LIFE HISTORY AND UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL MEANINGS
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PERSONAL MEANINGS

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This thesis is an attempt to examine why it is important to study an individual in his culture. A hermeneutical perspective then is offered as an example of one way in which an ethnographer may collect life history materials from a native person. Next, this hermeneutical perspective is developed as an interpretive scheme, the criteria of its uses are explored and then applied in a reinterpretation of Radin's presentation of Crashing Thunder, a Winnebago Indian. Consideration is given to how he used the life history form.
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CHAPTER I
HERMENEUTICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is twofold; first, I will outline what is to be presented in this thesis, and second, I will discuss the topic of hermeneutics and its place in anthropology. Before entering into a discussion using a terminology that may be foreign to many I introduce a working definition of the concept of hermeneutics and some of the related terms. I also provide a brief history of hermeneutics, including some of its uses in anthropology.

Outline

Anthropological interests at the level of ethnology normally have concentrated on the domains of culture and society. However, when anthropologists turned to such topics as meaning, thought, personal motives and adjustments, beliefs and psychological variables that form the lives of individuals, they did not turn simultaneously to an interest in the individual qua individual, but to individuals as model representations of cultures (Radin 1933; Sapir 1937). In the main, emphasis on the specific individual was given only lip service. Luckily, there have been important and
notable exceptions to this state of affairs. Radin (1927; 1933), Sapir (1937) and, more recently, Hallowell (1955) have made important contributions to an anthropology that provides an understanding of the individual in his culture.¹

Each of these men has, in his own way, forged new directions for anthropologists in their study of the individual in culture. In my second chapter I will provide a format for looking at the individual and in doing so I rely heavily on the works of these men. First I want to show that it is important to study the individual in culture. What is to be gained by taking a position that, as a focus of interest, stresses and highlights specific individuals and specific events and not culture per se? While the place and the context for the individual is his culture, how does he actively participate in, creatively act upon and adjust to it?

In my third chapter I attempt to answer these questions by discussing one of a number of ways in which an individual may be studied: the life history. Life histories have traditionally been used to explicate the events that make up an individual's life and the meaning he gives to experience, actions and events.² I form a context for life history, by suggesting the steps that an ethnographer should be aware of when he works with an individual of a particular culture. In this regard, I propose an individual-oriented modification of the hermeneu-
tical approach and indicate what it might look like. I will also indicate how it can give to ethnography a self-reflective and interpretive setting for looking at and understanding the meaning of events in the life of a particular individual.

In chapter four I bring Crashing Thunder, the major figure in Radin's (1926; 1963) life history of a Winnebago person, into an interpretive scheme. I also attempt a reinterpretation of his life. Primarily I hope to provide an understanding of the meaning Crashing Thunder gives to certain actions and experiences in his life. To do this, I will have to indicate how an individual-oriented hermeneutics can be used to provide an interpretive context to Crashing Thunder's life events. I will show how Radin was contributing, by the nature of his focus on the subject matter, to a hermeneutic motion that opens to interpretation and mediation the life events of Crashing Thunder. Similarly, I will need to indicate how my reinterpretation of the meanings that Crashing Thunder gives to his life events is, indeed, hermeneutical. Lastly I will lay out his life events in a manner that sheds light on four major "critical turnings" in his life (Mandelbaum 1973:5). As I describe the major events that make up and effect his life I will also provide an interpretation of their meanings and significance.

The last chapter will be a summary and end comment in which I will attempt to summarize my thinking about
life history and the individual in culture.

My thesis is that the individual-oriented hermeneutic that I develop constitutes a useful and insightful contribution to the anthropological understanding of an individual in culture.

**Hermeneutics**

Hirsch (1976:18) explains that in Greek mythology the word hermeneutics "suggests a sacred origin, being cognate with Hermes, the messenger of the gods." The term "hermeneutics" comes from the Greek hermeneuo, I interpret, or I make clear (Gauld and Shotter, 1977:5). According to Hirsch (1976:18) "Hermes is the mediator between gods and men." In other words, he translates their infinite words into finite, the divine spirit into a sensible image. Everything that belongs to the realm of understanding may be attributed to him (Hirsch 1976:18). There is a similar sacred association with the Latin interpretatio, "and indeed the word interpres, meaning interpreter or mediator, is a normal epithet for Mercury, the Roman version of Hermes (Ibid. 1976:19).

In 1761 Friedrich Schleiermacher asserted that hermeneutics as the art of interpretation and understanding did not yet exist as a general discipline. It was Schleiermacher who introduced the discipline of "general hermeneutics" to the world. Before him hermeneutics was
almost the exclusive property of biblical interpreters. There were, instead, only a plethora of special hermeneutics. He criticized the procedure common up to that time of using recognized disciplines like philology, theology and philosophy to construct a view of textual interpretation (Palmer 1969:154). Schleiermacher renounced this technique and in its place he argued the need for starting with a theory of the process of understanding. Hence Schleiermacher's project of a "general hermeneutics" was born. For him this was not a movement towards constructing a universal methodology of interpretation, but rather a movement toward describing the "fundamental operations of understanding in both their mechanical and divinatory aspects" (Palmer 1969:155). He rejected as outside hermeneutics the science of explanation, for hermeneutics is not the science of explanation but of understanding. The aim is not for the formation of more precise methods of explanation, but for the creation of the conditions which enable understanding in dialogue to occur. This is a matter of interpretation and not a matter of cleverly managing the functions of explication. Clearly Schleiermacher's contribution was to provide a new vision of the phenomenon of interpretation itself.

Although many scholars still debate issues concerning Schleiermacher's "general hermeneutics", other more contemporary issues have come to command attention. While a number of these issues touch upon different aspects
of this thesis, I believe another time and place may be
more appropriate to discuss them. However, I will mention
one important issue that cannot be neglected.

Modern debate in hermeneutics has again centered
itself around the problem of authorial interpretation
versus the interpretation of what a text says via an
interpreter's reading of it. The argument for authorial
interpretation as the only valid interpretation began with
Schleiermacher, was kept alive by Dilthey and is carried
on by E. P. Hirsch, who is one of today's leading exponents
of the position. Of course there are many others who
hold to this position. I mention these three men only as
a way of indicating a trend. The other side is represented
by Gadamer, Ricoeur, and a number of literary critics and
writers including N. Fry, T. S. Eliot, and E. Pound (c.f.

Briefly, the former argue that the identification
of the meaning of a text or the meaning of human actions
and experience must lie with the subjective interpretations
of its author (Linge 1976:xiii). Similarly the text or,
as the case may be, the meaningful actions of a person,
must refer to and represent somebody's meaning and to
banish the original author as determiner of meaning
constitutes a rejection of a normative principle that is
one of the only means of validating the interpretation
(Hirsch 1967).
The latter argue, and this is the position that I hold throughout this thesis, that understanding and interpretation are "not reconstruction but mediation" (Linge 1976:xvi). In other words, as Gadamer argues, emphasis must be put on the interpreter's position in the process of understanding. If this is acknowledged then it becomes

...important to recognize that the hermeneutical phenomenon encompasses both the alien [world] that we strive to understand and the familiar world that we already understand (Linge 1976:xii).

In every case of interpretation the hermeneutical aspects of it have to do with bridging the gap between the familiar world in which the interpreter stands and the meaning that resists assimilation into our own world.

Essentially Gadamer argues that the familiar world of the interpreter is an integral part of the event of understanding but, so also, are the procedures by which the interpreter begins to assimilate the object of study. The interpreter's recognition of this latter fact constitutes an acknowledgement of his "own immediate participation in traditions that are not themselves the object of understanding but the condition of its occurrence (Linge 1976:xii). This is the reflexive dimension of understanding that has been ignored by those who argue for a strictly authorial interpretation. Understanding, then,
...is essentially a self-transposition
or imaginative projection whereby the
knower negates the...distance that
separates him from his object and becomes
contemporaneous with it (Linge 1976:xiv).

Gadamer's ideas are introduced here only as an
entree into use of the word hermeneutics in this thesis.
It is maintained here that the interpreter's own present
situation is already constitutively involved in any
process of understanding. Similarly, the interpreter's
own pre-understanding (vorverständnis; the presuppositions
and preconceptions to a knowledge about and a full,
appreciative understanding of something) do not cut him
off from the past, present or future of a text or a
person's activities. Instead, the interpreter's own self-
reflection, self-criticism and constant questioning of
such pre-understanding as well as his position vis-a-vis
the person with whom he converses, open that person's
activities to his interpretation. As he questions and
delves further into the person's activities he begins to
affirm an intelligible juxtaposition of his own place and
history with that of the other person and the phenomena
being questioned. This is the basis of an intersubjective
merging of interpreter (ethnographer) and (native) person.

Ricoeur takes this argument one step further and
defines, as Rabinow does, the problem of hermeneutics as
"the comprehension of self by the detour of the comprehen-
sion of other" (Ricoeur in Rabinow 1977:5). Rabinow (1977:
6) suggests that
The self being discussed is perfectly public, it is neither the purely cerebral cogito of the Cartesians, nor the deep psychological self of the Freudians. Rather it is the culturally mediated and historically situated self which finds itself in a continuously changing world of meaning.

This process of comprehension is the basis to a very general model of the development of knowledge called the "hermeneutic circle" which is derived from the idea of hermeneutics as the "technique of understanding" (Radnitzky 1970:2,23). Radnitzky also suggests that it should be thought of as a spiral rather than a complete circle. In other words the development of knowledge is through a "tacking" process or a dialectical process which presupposes some foreknowledge about the object of study. For example, what happens when an ethnographer begins to ask questions of and gets answers from a person of a culture within which he is doing fieldwork? Rabinow (1977:38-39) has aptly described how such an encounter is part of a dialectical process. While doing fieldwork in Morocco, Rabinow and an informant discussed a curing ceremony the former had just finished observing. I will quote Rabinow at length, primarily because this is one of a very few written accounts that speak explicitly of the ethnographic process as being a dialectical one.

Rabinow (1977:38) begins by indicating what kind of an effect this curing ceremony had on him.
As I began to question Ali about the curing, my scientific categories were modified—I understood more about curing, its tacit assumptions, modes of action, and limits—but my common-sense world was also changed. I knew no curers in New York. Thus the first time I witnessed activities like this one they required greatly heightened attention on my part; they focussed and dominated my consciousness. But as the fieldwork progressed and I witnessed such performances a number of times, I began to take them largely for granted. They increasingly became part of my stock of knowledge, part of my world. Ali's curing activity no longer jolted my consciousness, and I was free to focus elsewhere.

Rabinow also provides information as to the effect that this particular curing ceremony had on Ali as well as on himself, as he found himself becoming further involved in his relationship with the ethnographer. He (1977:38-39) continues:

This highlighting, identification, and analysis also disturbed Ali's usual patterns of experience. He was constantly being forced to reflect on his own activities and objectify them. Because he was a good informant, he seemed to enjoy this process and soon began to develop an art of presenting his world to me. The better he became at it, the more we shared together. But the more we engaged in such activity, the more he experienced aspects of his own life in new ways. Under my systematic questioning, Ali was taking realms of his own world and interpreting them for an outsider. This meant that he, too, was spending more time in this liminal, self-conscious world between cultures. This is a difficult and trying experience—one could almost say it is "unnatural"—and not everyone will tolerate its ambiguities and strains.
Rabinow (1977:38-39) summarizes by suggesting that

This was the beginning of the dialectic process of fieldwork. I say dialectic because neither the subject nor the object remain static...with Ali there began to emerge a mutually constructed ground of experience and understanding, a realm of tenuous common sense which was constantly breaking down, being patched up, and re-examined, first here, then there.

This examination, although grounded in and constantly mediated by everyday experience of this new sort, is governed for the anthropologist by his professional concerns. Ultimately this constitutes his commitment; this is why he is there. For the informant, it is a more practical affair, both in the sense that we can assume that his motivations are primarily pragmatic and in the sense that he is developing a practical art of response and presentation.

As time wears on, anthropologist and informant share a stock of experiences upon which they hope to rely with less self-reflection in the future. The common understanding they construct is fragile and thin, but it is upon this shaky ground that anthropological inquiry proceeds.

