outside looking in. We are thrown into a world where much of what goes on is experienced at a prereflective level. The classic example is that one does not pause to think and observe a tool such as a hammer while one is using it. One simply uses it. It

is only when the tool breaks down or when our action somehow does not achieve the desired result that we reflect on it. According to Winograd and Flores (1987),

> Our openness to experience is grounded in a pre-understanding without which understanding itself would not be possible. An individual's pre-understanding is a result of experience within a tradition. Everything we say is said against the background of that experience and tradition, and makes sense only with respect to it. (p. 74)
>
> Knowledge is always interpretation, which depends on the entire previous experience of the interpreter and on situatedness in a tradition. (pp. 74-75)

The implications for this concept of breakdown in terms of the cross-cultural experience are substantial. When in our own culture, we are literally like fish in water, unaware of the water. We take most things for granted. When we are in a different culture, breakdowns are far more frequent. Our interpretive frameworks fail us, and we are forced to reflect on events—minor events, such as the bus example above—that at home we would not think about twice. If this happens consistently, as indeed it can all too frequently in another culture, our whole sense of making meaning of the world can literally be shattered. And if, as existential psychologists suggest, our sense of self emerges to a large extent through our participation in a world with others (May, 1976), then such a series of breakdowns will have more than simply the effect of a simple instrumental annoyance. It will challenge our very sense of who we are and who we are in the world. Our confusion about the world will translate into a confusion about who we are, which indeed is typical of culture shock.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) describe culture shock as "the shock of the new." They summarize six aspects of culture shock:

1. Strain due to the effort required to make the necessary psychological adaptations.
2. A sense of loss and feelings of deprivation in regard to friends, status, profession, and possessions.
3. Being rejected by and/or rejecting members of the new culture.
4. Confusion in role, role expectation, values, feelings and self-identity.
5. Surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation when becoming aware of cultural differences.
6. Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment. (p. 48)

Furnham and Bochner note the similarities between culture shock and anomie, as described by Hampden-Turner (1971), who considers it a failure of the process of self-renewal, a process that characterizes creative persons:

> Those suffering from anomie complain that "everything is so uncertain", that "the old kind of friendship" is lacking, that the person cannot know "where he stands from one day to the next," "which are the right rules to follow" and "just how one is expected to act." (p. 78)

Hampden-Turner (1971) notes that "with anomie there is no capacity to rebel and create meaning" (p. 79). We would argue that culture shock arises in part out of a need to make meaning in precisely those areas where at home we take certainty of meaning most for granted. Coping with a new environment involves, above all, creating meaning out of it. One of the most vital aspects of a cross-cultural encounter is precisely that it can make us aware of our creative capacity as makers of meaning, a capacity that is generally dormant in most of us because of the taken-for-grantedness of our experience of our familiar world. A cross-cultural encounter can, therefore, be viewed as a creative challenge, a challenge to make meaning and construct our understanding of a new world. Culture shock is the result of the accumulated breakdown in precisely those things we most take for granted—sometimes little, insignificant things, like how to ride a bus. But the accumulation of many breakdowns in these seemingly insignificant everyday practices can lead to a deep questioning of our own self-efficacy, our own capacity to be in the world as effective and competent persons, who, above all, have some basic understanding of the world around us and how to be in it.

Adler (1975) argued that culture shock presented a great opportunity for psychological growth and borrowed Kazimier Dabrowski's concept of "positive disintegration" to explain this. This argument holds that personal growth can occur when one's capacity to make meaning of the world is challenged, and one can come back and reintegrate at a higher, more inclusive level. At this higher level, one's capacity to make meaning may be increased, as is one's self-understanding.

CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND CREATIVITY

Research in the psychology of creativity can provide further insights. Creative people cope well with new things and are open to new experiences and interesting situations that could lead to personal growth and development (Tardif & Sternberg, 1988). Creative persons seem to have a preference for complexity, and complex perceptual phenomena, that they then seek to integrate in a higher order (Barron, 1995). In other words, they seek out the anomalies in the existing paradigm, or way of doing things, and attempt to integrate them in a more inclusive understanding. In the same way, a cross-cultural experience can shatter our mental model of how the world works and present us with one anomaly after another. The creative person, it must be pointed out, *creates* meaning. He or she relishes the opportunity to have existing paradigms challenged, to experience the breakdowns and the disintegration that follows, knowing that this is a necessary part of the process of self-transcendence and self-renewal. There is literally an urge in the creative person, according to Barron, May, and other researchers, to not abide by the existing understandings of the world but rather to challenge them and develop new ones and engage in an ongoing process of self-renewal. Furthermore, creative individuals display great tolerance for ambiguity, independence of judgment, openness to new experience, and cognitive flexibility (Barron, 1963/1990, 1995). These kinds of characteristics seem ideally suited to cross-cultural sojourners. We might speculate that, if approached in the right frame of mind, cross-cultural experiences can in fact stimulate these qualities in individuals, particularly if an attempt is made to consciously cultivate them.