Fieldwork is a dialectic between reflection and immediacy. Both are cultural constructs. Our scientific categories help us to recognize, describe, and develop areas of inquiry. But one cannot engage in questioning and redefining twenty-four hours a day. The scientific perspective on the world is hard to sustain. In the field there is less to fall back on; the world of everyday life changes more rapidly and dramatically than it would at home. There is an accelerated dialectic between the recognition of new experiences and their normalization.

From what I have said in this chapter and from what Rabinow has stated, I suggest that for the ethnographer, harmeneutics is an intersubjective, shared understanding
about the actual and possible meaning of events in the lives of people. But hermeneutics is not just that, for such a definition leaves the whole process somewhat static. There is also a movement or a motion involved that gives the process a dynamic and this comes with what Steiner (1975:296) calls "the act of elicitation and appropriative transfer of meaning" (my emphasis); a "hermeneutic motion."

Concerning my use and understanding of a "hermeneutic motion", I think that it is fair to claim that the "appropriate transfer of meaning" is shaped out of four distinct but interconnected processes. In this thesis the first process I speak of is moulded out of the primary conversations between a native person and the ethnographer. From this fieldwork experience the second process finds its impetus; fieldwork experience is transformed into a conversation between the ethnographer, the wealth of detailed information he has collected and the mainstream of theory in anthropology.

There is a peculiar reversal that exists between the "transfer of meaning" which defines both of these processes. Rabinow (1977:4-5) explains it as follows:

...as graduate students we are told that 'anthropology equals experience'; you are not an anthropologist until you have the experience of doing it. But when one returns from the field, the opposite immediately applies: anthropology is not the experiences which made you an initiate, but only the objective data you have
brought back...under no circumstances is there any direct relation between field activity and the theories which lie at the core of the discipline...[many still] cling to the key assumption that the field experience itself is basically separable from the mainstream of theory in anthropology—that the enterprise of inquiry is essentially discontinuous from its results.

The reversal is another aspect of this thesis. Fabian (1971b:230) suggests that

...the task of 'observation' is not a mere recording of givens: it is possible only through participation in the process of their production. In other words, it is entirely dependent on an intersubjective field of communication between fieldworker and observed (my emphasis).

From this we can gain an important insight. The "things" anthropology "studies are not primarily products or objects, but production, process" (Fabian 1971b:230). Rabinow (1977:5) argues "that fieldwork is a distinctive type of cultural activity, and that it is this activity which defines the discipline." If this is true then the strength of the discipline must lie in its experiential and hence self-reflective and self-critical activity. This activity is constant both while the ethnographer is in the field and at home.

The third process in the "transfer of meaning" is exemplified in my reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life. It consists of an analysis of the life history form, a concentration on my selection and arrangement of
the events in Crashing Thunder's life and an analysis of how I can use such material in an hermeneutical reinterpretation of the events in Crashing Thunder's life.

There is a fourth process for which the "appropriative transfer of meaning" has relevance. Few anthropologists have actually considered it in any explicit detail. When the researcher has finished writing his ethnography, a conversation is created between the informant(s)-ethnographer on the one hand and the reading audience on the other. From this conversation there develops a transfer of meaning which is reflected in the interpretation that goes on between the intention of the text and those who read it.

My thesis is relative to a particular audience. That is, as a writer, I do not attempt to remove every possible block to every possible audience's understanding of this text. Inasmuch as I am reinterpreting for a particular audience the life history of Crashing Thunder, the substance of my reinterpretation is limited and so, correspondingly, is its validity or correctness. It is, then, not the exclusive valid reinterpretation, but one of a number of valid reinterpretations. Another reinterpretation—especially one worked out at another time, and so for another audience, and so clarifying other problems and having another content—might be equally valid or correct.

It must be remembered that the verification of the validity of an interpretation takes place in human
intelligence and nowhere else. All verification, including that of empirical science, takes place here. But how do I know that my reinterpretation is correct and valid? By reflective critique. The more reflective, comprehensive and exigent my critique of the conditions I have set down for reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life history, the more independent my verification. If I am only half critical in my reinterpretive insights, if I am indulgent rather than constantly critical and tough-minded toward them, my readers may well find my reinterpretation vulnerable.

To reiterate: interpretation or reinterpretation, as the case may be, is verified nowhere but in human intelligence, there being no higher, or more final court of appeal. It would be mistaken, however, to suppose that this makes the verification subjective, unreliable, indecisive. If such were the case, it would hold for the verification of empirical scientific hypotheses, as well; something few are inclined to admit.

Throughout this thesis I address myself to the problems surrounding the first three processes. The fourth process is one which I only mention in passing. The interaction that is created between the native person and ethnographer and similarly between the ethnographer and his collected information is also mirrored in the relationship between the reader of this thesis and the text itself. The first process I speak of is dyadic, shaped out of the field experience between the ethnographer
and native person. The whole of chapter three deals with this situation. The second process is the merging of the field experience and the mainstream of anthropological theory. How can we as ethnographers find an interpretive scheme which does as little violence as possible to the understanding of events that make up a person's world and his interpretation of them? This and my own reinterpretation of the life history of a specific person are the subjects that I address myself to in the fourth chapter. This provides a third process, a process of my active participation in the reinterpretation of the meaning of events in Crashing Thunder's life. The fourth process is tied in with meaning at yet another level of abstraction. It is made up of an interpretive presentation of text directed at the reading audience.

The goal of this thesis is to draw the first three processes to points of intersection. Each chapter depends on what comes after it. In other words, each process must be considered a step and as such a part of a larger motion in which each step is retained but transformed in the one that follows. Subsequently, this work must be looked at as a whole. Each process in the interpretation of a person's life takes place as one proceeds through the work. The intersections of these processes combine to construct a bridge from the ethnographer and the native person to the ethnography to my reinterpretation and finally to the mind of the reader. I outline a movement from the doing of
fieldwork and the reflective and critical experiences of the ethnographer and native person, to the ethnographer's interpretations and final written accounts, to my analysis of those accounts, through to the reader's own interpretations of this text. Together these processes create a constantly transforming and personally mediated hermeneutic motion.

To my knowledge Evans-Pritchard was one of the first anthropologists to propose generally to the discipline an hermeneutical approach. Although he did not explicitly suggest the role of an hermeneutical perspective until 1973, shades of this approach may be found throughout his work (see Evans-Pritchard 1956, 1960:15-16, 20-21; 1962; 1965a; 1965b; 1973). Similarly, others have considered his work to be hermeneutical (see Horton and Finnegan 1973:31-35; Preston 1975a:256; Scholte 1975:256).

Fabian (1971a; 1971b), Diamond (1974), Scholte (1974) and Watson-Franke and Watson (1975) have outlined the various aspects of the philosophical foundation and reflection as well as some of the methodological and theoretical issues behind an anthropology that incorporates hermeneutics. Geertz (1976) has also discussed hermeneutics and incorporated it into his work. Unfortunately Geertz does not clearly define nor present his use of Dilthey's hermeneutic circle. His use of the concept remains, at best, vague because he, like many phenomenologists, does
not distinguish his "materials into distinct, although mutable, levels of action, degrees of significance, and kinds of importance as do most anthropologists" (Boon 1978:363). Rabinow (1977) presents yet a different but more concise use of the concept of hermeneutics. He explicitly sets out to present a picture of the hermeneutical elements of the fieldwork setting. These elements are applied when he incorporates them into his reflections of Moroccan life, as I have already shown.

It has been only recently, within the last ten years, that philosophical concerns surrounding the hermeneutical dialogue have entered into anthropology as a social science. The use of hermeneutics in anthropology began with an emphasis on translation and interpretation and a subsequent questioning of the issue of understanding. Those aspects of understanding that are central to this hermeneutical dialogue surrounded the ethnographer's understanding of the native person, his society and culture, and through this process coming to better understanding of his own role and position in the elicitation of social, cultural and individual meanings central in the life of the native person. This includes an investigation into the epistemological and methodological foundations of anthropology. It also includes the construction of a type of understanding via description and interpretation through the fieldwork experience that incorporates the ethnographer's position in the creation of his work.
Footnotes

1 There are others who have been interested in the place of the individual in anthropological studies. For example, Dollard (1949), Kluckhohn (1945), Dyk (1938, 1947), Opler (1969), Mandelbaum (1973) are but a few notable examples. A simple reading of Langness' (1965) bibliography will provide a large number of other references.

2 Throughout this thesis I will use the pronoun he or the term man when I refer to people of either sex. I do this intentionally for the sake of maintaining simplicity and clarify in this discourse. When the pronoun he or himself is used to refer to both sexes I mean he/she or himself/herself etc.

3 Hirsch (1976:5) suggests that Dilthey first used the concept of the hermeneutic circle and Heidegger picked it up from him. Heidegger used it in arguing against Husserl's ideas of the phenomenological bracketing of experience. As Hirsch (1976:4-5) explains

...Husserl posited a number of functions of our minds which permitted psychology to overcome psychologism. He posited the mental function of intentionality, and he posited the mind's capacity to 'bracket' a domain of experience so that the domain could be contemplated over time. "Bracketing, then, is a simplified, visual metaphor for our ability to demarcate not only a content but also the mental acts which we attend to that content, apart from the rest of our experience. This demarcation...alone assures the potential sameness of objects in experience over time."

For Heidegger, Husserl's ideas pertaining to bracketing suggested an excessively abstracted cognitive model that left out of account the fullness of the experienced life through which we know something in the world. So in place of brackets, Heidegger took as his model a more expansive epistemic form: the circle, the hermeneutic circle as expounded by Dilthey...The hermeneutic circle is based on the paradox that we must know the whole in a general way before we know a part, since the nature of the part as such is determined by its function in the larger
whole. Of course, since we can know a whole only through its parts, the process of interpretation is a circle... But since we must in some sense pre-know a whole before we know a part, every experience is pre-constituted by the whole context in which it is experienced. On this model, it is impossible to bracket off one part of experience and separate it from the whole of experienced life. What we know at any time is "pre-conceptually" known and constituted by the whole of our world, and since that world changes in time, so must the objects (for us) change which that world pre-constitutes. The "artificial" brackets have been swept away, and replaced with the fullness of lived experience.

By dialectical I mean a process that has to do with partially unresolvable oppositions. Every individual has his own field of vision, a horizon. It includes all that he is aware of and it overlaps at least in part with the field of vision of others. But the fields of vision of two individuals from different cultures may oppose each other's common sense world; what one might find true the other false; what for one is good the other bad. To the extent that such opposition cannot be cleared away by appeal to further evidence, the opposition is dialectical and to uncover such oppositions is the work of dialectic.
CHAPTER II
PERSONAL DYNAMICS AND MEANING: A CASE FOR INDIVIDUALS IN CULTURE

Introduction

Few investigators have, in the final analysis, succeeded in the effort to get behind their ethnographic information in order to grasp and expand upon the significance to the informant of objects, meanings and events that are important to the understanding of the cultural contexts of personal and interpersonal patterns of active participation, creative formation, adjustment and the associated aspects of emotional dynamics. Consequently, many investigators have failed to understand or even to perceive the importance of the world of meanings, ideas and feelings that an individual abstracts from his interactions with other people and with the physical world as he conceives of it. For every individual there is the necessity of a particular and partially distinctive kind of psychological structuralization. This is characterized by an integration between, on the one hand, active participation in and adjustment to a physical world of objects, persons and events, and on the other, to an "inner"
world of fantasy, imagination and impulse (Hallowell 1955: viii).

I am interested, in this chapter, in the means to the accurate understanding of an individual's representation of experience with relation to the cultural contexts within which he operates.

The object of this chapter, therefore, is first, to formulate some of the lineaments of the relationships that characterize personal and cultural experience, and second, to ascertain some of the relationships between the active participation of a person in the formation of a meaningful world and the cultural adjustments he makes. How do these combine to structure an individual's perception of his world? As an extension of both of these points, I will argue throughout this chapter that an individual does not merely react, adjust or respond to his culture but that he also imaginatively, creatively and actively participates in the shaping and formation of a meaningful world, through his interactions with other individuals. Hopefully the frame of reference that emerges will provide a better understanding of the personal significances and interpersonal community that influence a person's relationship with his natural and behavioural worlds. There is very real damage done to our understanding of culture when we systematically ignore the individual and the kinds of subjective interrelationships he creates with other
individuals. To re-evaluate culture with this in mind is to bring culture patterns back to the living context from which they have been abstracted in the first place.

The Individual and Culture

Sapir (1937:865) asks the question, in an article discussing some of the contributions of cultural anthropology to an understanding of human behaviour in society;

When all is said and done, and in spite of the enormous documentation of the cultures of primitive groups, how easy is it to get even an inkling, in psychological terms, of the tempo, the relative flexibility, the individual variability, the relative openness or hiddenness of individual expression, the characteristic emotional qualities, which are implied or 'carried' by even the most penetrating cultural analyses that we possess of primitive communities? It seems unexpectedly difficult to conjure up the image of live people in intelligibly live relationships located within areas defined as primitive. The personalities that inhabit our ethnological monographs seem almost schizoid in their unemotional acceptance of the heavy colors, tapestries, and furniture of their ethnological stage. Is it any wonder that actors so vaguely conceived, so absent-mindedly typical of something or other, can be bludgeoned by a more persistent intelligence than theirs into sawing wood for still remoter stages, say that dread drama of the slain father and the birth of totemism?

Sapir explains further that instead of arguing from a supposed objectivity of culture to the problem of individual variation, we must instead proceed in the
We shall have to operate as though we know nothing about culture but were interested in analyzing as well as we could what a given number of human beings accustomed to living with each other actually think and do in their day to day relationships. We shall then find that we are driven...to the recognition of certain permanencies in a relative sense, in these interrelationships, permanencies which can reasonably be counted on to perdure but which must also be recognized to be eternally subject to serious modification of form and meaning with the lapse of time and with those changes of personnel which are unavoidable in the history of any group of human beings (Sapir 1949:574).

The task in anthropology, as Sapir (1937:870) conceives of it, is to "translate social and cultural terms into that intricate network of personalistic meanings which is the only conceivable stuff of human experience." Any successful contribution to social or cultural analysis will begin only when we start to "reveal the intricate symbolic network which binds individuals together into collectivities" (Sapir 1937:862). In other words, we must concern ourselves with how a specific

...culture lends itself to the ceaseless need of the individual personality for symbols of expression and communication which can be intelligently read by one's fellow-men on the social plane, but whose relative depth or shallowness of meaning in the individual's total economy of symbols need never be adequately divined either by himself or by his neighbor. It should be [our] aim...to uncover just such meanings as these (Sapir 1937:868).
Subsequently, if culture is to have psychological meanings that are more than superficial, we shall have to recognize as many effective cultures as there are individuals to be 'adjusted' to the one culture which is said to exist 'out there' and to which we are supposed to be able to direct the telescope of our intelligent observatory (Sapir 1937:869).

Appropriately enough, anthropologists have emphasized the social group and its traditions in culture in contradistinction to individual variation of behaviour. They have aimed at discovering the generalized forms of activity and thought which constitute the culture of a community. But many times the conceptions of culture that are created provide the image of the individual as more or less a passive carrier of tradition or as a person who acts out the modes of behaviour which are inherent within the structure and tradition of a given culture. If the statements of an individual are recorded as such, then they assume the individual's typicality for the community as a whole. Hallowell (1951:165) argues that this is "the myth of the passivity of the perceiver" and it should be disposed of. This of course related precisely to the supposed "givenness" of culture. Together these are the most serious obstacles to a more competent understanding of the nature of culture and its relationship to the individual personality.

Culture, for those who assume that the individual
is a passive perceiver typical of his community, becomes a self-contained 'superorganic' reality with forces and purposes of its own. For example, Kroeber's notion of the superorganic and his lack of interest in the person in culture (see: Kroeber 1952:233-234), led him to classify whole cultures by patterns or configurations of traits, artifacts and quantities. Kroeber's method is an eclectic mix of intuition and quantification. He believed that "ethnology was a natural science whose subject matter was composed of discrete, isolable, and objectively determined elements, which could be traced and categorized on their own terms..." (Diamond 1971:xxxiv). This obviously does violence to any attempt to focus on the interactions of individuals as the true locus of culture.

Similarly, Geertz (1973:5,12-16) warns us not to fall into the trap of thinking that culture is most effectively treated purely as a symbolic system—in its own terms. In other words we should not think that culture can best be treated by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements and then characterizing the whole system in some general way according to the core symbols around which it is organized. This will not get us any closer to the interworked system of symbols and a contextual "web of significances" within which objects and events may be interpreted. "This hermetical approach to things seems to... run the danger..."
of locking cultural analysis away from its proper object, the informal logic of actual life" (Geertz 1973:17).

Similarly, the recent majority of cognitive anthropologists continue to talk about the cognitive organization of phenomena divorced from events themselves as they are integrated with other events, feelings, and motivations. For the cognitive anthropologist, events are not to be integrated with the more refined and subtle context of understanding and interpretation that includes meaning, feelings, and motivation, since such contexts cannot be accounted for by the formal (normative) description of the phenomena per se, or in the principles underlying their taxonomic classification. Cognitive anthropologists are caught in the bind of their own taxonomies, and culture remains characterized only by an exhaustive enumeration of its parts.

Each of these conceptions of culture (culture as a pattern of conduct or culture as purely a symbolic system) become serious deterrents to the more dynamic study of the genesis and development of cultural patterns and contexts. Culture cannot be realistically disconnected from the organizations of events, ideas and feelings which constitute the ongoing life of an individual (Sapir 1949: 512). The true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals and in the systems of ideas, the world of meanings, motivations and feelings which each of
these individuals may abstract for himself from his participation in these interactions. The logical development of such systems should be viewed as implicit commentaries on the validity or, (as the case may be), the nonvalidity of the more personal and intimate implications of culture patterns for the creative process that have a causal influence upon perception, thought, feeling and action, as well as the personal adjustment processes of given individuals; especially in their perception of the relationships that they share with each other and with their physical world of objects and events.

The method of describing a culture without any reference to the individual except insofar as he is an expression of rigidly defined cultural forms, produces a manifestly distorted picture. Investigators that do so end up applying to culture a type of reasoning that has applicability only in a theory of knowledge or a theory of culture history. Accordingly, they have secondarily individualized a theoretical synthesis, a priori, with insufficient examination of the individual and his activities. The so-called individual in these cases remains excessively abstract. Sapir (1928:77) contends that this process destroys all confidence in the meaning of the concept of 'the individual'. Any attempt to do so would obviously be inadequate to the understanding of the emotional and perceptual dynamics that are a part of an
individual's experience. While missing the relational significances and activities of how an individual actively participates in and adjusts to his behavioural environment and the physical world of objects and events, many investigators miss the more implicit aspects of the relationships that exist between imaginative expressions and their representations in action and experience. They are not concerned with the reflections of personal experience and therefore are less concerned with the way an individual deals with and represents experience.

Sapir (1949:595) suggests that these culturalists should not be frightened of studying the individual nor of using the concept of individual personality. For example, he argues that the individual personality must not be considered as some sort of

...mysterious entity resisting the historically given culture but rather as a distinctive configuration of experience which tends always to form a psychologically significant unit and which, as it accretes more and more symbols to itself, creates finally that cultural microcosm of which official 'culture' is little more than a metaphorically and mechanically expanded copy (Sapir 1949: 595).

Unfortunately, the metaphor, although alive and well, is seriously misplaced. Those who adhere to it continually try and persuade us that culture is a neatly bundled package of forms of behaviour that are gradually,
piece by piece picked up, but without anything seriously happening to the package, by the passively questioning individual (Sapir 1949:596). Sapir (1949:592-593) explains that those who support this idea of culture "are careful to maintain objective ideals, abstracted as...these are from the directly given facts of experience..." Culture, from this perspective, is the mechanical, normative "sum of the more striking or picturesque generalized patterns of behaviour which he [the ethnographer] has either abstracted for himself out of the sum total of his observations or has had abstracted for him by his informants in verbal communication" (Sapir 1949:593). In effect these abstracted configurations are imposed structures of what the idea and action patterns are of various individuals within a society. Sapir (1949:593) argues that

The cultures so carefully described in our ethnological and sociological monographs are not, and cannot be, the truly objective entities they claim to be. No matter how accurate their individual itemization, their integrations into suggested structures are uniformly fallacious and unreal.

In other words, the description of a culture must be done in such a way that we feel we are dealing with real and specific people, with real and specific situations, and with a real and specific tradition (Radin 1933:177). If we cannot do this then it is we who end up "giving" (intellectually imposing on) native individuals their
uniqueness, and that is something fundamentally different. Radin was always suspicious of what he considered "to be easily won insights into the most intimate patterns of native behavior, in the absence of familiarity with the language, long-term fieldwork, and grounding in the lives of specific individuals, as distinct from 'generalized' persons fleshed out from an ethnological skeleton..." (Diamond 1971:xxxi). Subsequently we must realize that we

...are dealing with specific, not generalized, men and women, and with specific, not generalized events. But the recognition of specific men and women should bring with it the realization that there are all types of individuals and that it is not, for instance, a Crow Indian who uttered such and such a prayer, but a particular Crow Indian. It is particularity that is the essence of all history and it is precisely this that ethnology has hitherto balked at doing (Radin 1933:184-185).

For example, Radin (1914a:211) explains, in his description of an Ojibwa shaman, that it must be

...remembered that success and efficiency of individual powers depends not so much upon the performance of a rite and the attitude of prayer, but upon the individual's emotional attitude—the power of...absorption while at prayer, in his religious emotion...then it will be easily realized how intense the religious life of these individuals must be...

In effect Radin's approach is a critical reaction to any approach that robs cultural facts of their validity, of their humanness, of that specific quality which makes
them imaginative expressions. Accordingly, Sapir (1937: 866) argues that we should not think

...of culture in the abstract nor of society as a hypothetically integrating concept in human relations, but rather of the actual day-to-day relations of specific individuals in a network of highly personalized needs, we must see that culture is the inevitable coin of the realm of behavior but that it is far from synonymous with those actual systems of meaning, conscious and unconscious, which we call personalities, and that the presumptive psychology of a culture as a whole is not equatable with any actual personalized psychology. Cultural analysis is hardly more than a preliminary bow to the human scene, giving us to know that here are people, presumably real, and that it is here rather than there that we must observe them.

Perception and Culture

Hallowell (1951: 166) argues that the psychological field in which all of human behaviour takes place is culturally constituted, in part, but people's responses are never reducible in their entirety to the stimuli derived from an "objective" world. Similarly, the psychological domain in which any and all of an individual's behaviour takes place is not reducible to a culturally constituted behavioural environment. There is a cultural patterning of perception, and this is one of the most fundamental aspects of the relationships that exist between culture and an individual. It is through this patterning that frames of reference are established as basic to the
objects and events of his physical world. Accordingly, an attempt must be made to conceptually integrate perception with the individual's ability to creatively shape and causally influence the behavioural environment and also recognize that cultural variables embodied changeably in individuals imply different modes of adjustment in different behavioural environments (Hallowell 1951:167).

What becomes perceptually significant to each individual person cannot be considered apart from a continuum that views the human individual as an entity that has the ability to creatively act, shape and adjust as well as being motivated, goal directed, and psychologically structured as a functioning person. From the viewpoint of personal adjustment and motivation, culture has an instrumental function that is coordinate with the function of perception. Accordingly, perception is linked to the complex personal needs which selectively influence culture, so that cultural variables are inevitably but not uniformly nor consistently constituents of human perceptions. Dynamically conceived, then, perception must be considered as one of the basic integral functions of an individual's creative ability to shape and mould his behavioural and physical environments as well as make an ongoing adjustment to them. Essentially what we need to know more about are the relationships that exist between the cultural constituents of perception and the idiosyncratic aspects of the
individual, rooted in the personality structure of the individual. As I have tried to explain earlier, interest in cognitive aspects of culture, while necessarily of importance, has led to an overemphasis upon them and a concomitant underemphasis upon the relation of perceptual and emotional processes to the basic aspects of behaviour. Hallowell (1951:166) argues that

...once viewed in its total behavioural context perception cannot be isolated from action, that is, from motivated and goal-oriented behaviour. Consequently, the perceptual field of the [individual] must be structuralized in a manner that bears a direct relation to its activities, no matter what these may be.