In Barron's (1995) words, creativity is the "ability to respond adaptively to the need for new ways of being" (p. 31). In cross-cultural encounters, the ability to go beyond one's cultural norms to find new ways to interact with persons from another culture is a demonstration of creativity and innovation. In addition, cross-cultural interaction requires the ability to improvise and respond to what is happening in the moment instead of falling back on previously learned norms for social behavior. Development of such an ability requires the person to have the qualities that Barron equates with creative persons, such as tolerance for ambiguity, independence of judgment, openness to new experience, and cognitive flexibility. Mary Catherine Bateson (1999) refers to this ability

as to improvise adaptively in daily life as "small acts of ordinary creativity" (p. 153). She also considers creativity an essential component in any cross-cultural interaction and suggests that successful social interactions have an improvisational quality to them.

Adler (1975) wrote that the stress and anxiety a person encounters in a cross-cultural interaction provide the opportunity for personal growth and development. Dabrowski (1964) reported that the symptoms of stress and growth are similar because "crises are periods of increased insight into oneself, creativity, and personality development" (p. 18). Dabrowski presented the concept of *positive disintegration* as the point where the self disintegrates and is created anew at a higher level.

Barron (1995) found a correlation between psychoneuroses and creativity. He stated that in creative persons, "evidence of conventional psychopathology is coupled with unusually high ego-strength and sense of reality" (p. 75). Barron offered the concept of ego-strength as an explanation for the ability to rally from setbacks. Ego-strength in fact refers to the ability to counter and recover from difficulties and setbacks. According to Barron (1995), "Ego-strength includes the ability to right oneself when one is falling over" (p. 170). In terms of a cross-cultural encounter, we can see where ego-strength would be necessary in the daily encounter with unusual experiences. Being able to learn from and integrate these experiences might lead to a reconstruction of personality at a higher level as Dabrowski suggested.

Cross-cultural encounters can potentially result in anxiety and neurotic symptoms that can lead to positive disintegration and result in the creation of a new identity that has more flexibility and is better adjusted to deal with the new environment. Dabrowski explained that "individuals of advanced personality development whose lives are characterized by rich intellectual and emotional activity and a high level of creativity often show symptoms of positive disintegration" (pp. 18-19).

Cross-cultural encounters could lead a person to explore her or his own assumptions and beliefs and to accept different ways of being and thinking. This is something most people who do not have exposure to other cultures are not often inclined to do. These encounters also open the way for a person to move from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative worldview.

Cross-cultural encounters can therefore be seen as encounters that challenge our creativity. Creativity is often thought of mostly

as the creation of a new product—of a "thing," be it a painting, a novel, a musical composition, a theory, and so on. In this context, creativity is more about a way of being—a way of being in the context of an encounter that, because of the degree of difference and novelty involved, heightens our awareness of self and other. Navigating that encounter in such a way that it can lead to an expanded concept of self, of culture, and of human possibilities is what we are proposing in this article.

THE CHALLENGE OF AND FOR HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

We suggested earlier that humanistic psychology may be in a unique position to address in a very important way the phenomenon of cross-cultural encounter. We would now like to present some of the challenges we believe humanistic psychology faces in doing this. First of all, humanistic psychology must reconceptualize and rearticulate its perspective on the relation between self and society. Although most of the focus of humanistic psychology has been on the individual, and the early philosophers of existentialism (Kierkegaard in particular, of course, but also Heidegger and the early Sartre) shared this fierce individualism, humanistic psychology has done little to reexamine the role of self and society and the crucial role of culture, and this despite the statements by Heidegger, Sartre, May, and others that the individual is created in relationship. The later Sartre, of course, moved toward a hard Marxist orientation, partly as a result of his dissatisfaction with the limitations he perceived in the existentialist position. This should be a hint, we believe, of a necessary challenge, one that humanistic psychology should take up with renewed vigor. Ogilvy (1977) has suggested the need for a new kind of social existentialism, attempting to bridge the conceptual divide between individualism and collectivism; he attempted to combine existentialism's focus on individual responsibility with the development of ethics and of a more social conception of the person.

If indeed we are profoundly shaped in encounter with others, then it becomes necessary to see how existentialist philosophers and humanistic psychologists have addressed the fundamental relationship of self and other. Unfortunately, this extremely complex issue has often been trivialized by references to Heidegger's

use of the generic term *Das Man*, to refer to the great unwashed "other," and further points to a fundamentally antagonistic relationship between the individual and other people and, most prominent, to Sartre's statement that "Hell is other people." Despite, or because of, his emphasis on individual freedom and responsibility, Sartre viewed other people's freedom as threat, and relationships are seen as inevitably conflictual. From our perspective, this conflict is not denied by any means, but as we have seen, it can be a source of change and movement, as Adler shows. In Sartrean terms, an encounter, and particularly a cross-cultural encounter, can be an opportunity for transcendence. It can disclose possibilities that were not apparent due to our cultural facticity.