In actual life situations, perceptual responses never occur in a behavioural vacuum. Instead, the "goal" of perception in its broadest sense "is the construction of a meaningful behavioural environment--an environment congruent with 'reality' on the one hand and the needs and dispositions of the organism on the other..." (Hallowell 1951:168). In addition to enabling people to adapt themselves to a world of physical objects and events, perception enables individuals to adjust to a realm of culturally constituted objects as psychologically "real" as other more objective, orders of phenomena. Motivation, feelings and appropriate conduct must be judged with reference to an order of reality in the contexts of culture patterns.
Consequently, groups of individuals are prepared for quite different patterns of activity through different modes of training and experience, through their orientation to different systems of values and through their motivations toward different needs. What is individually learned in the context of acquired experience in one society as compared with another constitutes an important set of factors with reference to the full understanding and interpretation of the behaviour of those individuals who have received a common preparation for action. The situations that arise in one society might never occur in another and what appears objectively to be the same objective situation is significantly different because its cultural context is very different. For example, Hallowell (1956:356) explains that

Celestial and meteorological phenomena, for example, or the plants and animals of man's habitat, even its inanimate forms never are separated as such from the concepts of their essential nature and the beliefs about them that appear in the ideological tradition of a particular cultural heritage. Man's attitude toward them is a function of their reality as culturally defined not in terms of their mere physical existence. Thus to treat the physical environment in which a people lives, independently of the meaning that its multiform objects have for that people, involves a fundamental psychological distortion if we aim to comprehend the universe which is actually theirs (my emphasis).
An individual's perceptions are not simply processes by which he adjusts to the world at large. What is of prime *psychological* significance is that an individual does this

...(i.e. builds up a meaningful world with reference to the accumulated and socially transmitted experience of past generations) in terms of an organized *schema* for living in which, to some degree, a *provincial* world of articulated objects become defined, characteristic values and goals are represented and institutionalized means of reaching them are emphasized (Hallowell 1951:169).

Many investigators have failed to realize these more subtle implications of ethnographic interpretation and in effect they ignore the very information which has the most important significance, namely the differences in meaning and in the systems of ideas that similar objects and events of the phenomenal world have for people of different cultural traditions. The objects and events of the external and internal worlds are what constitutes the reality to which the individuals habituated to a particular system of beliefs and ideas actually respond to as meaningfully defined and experienced in a cultural context. Hallowell (1956:359) suggests that "the traditionally sanctioned concepts which are reified become real to the extent that they make demands upon human individuals in the same manner that physical objects and persons make demands."
Little emphasis has been put on the fact that the existence of varying culture patterns carries with it the psychological implication that the individuals of these societies actually live in different reality-orders. While the term reality, as Hallowell (1956:355-356) points out...

...can scarcely be regarded as having any absolute meaning content, unless it be used in a metaphysical sense to connote the ultimate nature of the phenomenal world...there remains a pragmatic usage of the term which is relevant to the comprehension of the determinants of human behavior and human psychology. Reality in this sense of the term does not primarily refer to discrete objects or persons as existents. The core of its connotations is functional. It defines the relations of human beings to the objects of their physical environment and other men in terms of the meaning and practical significance which these have had for them.

An individual will tend to interpret particular objects, events and experiences in a manner which offers a framework of empirical support to the cultural pattern. The framework is the psychological counterpart of the pattern and it is found in the locus of the reality-order which lies in the relations of individuals acting upon and adjusting to the culture patterns of their respective societies. This must be our primary frame of reference for an understanding of the behaviour of individuals.

Within any particular event, the kind of judgments that are made, the nature of the discussions arrived at, and the consequences in terms of motivation and conduct,
are related to both normative and idiosyncratic features. Consequently, the dynamics of perception are not entirely clear if we do not approach them in a fashion that enables us to take account of how the individual acts upon and adjusts to non-sensory as well as sensory aspects of his culture. Hallowell (1951:178) suggests, for example, that

...entities that have no tangible or material existence may become perceptual objects in the actual experience of individuals. That is to say, the reality of what to outsiders are only symbolically mediated and concretely elaborated images may receive perceptual support through the experiences of individuals for whom such entities are reified in an established system of traditional beliefs. Under these conditions...some persons will not only report perceptual experiences involving such entities, but will act as if they belong in the category of tangible or material objects.

Beings of a purely conceptual nature are an example of intangible entities that are variously admitted to the culturally influenced order of reality in which people live. For example, "spiritual beings no more can be ignored than can one's associates" (Hallowell 1956:359). Sacred narratives in which spiritual beings play a role, testify to the belief in their existence as do the more empirical tokens presented by their appearance in dreams or in other circumstances defined by the pragmatic realities with which culture patterns present to individuals. To treat the physical and behavioural environments in which a
person lives independently of the meaning that their multiform objects and events have for that person, involves a fundamental psychological distortion if our aim is to comprehend the universe which is actually his.

Summary and Conclusions

From a psychological point of view, individuals both creatively act upon and adjust to specific reality-orders, rather than to "reality" per se. Similarly, for the same individual, his beliefs are true and any understanding of his behaviour must proceed from the premises implicit in his version of reality. Hallowell (1956: 361-362) argues that any interpretation of an individual in culture would be confusing unless first, we are ready to admit the relative connotation of his construction of reality; second, be ready to take different reality-orders at their face value; and third, be able to use them as a primary standard of reference with respect to the conformity or non-conformity of the ideology of individuals to them.

To dismiss all such beliefs of the individual as "imaginary" only averts attention from the influential role which they play in people's behaviour. In stricter psychological terms, such conceptualization, as is produced by the native individual, "involves imaginative processes,
but imagined objects may or may not be reified. Thus to point out that all conceptualized beings are imaginary objects is not equivalent to the assertion that such beliefs embody both imaginary and reified objects" (Hallowell 1956:358). These beliefs, in other words, are the culturally supported substantiations of a system of ideas.

In conclusion, humans have redirected the phylogenetic capacity for modifying the present moment, creating for themselves the self-reflective ability to reference past events and indicate future ones. Human experience is moulded in terms of immediate feeling, awareness and perception, in the conceptualization of past events and in the expectation and prospect of experience yet to enter the immediate sensory field.

Hence, through time, learned and shared responses have become patterned as cultural representations and are passed on from generation to generation. Humans orient themselves by reference to the superorganic information of their culture. Human experience, when placed within a culturally constructed environment, takes on meaning.

Essentially, human experience acquires meanings in a relational manner, that is, through meanings which are culturally patterned and brought into being through a negotiation with the experience of individuals. In other words, the meaning of individual experience is brought
about through an ongoing process of negotiation between an objective, artifactual, superorganic system of information called culture and the individual's possession of forward movement, or an active, creative reshaping of an individual's perception, thereby causally influencing behaviour. "The individual abstracts for himself from his interactions with other persons and with other components of his environment" (Preston 1975:13). This refers to the broader meanings of experience for the individual that are shaped out of imagination, and intuitive perception of new relationships, where none were perceived before. We are dealing with a negotiation of culturally patterned meanings that find form in an individual's active participation within the behavioural and natural environments and in the content of the creative acts of his imagination. From this, meaning, feeling, relations, recognitions, images, etc., play upon and presume the life experiences of the individual. Cultural logic is developed using the terms of this experiential reality. Culturally meaningful relationships, then, are an image for a reflection of a person's world that is articulated through his actions and his experience. It must be remembered, therefore, that not all of a person's actions, knowledge and attitudes have developed independently; many of them are not simply spontaneous and individual expressions. Opler (1943:330) explains that "No matter how
personal in character such funds of knowledge and attitudes are, they resemble and overlap those of other \([\text{persons}]\) and can be understood only in relation to the central tendency to which they are more or less adequate reflections." This is what Sapir had in mind when he spoke of the true locus of culture being in the interactions of individuals.
CHAPTER III
LIFE-HISTORY: MEANING AND REFLECTION IN THE
PRESENTATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE

Introduction

Life history is the extensive recorded document of a person's life as it is told by the individual or by another person. It can provide anthropologists with a wealth of detailed information that can be used to emphasize the system of meaning and ideas that form an expressive understanding of an individual's life events and his experience of them. Clearly, it has proven to be one of the best ways of recording the salient facts about persons, including the dynamic and adaptive aspects of life experiences and the patterns of personal knowledge and conduct that make up life in society and culture.

In this chapter I will trace the most important aspects of the use of life histories as an interpretive approach for describing an individual within his culture; to see how a person copes with his culture and society, rather than how his society must cope with the total flow of individuals that compose it. I will include a discussion of the processes of interpretation and understanding
of events in a person's life and then I will indicate how both textual and contextual orientations to life history materials are important aspects of interpretation in general.

Life History and Hermeneutics

One of the major problems that face students who want to use the life history form and develop a more personalized or humanist convention (descriptive technique) is how to get at a subtle and implicit interpretation and understanding of the native person involved. I must address myself, therefore, to the problems inherent in the task of opening up the hermeneutical dimensions of a relational, integrative description through the use of a life history. Accordingly, the basis of my discussion must turn to an exploration of the character of and requisite conditions for the interpretation and understanding of human events and activities. It is also important that the ethnographer become familiar with and, indeed, recognize that he is a part of the process from which a description, interpretation and understanding of events emerges. The ethnographer must work in this way to present the system of meanings and ideas that emerge from the critical and intersubjective discourse about the activities and events that make up a person's life as he
presents them in his own life history. The intersubjective and dialectical relationship that is created between the ethnographer and the person whose life history is being recorded must be analyzed. Then the ethnographer may be able to provide an interpretation of how these relationships help shape an understanding of the life of the individual; one closer to significance and wisdom because it is closer to the personal understanding that the individual himself places upon the activities and events of his life. It is not an attempt on the part of the ethnographer to think beyond the person's life, but to think in response to and act with the individual in his interpretation of the worlds of meanings, ideas, and events that make up his life. Both the ethnographer and individual are involved in a critical and reflective understanding of the prominence of the meanings of interrelated events that construct their relationship and their lives.

Evans-Pritchard (1973:764) called for a closer examination of the hermeneutic role of the integration of description when he suggested that

...a turning-away from the pursuit of laws, whether synchronic (functional) or diachronic (evolutionary), will place emphasis on meaning rather than on process and hold that explanation is no more than exact description which bears its own interpretation. It is indeed true that 'meaning' is an ambiguous term, for what a custom may mean to the anthropologist (its latent meaning, or so he
may think) may not be the same as what it means to the people he is writing about (its manifest meaning); and it is necessary to present the one in the light of the other. Here I want only to draw attention to what follows: a shift in interests in systems and models towards a study of modes of thought, symbols, values and sentiments.

This, Evans-Pritchard (1962:26-28) contends, encourages a release from the philosophical dogmas and concepts of natural systems and laws modelled on constructs of the natural sciences and would provide the basis of a "relational analysis". For Evans-Pritchard the meaning of facts do not lie in themselves (where they can be analytically considered but in their interrelationship. The intention of anthropology must reveal this and hence their interrelational meaning (Evans-Pritchard 1960:20-21). To relate these facts to one another in such a way that, taken together, they are intelligible to the ethnographer and the native people, both together and singly, is the basis of an integration of description and the process of understanding through interpretation. This keeps theory at low level of abstraction. But for Evans-Pritchard (1965:34) description and interpretation must come before any scientific theoretical analysis.

This proposition for ethnographic description means that we as anthropologists should become more self-reflective and critical. A major part of this comment deals with the nature of anthropological inquiry as, itself,
a part of a "human praxis". That we subject accepted anthropological traditions to an hermeneutic mediation is the major part of how a critical and reflexive anthropology can be created. As Scholte (1974:441-442) suggests, anthropology urgently needs to take up a dialectical position,

"...one in which analytical procedures and descriptive devices are chosen and determined by reflection on the nature of the encountered phenomena and on the nature of that encounter...In other words, if we assume a continuity between experience and reality, that is, if we assume that an anthropological understanding of others is conditioned by our capacity to open ourselves to those others...we cannot and should not avoid the 'hermeneutic circle'...but must explicate, as part of our activities, the intentional processes of constitutive reasoning which make both encounter and understanding possible."

The major question for the anthropologist, then, should not be how to avoid the hermeneutic circle, but how to get into it with enough subtlety that we do not damage or harm any aspect of human understanding.

The use of hermeneutics in anthropology (generally as anthropology deals with interpretation [cf. Rasmussen 1971; Watson-Frank and Watson 1975]) is responsible for facilitating the understanding of event-situations and bringing them into a mutual context of understanding for both the ethnographer and the native person. Understanding the significance of personal events and their symbolized
content necessarily means a hermeneutical approach. It also demands constant probing to determine whether the techniques used to find meaning are themselves appropriate.

In hermeneutics, as, for example, in Gestalt psychology, the personal life under study always indicates more than the sum of its components (the life events). This relationship between the components and the whole is implicit in the idea of an "inner connectedness". The hermeneutical approach would say that the components (the life events) that make up an individual's life cannot be removed from the total individual life itself without showing characteristics of the whole, since the individual as a whole pervades its attributes, each part affecting the others (Watson-Franke and Watson 1975:249).

The recording of life histories is more than merely an appropriate way of discovering the total value context of an individual's life as it is exemplified in the various events that make up his life. Life history accounts provide potential insight into the relationship between a whole (here an individual's life) and its parts (the experienced events in each life situation). "Every verbal communication...is one life situation...in the context of a whole life, the historical and sociocultural background of which must be known to the listener...if he is to understand the communication" (Watson-Franke and Watson 1975:248).
Consequently, the ethnographer must look at the whole phenomenon in his historical and sociocultural contexts, but he must also integrate a knowledge of its components with himself and the native person through a process of hermeneutical mediation. It is in this way that the ethnographer may begin to understand the life events of the person in which he is interested. Accordingly, hermeneutical interpretations lays bare the false impression that understanding operates strictly within the limited context from which the phenomenon originates.

The hermeneutic circle, therefore, refers to both the relationships that exist between the parts and the whole of any given phenomenon, and to the inner connectedness in the process of understanding. With regard to the combination of these two components of the hermeneutic circle, Watson-Franke and Watson (1975:249) suggest that...

...it is characteristic for the hermeneutic approach to break contexts; it is a dialectical process of enlarging the contexts of experience by working in concentric circles away from the original meaning of an event into its new context, though the event still remains a part of its original context...the continuous correction of contexts that embraces the complex interplay between questions and answers and results in a dialectically determined change in our pre-understanding.

In other words, the ethnographer already has some kind of knowledge and understanding of the native person
about whom he intends to write (i.e. a pre-understanding). At the same time he is also restricted and influenced by the implicit workings of his own socialization; no ethnographer is free of this. A major position concerning understanding in hermeneutics is that it is neither possible nor at all desirable for the ethnographer to step outside of this pre-understanding, to try and derive an interpretation of the meaning of events in the experience of a native individual. As a dialectical approach, the ethnographer's position has to be interpreted into a communicative event within a context. As Fabian (1971:34) suggests:

This should by no means be taken to advocate a passive, merely reflective attitude toward reality. On the contrary, a dialectical view of the constitution of knowledge is always a crucial one. It rejects a metaphysical separation between subject and object (a separation which is implicit in most positivist-pragmatist philosophy). Therefore it cannot divide scientific activity into data gathering as a basically unproblematic part, and theorizing as a basically problematical part. Understanding based on dialectical epistemology is always problem-critical, for the simple reason that the first step in constitution of knowledge implies a radical reflection on the student's involvement in the communicative context to which the phenomena under investigation belong (my emphasis).

Questioning takes place in the form of a dialogue which represents an exchange of ideas and actions, verbal and nonverbal, between the ethnographer and the native person, and within the ethnographer's own critical thinking
about these events, which in turn takes into consideration, as well, the character of the questions that are being asked and the mutual confidence that has developed. The dialogue bridges the ethnographer's position with that of the native person's in light of his broadening comprehension of the phenomenon being studied. Accordingly, the horizon of meanings, within which phenomena stand, is approached critically from within both the ethnographer's and native person's horizons and they do not leave their own horizons behind, in the interpretive process, but broaden them so as to merge them with that of the mutual horizon that is built up around a shared event. This process is an intrinsic part of an ethnographer's and native person's experience. If successful, it structures their conversation and actions into new and less restrictive forms of understanding that serve to open up the dimensions of new contexts of inquiry.

I use the term horizon in a manner somewhat different than philosophers and phenomenologists like Kuhn (1940) and Schutz (1970). Their use of the term is most clearly identified with the transforming aspects of experience of individuals. I am more interested in the historically situated and culturally mediated individuals of two different cultures and the meaning they bring to shared events and their understanding of them.

By horizon I mean a phenomenon characteristic of
all mental experience and cognitive and perceptual effort. As a way of being able to explain what I mean by the term, I describe it as having a central core and a circumference.

An individual's horizon has a circumference or a frame within which all things real and imaginable may appear. Like the frame of a picture, which forms no actual part of the picture but helps to contribute to its wholeness, the frame I speak of is a constructed fringe of related, at the moment not central, perceptions, feelings, memories, considerations, expectations, etc. (Schutz, 1970:319). An individual's horizon then is partly a guiding notion which enables him to reveal "shades" of meaning cast upon objects, persons and events.

Similarly, there is a horizontal core constructed out of a mental awareness including perception, thought, feeling, recollection, problem, expectation, imagination, etc., that is central to the meaning of experience at a particular moment. This core is responsible for an event specific, objectifying act which holds the individual's attention to it. It is a process which gives both a mental and a material status to objects and persons as they become part of the fabric of meaning of a particular event for the individual. This enables the individual to proceed from hour to hour and from day to day without having to reconstruct from scratch his social relations or personal meanings.
To explore the horizon means that we must investigate the individual's movement away from the core, the limit of one's field of attention and experience, with a view of integrating these in a continually broadening context (Kuhn 1940:107). What is advocated here is the discovery of the meaning of the significance of events for an individual in a context of his culture patterns against the ethnographer's background understanding of the native person in culture. Understanding takes place while contexts are embodied in the merging of horizons and new contexts and a new horizon with new meanings is created.

Hence, by its very nature, every person's horizon is "open". As the individual moves from the core to the circumference of the horizon, objects, events and the actions of people are opened up to various and less reified meanings. This is what happens, for example, when the ethnographer, through the questions he asks, strives to understand a native person and vice versa. Each person's horizon is opened; each is "caught" in a dialogue which will inevitably transform the boundaries of his own horizon and merge it with the other. The creative force which enables the ethnographer to find the questions worth asking, as the native person communicates the events of his life, is a process that involves critical self-reflection on the part of the researcher as the basis for the dialectical dialogue. This is provided through the earlier questions
that were asked and the communicative context that was created. In all respects this is a process that involves a self-reflexive, critical awareness.

Gadamer argues that the basis of the differences between using hermeneutics as a methodological tool ("which promotes sterility") and its use in the pursuit of understanding, is the imagination (Linge 1976:xxii). The ethnographer's capacity to see what is questionable in his subject matter and to be able to formulate questions which query the subject matter further, has much to do with processes of the imagination.

In effect, understanding, in the way Gadamer (1976:13) conceives of it, does not allow either the ethnographer nor the native person to stand beyond the subject matter. Both ethnographer and native person can speak therefore of having "gotten into" or of having been "caught" in a discussion. The ethnographic endeavour is a grounded epistemological mediation that takes into consideration the crucial situation of ethnographic experience itself. Wolff suggests how fieldwork demands a "catch" and a "surrender" to the ethnographic setting.

The intimacy of these...acts...entails a 'total involvement, suspension of received notion, pertinence of everything, and the risk of being hurt'...'catch' and 'surrender' ...suggest an important epistemological priority and unique ontological precondition. 'Man, in contrast to all other phenomena in the universe, can be done justice to only by surrender and catch--or invention--...rather
than by the customary varieties of describing, defining, or reducing to instances of generalization...This means that...any ethnographic encounter demands the observer's initial (that is premethodological) involvement (Wolff, cited in Scholte 1975:439).

As Gadamer (1976:58) explains, "The real event of understanding goes continually beyond what can be brought to the understanding of the other person's words by methodological effort and critical self-control. It is true of every conversation that through it something different has come to be."

This brings me back to a discussion of contexts of understanding. Understanding in context must include the structuring of a dialogue, in the form of questions, between the ethnographer and the native person, which is created in such a way that it encourages breaking the barriers of its own context. A truly creative dialogue is characterized foremost by an attempt to phrase questions appropriately to the context of events in a native person's life that the ethnographer is constantly trying to interpret and understand. However, this process of grasping the question posed by the events does not lead to an openness of a genuine conversation when it is conceived simply in the scientific isolation of the "original" question, but only when the ethnographer is provoked enough by the subject matter to question further in the direction it indicates. Genuine questioning always involves a laying
open and holding open of possibilities and potentialities that suspend the presumed finality of both the native person's and the ethnographer's current opinions. One can then understand the subject matter of the phenomenon that talks to the ethnographer and native person when they both locate it in their questioning. In their attempt to find ways of answering these questions they are, in their questioning, continually transcending the historical horizon of the phenomenon itself and fusing it with their own horizons, and consequently transforming their horizons.¹

What is exhibited in this aspect of the hermeneutic circle, in every new achievement of knowledge, is a mediation or refocusing of the past, within a new and expanded context; in other words it is a shift in contexts. This dynamic character of knowledge is at the center of Gadamer's concept of understanding, as a "concrete fusing of horizons" (Linge 1976:xii). This is not absolute knowledge that Gadamer is speaking of, but the moving dialectical life of knowledge that is expressed in the description of what takes place in the merging of horizons.

In summary, it is personal knowledge which makes scientific observation possible in the first place (Polanyi 1960). The task of hermeneutics in ethnographic description is completed by bridging the personal and historical distances that separate the ethnographer and the native person. The ethnographer's awareness of his own personal
and professional historicity brings with it an openness to new possibilities and potentialities that are the preconditions of genuine understanding. The merging of the ethnographer's horizon with the horizon of the native person (which takes place during the actual field experience when the ethnographer is copying out the life events of the native person which is when they are both most actively aware of this process), has the potential to make both of them aware of assumptions (which come out of critical self-reflection intrinsic in the dialectical dialogue that emerges out of the questioning that occurs), so deep-seated in themselves that these assumptions would otherwise remain unnoticed. This whole process becomes a dynamic interpersonal experience which throws a reflected light upon the fundamental conditions that underlie understanding in a context. Accordingly, understanding, partly as a fusion of horizons, provides a concise picture of what happens in every translation of meaning.

Similarly, questioning in word, gesture and thought plays a major role in every translation of meaning. This fusion of horizons, brought about by an interpersonal relationship that is created by the dialectical dialogue that ensues, between the ethnographer and the native person, begins with a common question. In the relationship between them, the ethnographer learns to translate and combine the meaning of the native person's experiences into
his realm of experience and vice versa. This whole process requires the use of the imagination because, as such, it is the imagination that is the creative quality that allows for hermeneutical reflection.

Geertz's Suggestion

Geertz argues (1973:13-14) that what prevents researchers

...from grasping what people are up to is... a lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs... [this] is what ethnographic research consists of as a personal experience; trying to formulate the basis on which one imagines... We are not... seeking either to become natives... or to mimic them... We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term... which... encompasses very much more than talk, to converse with them... Looked at in this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse... But it is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted (my emphasis).

He argues for a textual, interpretive approach to the description of social activities, but the "texts" (i.e., what the native people say they are doing in everyday activities) must be viewed as "acted documents".