Cross-cultural encounters demonstrate very vividly the extent to which we are in and from a culture, and that culture is in us. The rich heritage of humanistic-existential psychology must begin to bear on this crucial issue, particularly in a time when the death of man has been trumpeted so eagerly in so many intellectual and even popular circles. Cross-cultural encounters can open a world of possibilities. They can invite us to transcend what we perceive to be our facticity and open up the possibility of new ways of being-in-the-world.

CONCLUSION

Adler's 1975 article opened up a potentially rich vein for research. We have suggested several important implications coming out of an encounter between humanistic psychology and cross-cultural encounter. First of all, humanistic psychology offers a unique entry point into the lived experience of cross-cultural encounters, offering a more fruitful approach than medical, social-psychological, or transpersonal approaches. In terms of paradigms of inquiry, there is an enormous depth in humanistic psychology's encounter with the ordinary and the everyday, and their transformative potential, that is not addressed in the other approaches. Second, humanistic psychology can use its encounter with cross-cultural experiences as an opportunity to reassess the nature of the relationship between self and culture. Much theoretical work is needed in this area to address the challenge of cross-cultural encounters but also to face the now popular and often deterministic approaches of social constructionism, structuralism, post-

structuralism, certain varieties of systems theory, and postmodernism. Third, viewing a cross-cultural encounter as a potentially creative encounter, in which the individual's creative capacities for adjustment and meaning making are drawn upon, places this inquiry squarely in the humanistic psychology tradition of work by Barron, Maslow, May, Rogers, and others.

REFERENCES

Adler, P. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *15*(4), 13-23.

Barnlund, D. C. (1975). *Public and private self in Japan and the United States*. Tokyo: Simul Press.

Barron, F. (1990). *Creativity and psychological health*. Buffalo, NY: Creative Education Foundation. (Original work published 1963)

Barron, F. (1995). *No rootless flower: Thoughts on an ecology of creativity*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Bateson, M. C. (1999). Ordinary creativity. In A. Montuori & R. E. Purser (Eds.), *Social creativity: Volume I* (pp. 153-171). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Bell, L., & Schniedewind, N. (1989). Realizing the promise of humanistic education: A reconstructed pedagogy for personal and social change. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *29*, 200-223.

Bellah, R., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dabrowski, K. (1964). *Positive disintegration*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Doi, T. (1986). *The anatomy of self: The individual versus society*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Fahim, U. (2002). *Becoming a culturally sensitive person* (Dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies). Ann Arbor, MI: Bell and Howell Information and Learning Company. (UMI 3042867)

Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1986). Social difficulty in a foreign culture: An empirical analysis of culture shock. In S. Bochner (Ed.), *Cultures in contact: Studies in cross-cultural interaction* (pp. 161-198). New York: Pergamon Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Greening, T. (1997). Commentary. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *37*(1), 3-10.

Hall, E. T. (1959). *The silent language*. New York: Anchor/Doubleday.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Anchor/Doubleday.

Hampden-Turner, C. (1971). *Radical man: The process of psycho-social development*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.

Hampden-Turner, C., & Trompenaars, F. (1993). *The seven cultures of capitalism: Value-systems for creating wealth in the United States, Britain,*

Japan, Germany, France, Sweden, and the Netherlands. London: Piatkus.

Hampden-Turner, C., & Trompenaars, F. (2000). *Building cross-cultural competence: How to create wealth from conflicting values* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Marsella, A. J., DeVos, G., & Hsu, F.L.K. (Eds.). (1985). *Culture and self*. New York: Tavistock.

May, R. (1976). *The courage to create*. New York: Norton.

Oberg, K. (1960). Culture shock: Adjustments to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, *4*, 177-182.

Ogilvy, J. (1977). *Many dimensional man*. New York: Harper.

Polkinghorne, D. (1982). What makes research humanistic? *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *22*, 47-54.

Rotenberg, M. (1977). "Alienating-individualism" and "reciprocal-individualism": A cross-cultural conceptualization. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *17*(3), 3-17.

Slater, P. E. (1970). *The pursuit of loneliness*. New York: Penguin.

Stewart, E. C., & Bennett, M. J. (1991). *American cultural patterns*. Dartmouth: Intercultural Press.

Tardif, T. Z., & Sternberg, R. J. (1988). What do we know about creativity? In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *The nature of creativity* (pp. 429-440). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, E. (1994). Intercultural competency: A transformative learning process. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *44*(3), 154-174.

Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1998a). *Mastering the infinite game: How East Asian values are transforming business practices*. Oxford: Capstone Publishing Ltd.

Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1998b). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Winograd, T., & Flores, F. (1987). *Understanding computers and cognition: A new foundation for design*. New York: Addison-Wesley.