First we have to realize that what native people say they are doing or say they think they are doing in everyday activities must be cast in terms of the anthropologist's descriptions.
Normally, it is not necessary to point out quite so laboriously that the object of study is one thing and that the study of it another... But, as in the study of culture, analysis penetrates into the very body of the object—that is, we begin with our interpretations of what our informants are up to, or think they are up to and systematize those... (Geertz 1973:15).

This is what Geertz means when he argues that anthropological interpretations are fictions; "fictions in the sense that they are... something fashioned... not that they are false..." (ibid. 1973:15). To construct such descriptions is clearly an imaginative act.

Secondly, for Geertz (1975:5,14), culture is an acted document, it is the "webs of significance" that people themselves spin; in other words, "an interworked system of construable signs (... symbols)." Human behaviour must be looked upon as symbolic action—action which, like a line in writing, signifies something. Once its significance is realized then the thing that must be interpreted is the "what it is that is getting said" when people do things. Subsequently, if anthropological interpretation is the construction of "a reading of significant activities" then it should not be separated "from what happens; that is, from what native people say that they are doing" (Geertz 1973:18). In writing this down the "meaning of the speech event (the said of speaking), not the event as event, is transformed into an account" (Geertz
1973:19). Accordingly, the understanding of the form of native inner lives that is provided is "more like reading a poem--than it is like achieving communion" (Geertz 1976: 236-237). The dynamics of textual creations within and between native individuals and groups, studied from the point of view of different types of cultural "texts" ("the heart of that of which is the interpretation") is, for Geertz, the most important "stuff" at which to get.

With regard to the interpretive value of ethnographic description Geertz's statement remains questionable. The role he gives to the imagination in ethnographic description and interpretation leaves me with a curious feeling that it acts as a kind of inflexible mechanism through which the "stuff" of a dialogue, created between the ethnographer and the native person must be filtered. This is partly due to the role Geertz gives to the ethnographer's personal experience in the "enlargement of the universe of human discourse" that he contends must be created. The description of another culture must be moulded in terms of the constructions that the ethnographer imagines. As imaginative acts the ethnographer's descriptions are cast in terms of the interpretations to which people of that culture subject their experience, because that is what they are supposed to be descriptions of. Here it is the ethnographer that is professing them and necessarily he must begin with his own interpretations of
what his informants are doing.

It seems as if Geertz uses the role of the imagination as an independent or private heuristic device in the process of formulating the systematization of other people's symbolic capacities. Through systematization, the descriptions of the involvements of the native individuals within their culture are interpreted. My main criticism of this is that it leaves the role of the imagination psychologically sterile and somehow out of touch with a complete dialectical ethnographic encounter which should emphasize a unified praxis and a dynamic interpersonal experience between both the ethnographer and the native individual. If, as a more enlightened hermeneutic might have it, the imagination has to do with the process of interpreting new and different dimensions of meaning that emerge when the relationship between the ethnographer and the native person is understood, then in the changing contextual arrangements both individuals must be free to act creatively within the ensuing dialogue. The dialogue, brought about by more demanding and critical questions, creates a transforming praxis. This transformation includes the activities of both the ethnographer and native person who are at one and the same time being transformed themselves. Geertz underplays the personal experience of the ethnographer in his relationship with the native person and hence loses what should be the full effect of a dialectical dialogue and the role of the imagination. I
must elaborate on these aspects of my criticism.

Geertz's project fails because he leaves vacant the very important role of the individual. Further, he is not subtle in his concern for the imagination and intuitions of both the ethnographer and the native person. Both of these aspects of interpretation are interlinked and have a great deal to do with ethnographic description.

In Chapter II I discussed what should be considered the true locus of culture. It remains in the interactions of individuals and in the world of ideas, meanings, motives and feelings which each individual may abstract for himself in his participation in these interactions. Because I am interested here in life history, I am concerned mainly with an understanding of an individual's life events in the treatment of a subject; in other words, the "increment of individuality which alone makes culture in the self and eventually builds up culture in the community..." (Sapir 1958:330). I think this is the crucial aspect which Geertz overlooks. Disregarding the individual means that Geertz dismisses the variations of mental proclivities and physical activities that bestow both a life and a strength to a system of thought and meanings. I think this has more general implications for ethnographic description and the researcher's place in the interpretation and understanding of the individual's life history.

In a critical article that Sapir wrote on a
series of North American Indian "life-scapes", interesting questions are posed. Sapir asks (1922:571)

To what extent can we penetrate into the vitals of primitive life and fashion for ourselves satisfying pictures on its own level of reality? Can the conscious knowledge of the ethnologist be fused with the intuitions of the artist? It is difficult to think oneself into the tacit assumptions of so alien a mode of life as was that of an American Indian tribe. It is not that its patterns are elusive or unintelligible, for they are not, but that the attempt to sink these visible patterns into an atmosphere which is as unobtrusive as it is colourful demands an imagination of a peculiarly tolerant kind. Few artists possess so impassioned an indifference to the external form of conduct as to absorb an exotic milieu only to dim its high visibility and to make room for those tracks of the individual consciousness which are the only true concern of literary art.

In other words, Sapir feels that the appropriate mode of recounting these "exotic" forms of behaviour must include a measure of intuition and imagination, just as much as both intuition and imagination are paramount in providing a kind of knowledge that the ethnographer (be he an artist or a scientist) possesses about his own realms of experience.

The issue to which I think Sapir is speaking is the fundamental, simultaneous, intersubjective experiences of the ethnographer and native person. But he takes this intersubjective experience back one step to a personal recognition (on the part of the researcher) of the primary and tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1960) of both himself and
the native person. Each person is reflective of the
development of his logical faculties while at the same
time, because of the creative imagination that each of them
brings to bear in developing a dialectical dialogue, they
must also use the active mind that each of them possesses
and expansion is the tendency to advance in the world and
to change it creatively through activities which include
both physical and mental interaction in a way that
influences perception, thought, feeling and action. Every
individual is subject to both of these processes
simultaneously. The individual for Sapir (1949:155-156)

...means not simply a biologically defined
organism maintaining itself through physical
impacts and symbolic substitutes of such
impacts, but that total world of form,
meaning and implication which a given
individual partly knows and directs, partly
intuits and yields to, partly is ignorant of
and is swayed by.

Hence, with the reflective, logical and creative qualities
of the individual, we may be able to get at the intrinsic
"stuff" of symbols and symbolic discourse. Geertz (1973;
1976) speaks to these issues of symbols and hermeneutics
but his use of both remains sketchy and empty of the
creative and imaginative quality that is the essential
part of ethnographic description and interpretation. The
relations between the elements of experience which serve
to give events in an individual's life both form and meaning, while known and understood at one level of meaning, are also more powerfully "felt" or "intuited" than consciously perceived at another level.

In a sense [they are] well known to him. But this knowledge is not capable of conscious manipulation in terms of word symbols [as Geertz later claims it is]. It is rather, a very delicately nuanced 'feeling' of subtle relations, both experienced and possible. To this kind of knowledge may be applied the term 'intuition'... (Sapir 1949:548).

Geertz does not deal with the problems of levels or dimensions of interpretation and meaning and therefore his understanding of the symbolic significance of native individuals and the role of the hermeneutic circle remains shallow. He is not willing to take the risk of getting involved in the human discourse of events brought about by critical self-reflection. To extend his metaphor, Geertz settles for an understanding of the outline of the poem, the poem's exterior shape. He is not taking an active part in the reading of the poem which comes as he listen and interprets with the poet. It is both of these together (reading and listening) that give the poem the vitality and life it needs, the meaning, feeling and understanding that comes with mutual participation in the communication of the poetic event.
Footnotes

1 Gadamer suggests that history cannot be envisaged as a "chain of static moments", but rather as a process in which one horizon of action and understanding evolves out of what came before, and present meaning is derived from the former contexts of understanding. It then follows, that the researcher approaches the individuals of another culture, in their present context, which includes both their (researcher's and native individual's) own histories and all the changes that history has added to present meaning. Interpretation, in this respect, does not so much involve reconstructing something of a history but rather it involves "bringing phenomena under study out of the past and into the circle of present life and hence into the sphere of present meaning" (Watson-Franke and Watson 1975:249).
CHAPTER IV
REINTERPRETING CRASHING THUNDER: THE CRITERIA FOR A
HERMENEUTICS OF A LIFE HISTORY

Introduction

My major intention in this chapter is to reinterpret the events that shape Crashing Thunder's life. To do this the logic of a reinterpretational movement must be set forth, from the reinterpretation of the actions and experiences that comprise Crashing Thunder's life to some understanding of their meaning for him. The first part of this chapter sets the basis for a hermeneutical perspective. While traditionally hermeneutics denoted the science of the elucidation of the meaning of texts, it recently has been widened to include the interpretation of actions and experience as acted documents (see Gauld and Shotter 1977:5).

Second, by providing the basis of the interpretive relationship between Crashing Thunder and Radin I open that dialogue to a hermeneutical reinterpretation of the former's life. I set out the basis of the particular perspective I use to reinterpret Crashing Thunder's life. This includes studying certain questions that I have brought to bear upon the use of the life history form and
on the selection and arrangement of life history materials. The last section of this chapter is my reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life.

**Human Action and Text**

Although I have criticized Geertz for the way in which he uses a hermeneutical approach, in fairness I must state that he has provided a starting point for its use in anthropology. Primarily, his contribution stems from his concept of "acted document" (Geertz 1973:10). He explains that these are constructed from native explanations of what they say they are doing in everyday activities, or, as he describes them, actions and experience considered as "acted texts" (Geertz 1976:235-236). These are ideas for which Geertz should be most highly praised. As acted documents, human action and experience can be said to provide the textual "winks" that speak directly to epistemology (Geertz 1973:6-7).

Likewise Ricoeur (1971a; 1971b) has shown how criteria used to analyse texts can also be used to analyse human action and experience. To understand how this can be done we must understand Ricoeur's use of hermeneutics. Ricoeur holds to the idea of text freed from the notion of scripture and writing. Radnitsky (1970:2:23) expresses the same idea of a transposition of the meaning of a text
to the personal meaning and significance of action and experience. Similarly, Gauld and Shotter (1977:5) suggest that "the term "meaning"...can be assigned not just to words or sentences or other textual items, but to all sorts of non-linguistic entities or events." These are the text-analogues of which they speak. Roughly speaking text-analogues are "any sequence of human activities, or set of the products of such activities, to which, or to items within which, one can assign a 'meaning'" (Gauld and Shotter 1977:5). This use of text-analogue facilitates a movement which allows us to deal with action in the same way that those of the "older" schools of hermeneutics, who deal specifically with biblical interpretation, deal with an assemblage of texts but with full recognition that experience and action differ from a body of text.

For Ricoeur hermeneutics, at this level, is a set of rules which presides over an exegesis, that is, over the critical interpretation of a particular "text" or a group of actions as signs that may be viewed analogously as texts. In other words, a textual exegesis is extended "to all signs [actions] bearing analogy to a text" (Ricoeur 1970:8). In this way actions are symbols encompassing multiple meanings of expression and thereby require interpretation (Winner and Winner 1976:123).

Winner and Winner (1976:123) suggest, however, that Ricoeur does not hold to the notion of there being
a general hermeneutic. In other words, there is

...no universal canon for exegesis, but only disparate and proposed theories concerning the rules of interpretation... according to one pole, hermeneutics is understood as the manifestation and restoration of a meaning addressed in the manner of a message (e.g., depth semantics); according to the other pole, it is understood as demystification, as a reduction of illusion (e.g., the French school of structuralism)... A general theory of interpretation would thus have to account not only for the opposition between two interpretations of the interpretation, the one as recollection of meaning, the other as reduction of illusions, but also for the division and scattering of these two great 'schools' of interpretation into 'theories' that differ from one another (Ricoeur quoted in Winner and Winner 1976: 123).

The former approach places confidence in the object of interpretation to which the subject will address itself; (e.g., a particular native person's actions to which the ethnographer addresses himself). The latter approach doubts the primacy of an object of interpretation, contests it, tears off its mask and reduces its disguises. Meaning here is always the result of a combination of elements which are not themselves significant; it is always reducible. The object of study is a sort of inquiry into syntactical arrangements. For example, as Ricoeur (1970:74) suggests to Levi-Strauss
...you dispair of meaning; but you console yourself with the thought that if men have nothing to say, at least they say it so well that their discourse is amenable to structuralism. You retain meaning, but it is the meaning of nonmeaning, the admirable syntactical arrangement of a discourse which has nothing to say.

Ricoeur's allegiance therefore lies with the former group because the latter one does not contribute to rendering manifest a "live" semantics. For example, the structuralists are not interested in the "live" semantics of a myth—in other words, the restoration of its meaning in terms of its various messages—but rather, they are interested in the myth's power of resolving a structural illusion. They place emphasis on the myth's form or, analogously, to syntactical arrangement, not its content. The resolution remains static, a rearrangement of its internal parts, rather than dynamic. Such analysis is not concerned with the actualization of semantic dimensions but rather with logical rules and explanations.

The approach to which Ricoeur subscribes involves, at a conscious level, self-interpretation on the part of the receiving subject, encouragement of reflection, and an attempt at overcoming some of the cultural distance and estrangement between the ethnographer and native person. This is the actualization of semantic dimensions. In other words, the meaning of actions and experiences that address themselves to the subjects interpreting them
keep open the interpretation. The actions are never closed in the sense that there are always other interpretations. Ricoeur suggests that what is at stake here is the mythopoetic core of imagination found in the restoration of meaning or understanding which comes through interpretation (Winner and Winner 1976:123).

With the leads of both Geertz and Ricoeur, I want to consider the process through which events that make up Crashing Thunder's life take on meaning. I can then move closer to a reinterpretation of those actions and experiences which make up the events in Crashing Thunder's life which will eventually provide me with an understanding of the meaning of his life events.

The events in an individual's life are created out of his actions and experiences. These actions and experiences form life-events that a native person in the telling of his life to the ethnographer critically reflects upon and interprets for himself. In his interpretation these events are given meaning. But an individual's actions and experiences do not merely mirror, in shared events, the circumstances of their happening and thereby the meaning of these communally shared events. Rather, they open up for interpretation a world which it bears beyond itself. An individual's actions and experiences must be seen in terms of the role they play in the formation of an open, interpreted, acted document. The meaning of
the document is created in and is a reflection of the interpretation of a person's life by that person and by the person studying that life.

The ethnographer's presentation of that life begins with the native person's own interpretation of his actions and experiences. The meaning of events in the native person's life is a result of a merging of the two persons (for example, Radin and Crashing Thunder) together in a conversation that involves reflective and critical questioning on the part of both partners. This process "opens up" the interpretation. In the conversation between the ethnographer and the native person events become open to new interpretations which determine their meanings. This is another way of saying that significant events in a person's life are open to interpretation through an intersubjective dialogue. These events, then, are open to those who want to join in the interpretive movement of their reading.

I must now ask how I may join in this interpretative movement. Accordingly, in providing my reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life I must see how I can organize, in a significant fashion, the actions and experiences out of which the events of his life are formed. I must also reflect upon my part in interpreting meaning of those events; that is, I must critically question and examine my own part in the formation of the meanings that emerge as
I reinterpret the events that make up Crashing Thunder's life. My reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life events is a modeling, as it were, of the live relationship between events and the process of my producing a reinterpretation of those events.

The conditioning of my understanding and subsequent reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life lies in the dialogue that I create. This dialogue is created out of my ability to bring into question my own pre-understandings. The pre-understandings that concern me, with regard to my reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder, include one of form of presentation and one of personal selection of material. Both pre-understandings are complex reciprocal variables that reflect and shade each other in the creation of my reinterpretation of the meaning of events in Crashing Thunder's life.

The problem hermeneutics sets out to solve is specified by inquiry into the questions that the researcher brings to bear on the object of interpretation. My reinterpretation, therefore, will be determined to a large degree by the questions that I bring to the actions, experiences and events that make up Crashing Thunder's life. Similarly, questions regarding the bias of form of presentation and selection of material must also be considered. I am therefore faced with the putting of questions and the hermeneutic develops through this process.
My comprehension of the events in Crashing Thunder's life becomes an interpretation of the nexus of thoughts between Crashing Thunder and Radin, Radin's autobiography of Crashing Thunder, and my reinterpretation of the events that make up Crashing Thunder's life.

There is a distance between the actions and experiences that form the events in a person's life as he himself interprets them, the formation of the meaning of those events which is the result of the intersubjective, interpretive dialogue between a native person and the ethnographer and finally the various reinterpretations of that dialogue. I see this distancing providing three unique levels of abstraction in interpretation. The first is at the level of the individual himself while he reflects upon the actions and experiences in the construction of what he considers to be the meaningful events in his life as he interprets them. The second level of abstraction is by ethnographer in his active participation in the recovery of meaning of events in the native person's life. This is a product of the dialogue between the two persons both who have a stake in the interpretation that is created. The third level of abstraction is my reinterpretation of the meaning of those events. Reinterpretation in this sense is possible because the individuality of Crashing Thunder, as described by Radin's interpretation of the events in his life, and my own reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's
life do not stand opposed to each other as two facts which cannot be compared. This provides the basis of hermeneutics as participation.

Very generally, then, the task of an anthropology that incorporates hermeneutics will be found in the elucidation of meanings of actions and experience that make up the life events of a person. Instead of replacing everyday common sense accounts of human action and experience the hermeneutical approach aims at enlarging and refining upon such accounts. Once we have made Crashing Thunder's life intelligible we may then be in a better position to examine it in terms of more general terms.

Many feel that the way in which hermeneutics is used makes it look and sound like a cure-all of the descriptive human sciences, while others have come to call it simply, good ethnographic sense. While I will partially agree with the latter statement, the former is one with which I earnestly disagree. To clarify my position, I will first provide the criteria for a bad hermeneutics as opposed to a good hermeneutics. I have for the sake of this argument used the terms structural hermeneutics (cf., Rasmussen 1974; Ricoeur 1969) and personal hermeneutics.

On the one hand, structural hermeneutics, as Ricoeur (Winner and Winner 1976:123) suggests, is formed
primarily on the basis of the "reduction of illusion", the deconstruction of text. For example, for those who try and reduce myth to its underlying logical principles, as Levi-Strauss does in his structural study of myth; or for those who try to interpret a phenomenon as a reflection of a religious experience of the sacred as opposed to the profane, as Eliade would present material; or for those who attempt to explain behaviour as psychic phenomena, as in Freud's interpretations; etc., a reductionist framework for interpretation is used. The theory that each of them has formed is imposed as a framework upon the subject matter being interpreted. To the extent that these theoretical frameworks may be said to be the result of interpretations, they may also be said to be consequential or derived, the result of a reductionism. This, primarily, is because of the willingness of those who adhere to such interpretive schemes to reify the labels they have become accustomed to using to describe a phenomenon they do not otherwise understand. To interpret structurally, or in the form of the sacred and profane dichotomy, or psychiatrically what, for example, native people believe and understand as empirical, is a reductionism whereby empirical "illusions", or the unverified, are defined and explained in relation to the structural rules or the psycho-analytical framework that has been used for such interpretations. Such interpretations remain static because they do not break the
boundaries of their own internal logical dimensions.

A good hermeneutics, personal hermeneutics, on the other hand, is related closely to specific persons and specific events. Its main purpose is in the restoration of meaning addressed in the manner of a message. In effect, this relies upon a transfer of meaning in relation to the events and actions that form an individual's life, and which addresses itself to the person interpreting them. This transferring process gives hermeneutics a movement that can be detected in the act of opening personal events and actions to interpretation by both the person who experiences them and the person who wants to understand them. This restores meaning to the messages.

A good hermeneutics, in this respect, opens up meaning because it relies on two crucial processes for its understanding: one, intersubjectivity and two, a dialectical dialogue. The importance of both of these aspects of the hermeneutic circle here need not again be emphasized. It is sufficient to say that I believe that the validity of a personal hermeneutic can best be understood in the manner in which the intersubjective relationship is stated. This is crucial, and it relates directly to the quality of the dialectical relation that is fashioned as the researcher addresses the native person about the actions and events that make up the latter's life.

The dialogue that ensues is the beginning of the
transfer of meaning where one person addresses the other, and vice versa, in a manner that brings both the ethnographer's and the native person's own preunderstandings about the phenomenon and each other to bear upon it. This promotes, on both of their parts, critical self-reflection, a quality of a dialogue that encourages more refined questions. In this way the dialogue, which I have called dialectical because it usually brings to an interface two different cultural traditions, remains grounded in the phenomenon in question. The context is an intersubjective transfer of meaning which becomes actualized or opened up by the participants in that world. This develops in accord with the recognition of the intention of both participants and in relationship to their activity with each other.

In this instance, reliance remains at the level of the dialogue and its interpretation, and not at the level of a theoretical assumption. The investigator, here, opens his understanding of the specific individual's interpretation of specific events, behaviours and actions. Accordingly, this leaves open to interpretation the mental and physical activities of an individual.
The Questions of Form and Selection in Reinterpreting A Life History

Earlier in this chapter I stated some of the questions that I, as a reinterpreter of the meaning of events in Crashing Thunder's life, must bring to bear on the information I have to work with. These questions centered specifically around the use of the life history and the selection and arrangement of life history materials. These questions, I suggest, are primary aspects of a hermeneutical analysis.

In this section I will turn to the literature concerning life history and analyze some of the methods, uses and criteria for life history. I suggest the possible benefits of the life history form in interpreting and translating the life of an individual in culture and indicate how I personally select and arrange the events in the life of Crashing Thunder to construct my reinter­pretation. This in itself is part of the hermeneutical analysis of which I am using. Questions about my procedure are, indeed, part of my interpretation. These questions form part of a hermeneutical analysis because in my attempt to select, choose, and arrange events in Crashing Thunder's life I am contributing to the reinterpretive context that helps give meaning to those events. My reinterpretation is constructed out of this questioning process. Three
major questions bear directly upon this analysis.

Why Study the Life History Form?

The life history form is a powerful and effective way in which to describe and interpret the personal experiences, feelings, motives and perceptions in the life of an individual. Similarly, many of the more orthodox forms of ethnographic description and interpretation, often represent individual variability or, for that matter, attempt a comprehensive study of a person within the world that he lives. Within this form I include studies in kinship, political process, religious systems, belief systems, economic systems, symbolic systems, material culture, the relationships of any one of these to the other, or any attempt to describe and interpret in a holistic fashion the different aspects of society and culture. In either case ethnographers commonly recognize that they have only the individuals of a society with whom they may do their fieldwork.

Usually what happens in the latter cases, when the ethnographic accounts are completed and monographs are produced, is that the ethnographers find they have transformed the descriptions and interpretations of the behaviour, personality, etc., of a native person from its "raw state" into an example that they can use as part of
their more general explanation of the society or some aspect of the culture. Sapir (1949:593) argues that

If we make the test of imputing the contents of an ethnological monograph to a known individual in the community which it describes, we would inevitably be led to discover that, while every single statement in it may, in the favorable case, be recognized as holding true in some sense, the complex of patterns as described cannot without considerable absurdity, be interpreted as a significant configuration of experience, both actual and potential, in the life of the person appealed to.

I maintain that these orthodox forms of description and interpretation per se are not suitable for the depiction of the lives of actual individuals nor, of course, are they intended to provide any descriptive and interpretive continuity to the life of a specific individual for the sake of studying that particular life or its place in society or culture. In other words, an individual as ordinarily dealt with in most orthodox ethnographic monographs takes his place as part of a generalized representation with which the ethnographer can use in his attempt to describe and interpret social life or culture. Emphasis is not placed on the endlessly different meanings that physical objects, events and interpersonal relations have for a specific individual in society, per se but rather on abstracting certain configurations of ideas, meanings and action patterns of society or culture. These forms of description and interpretation express the common characteristics of the group or culture; make
explicit the normative rules for the inner workings of a society or culture; describe and interpret aspects of culture in an attempt to show its integration and consistency in terms of shared mental, behavioural, material properties, describe the psychological types or sets and their relationship to cultural types; etc. Each form is meant to suggest a certain sort of social or cultural integration and consistency, define the internal rules of society or culture, etc.; the list of ethnographic purposes goes on forever. My point is that in such ethnographic accounts the individual loses much of his status as an individual. Geertz (1973:51) suggests that in such a case

Individuality comes to be seen as eccentricity, distinctiveness as accidental deviation from the only legitimate object of study for the true scientist: the underlying, unchanging, normative type. In such an approach, however elaborately formulated and resourcefully defended, living detail is drowned in dead stereotype: we are in quest of a metaphysical entity, man with a capital 'M', in the interests of which we sacrifice the empirical entity we in fact encounter, man with a small 'm'.

These types of descriptions leave inarticulate or at least elusive, any sense of reality of an individual's life. Of course they are not meant to be used for representing or understanding emotion, feelings, and motivations, conscious or unconscious, of the individual; his characteristic adjustments and his active participation in and reception
to the contemporary pressures of his natural environment, his way of dealing with situations in the physical world of objects and events and with other individuals.

The collection of a life history is one of the most suitable ways of being able to present the world of personal meanings and system of ideas of an individual. As an interpretive form it can provide the continuities and discontinuities of an individual with relation to the events that make up his life, the culture patterns that he adjusts to and the other individuals with whom he interacts. The portrayal of the various combinations of these things as told or written by the person who experiences them may create a valuable description of life events. In this way the life history document acts as an expressive focus which can vivify individual experience and thereby reveal the manner in which he adjusts to and acts upon his physical, mental and sociocultural worlds both at the conscious and unconscious levels.

The representation of individual experience becomes much clearer to the ethnographer (or any reader) when it is seen from the vantage point of an individual's own life, as his interpretation of life events. Seen from the eyes of an individual, ritual, economics, politics, religion, language and psychology no longer seem a maze of excessive complications. Rather, within the context of personal life history, these things begin to take on contexts and
meaning and become alive and human again. Accordingly, the subtle nuances of native feeling and motive can better be understood by the ethnographer and he is able to participate in and understand more intimately the different aspects of the individual (Sapir 1922:369).

With regard to life history documents, Sapir (1922: 570-571) suggests that we can truly see

...how compelling an imaginative treatment of primitive life might be. It would almost seem that bare recital of the details of any mode of life that human beings have actually lived has a hidden power that transcends the skill or the awkwardness of the teller... [and] a great deal might be done to capture the spirit of the primitive by adhering, so far as possible, to its letter—in other words, by transcribing, either literally or in simple paraphrase, personal experience and other texts that have been written down or dictated by natives. In any event, the accent of authentic documents always reveals a significant, if intangible, something about native mentality that is over and above their content.

The personal life history document may be defined, then, as any self-revealing record that intentionally or unintentionally yields information regarding the structure, dynamics and functioning of an individual's mental, social and physical life. To assemble a knowledge of an individual in regards to the complexities of his physical and mental worlds should be an essential first step in any description of an individual in culture. If we start too soon with any more abstracted analysis and classification we run the risk of tearing both physical and mental life into fragments
and begin with false cleavages that misrepresent the salient organization and natural integrations in the personal life of an individual. In order to avoid such hasty preoccupation with these abstractions we need to concern ourselves with the individual's life in all of its idiosyncratic proclivities and as it is lived by him. We must always bear in mind the concrete life in order to prevent ourselves from "straying into esoteric and chimerical bypaths" (Allport 1942:56). However, to believe that an abstract and more general knowledge of the rules and models of cultural behaviour or personality, as are reflected in the individual, can precede the knowledge of particular expressions of individual behaviour is an unfortunate blunder.

In other words, and to restate my major point, one of the chief faults with the uses of orthodox ethnographic descriptions is that they are used to generate abstracted models of human behaviour with little regard for the personal life of the individual. In life histories personal lives are not divorced from the descriptions of life because that is what the descriptions are of; in the life history document we find the needed subjective "touchstone of reality". Life histories emphasize the importance of presenting the individual's evaluation of his experiences and provide the contexts within which he undergoes his experiences. These investigators have not
yielded the kinds of findings deemed traditionally valid by other ethnographers because of what the latter suggest is a difficulty of getting beyond an idiographic emphasis on individual subjectivities. Primarily this is because much of the emphasis of orthodox, nomothetic ethnographic description

...has been on self-sufficient and self-contained single study in which the researcher's hypothesis is tested against what is discovered in that one piece of research. A life history, like life itself, is not so self-sufficient or self-contained, nor can it be deployed to prove or disapprove any one hypothesis (Mandelbaum 1973:179).

An interesting paradox emerges when a well trained ethnographer's scientific training and aspirations create doubts and misgivings as to the representativeness of any individual's subjective accounts, especially when presented in the form of a life history, and especially concerning the validity of subjective records. But at the same time he acknowledges to himself that in the case of the individual that confronts him he finds the vivid and irreducible "stuff" that constitutes such knowledge. As a result the ethnographer takes these subjective accounts as trustworthy as compared with the generalized canons of his science. It seems, rather, that he finds the life history document more absorbing, more enlightening, and fundamentally more real. Unfortunately, many ethnographers replace these
subjectivities with a form of description that systematically maps out the general cultural and social configura-
tive patterns of behaviour. Such a replacement reduces such subjectivities into either normative instances of
generalization or into non-useful information. Mandelbaum more than adequately describes this process. He (1973:178)
explains that

When an anthropologist goes to live among the people he studies, he is likely to make some good friends among them. As he writes his account of their way of life, he may feel uncomfortably aware that his description and analysis have omitted something of great importance. His dear friends have been dissolved into faceless norms; their vivid adventures have somehow been turned into pattern profiles or statistical types.

Kluckhohn (1945:162-163) argues that "until anthropology can deal rigorously with the 'subjective factors' in the lives of 'primitives' their work will be flat and insubstantial." It is for all of these reasons that I think the life history form is conducive to a hermeneutical perspective. Unless ethnologists can learn to delineate the emotional, perceptual and motivational structures and content of the individual, as the individual presents it in his own words, they will learn very little of the systems of personal meanings and ideas of native individuals. It is Dollard's (1935:262) contention that by and large ethnologists "have abstracted somewhat fictive
social structures from the visible realities of everyday life and have become so preoccupied with these abstracted patterns that they have lost sight completely of the individual." In effect, what this produces is a discontent in the minds of those ethnologists who are searching for a useful and more intricate grasp on the character of an individual's life. It is one thing to itemize, outline and provide normative or statistical models of the form or function of behaviour in a society and quite another to give a significant account of the personal meanings and feelings of an individual in his day to day activities. Radin (1963:2) insists that the life history is

...likely to throw more light on the workings of the mind and emotions of primitive man than any amount of speculation from a sophisticated ethnologist or ethnological theorist.

For the sake of illustration I will review Lowie's The Crow Indians as an example of the kind of orthodox ethnography that I have been discussing. While the description of the Crow Indians Lowie gives us is nothing less than excellent, it still falls far short of the kind of ethnography Radin emphasized. Radin suggested that we must build up our knowledge of culture by studying some of the particular individuals within culture. This did not mean that ethnologists were to collect accounts of culture from a particular individual, but rather to collect a personal
life account from an individual so that we see his interactions with other persons and examine how he creates for himself a world of ideas and meanings.

The kind of detail we get from Lowie's ethnography is about Crow normative culture. There is a section in his monograph on tribal organization, another on kinship and affinity, one describing the life cycle not of one specific person but generally about Crow Indians. Other chapters have to deal with subsistence activities and the division of labour, literature, Crow tales and mythology, club life, religion, wars and finally the sun dance. The chapter on Crow tales and mythology comes the closest to the actual stories of particular individuals but usually these are of mythological figures. They are told by specific Crow Indians and Lowie uses such accounts as examples of a more general description about mythology. The tales also sometimes describe the adventures of certain individuals but nowhere, however, do we get any indication of a description of a particular living individual, his interrelations with other individuals and the world of ideas, meanings and significance that he creates from such interactions.

Similarly, Radin's *The Winnebago Indians* is an equally excellent account of Winnebago culture and only somewhat less generalized than Lowie's work. The culture is described from the descriptions of material culture, archaeology, social customs, social organizations, ceremonial
organizations, religion, the peyote cult, etc. However, there is a partial attempt to adopt the use of personal narratives and other personal documents. This incorporation of personal documents is an early use of a form of description Radin (1933:183) called "reconstruction from internal evidence." The form of the reconstruction was to be shaped out of the personal life history itself.

Hence, in Radin's Winnebago monograph (1915-1916), which I consider generally to be an example of an orthodox ethnography, we find traces of what later came to command most of his ethnographic efforts, the use of personal documents.

To What Uses Have Life Histories Been Put and What is the Purpose of Restudying Radin's Life History of Crashing Thunder?

Both Kluckhohn (1945) and Langness (1965) have suggested the various interpretive uses to which the life history document can be put. They include in their studies interpreting life history materials in terms of culture structure, status and role, community studies, acquisition of culture, culture change, psychological analysis, personality formation and analysis, deviance, etc. Each of these uses certainly has its place in the interpretation of a native person and they all may be put to hermeneutical inspection. However, here I am concerned
with the way in which Radin used the life history. It is with Radin's example that I take my first steps in the reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life. Radin was one of the first to set the stage for the interpretation of a person's life. Here I want to outline his purpose in using the life history and show how my purposes parallel his and his mine.

Radin (1883-1959) spent a considerable time throughout his career (close to fifty years) working on the Winnebago materials which he had gathered mainly in the years 1908 to 1913. These were complemented with a number of shorter field trips after this period. As David Sapir (1961:65) suggests, Radin "knew [Winnebago] ways thoroughly and spoke their language as well as a white man could hope [sic]."

Radin was a pioneer in the use of life history materials. Kluckhohn (1945:87) explains that in 1913 Radin

...published a brief Winnebago autobiography in text and translation, accompanied by brief ethnographic annotations. In two pages he gave a cogent statement of the need for such documents to supplement the more usual data supplied by anthropologists. This was followed, in 1920, by a considerably longer Winnebago autobiography, given in English, though originally written down in native syllabary. In 1926 this autobiography was republished, addressed to a popular audience, with additional material which had been obtained from the informant on other occasions. This volume, Crashing Thunder,
undoubtedly marks the beginning of rigorous work in this field by professional anthropologists. Radin gives an acceptable account of how the material was obtained; he insists upon the necessity for literal translation and the editor's refraining from all changes; his carefully segregated interpretative remarks are not superficial but penetrating.

Most anthropologists (Dollard 1949; Kluckhohn 1945; Langness 1965) agree that Radin's study of Crashing Thunder is a cultural study, that he "was interested only in culture and not in the individual per se, the 'individual-in-culture' or in personality" (Langness 1965:8). The document, they believe, has greater value for the student of culture than for the student of persons-in-culture" (Kluckhohn 1945:87). I agree that the autobiography of Crashing Thunder could be taken as a valuable inside view of the Winnebago culture as Dollard and these others suggest. However, I disagree with his assertion that Radin's purpose was not to analyze and interpret a human life.

It is interesting to read Dollard's reasons for not taking Radin's life history material as an interpretive document of a human life. Dollard (1949:260) explains that

...there is very little attempt at analysis and synthesis of the material...The editor's comments, while revealing and sympathetic, are few and are characterized by a literary and impressionistic admiration rather than by a laborious theoretical construction of Crashing Thunder's life experience.
In other words, Radin's life history of Crashing Thunder is an attempt at "impressionistic" description but not an attempt at constructing a scientific theory of Crashing Thunder's life experiences. But to argue that Radin was not interested in a theoretical construction of some aspect of Crashing Thunder's life experience as being proof of his disinterest in the individual in culture is incorrect. It also means that Dollard did not read Radin's *Method and Theory of Ethnology* very carefully.

Radin (1962:2) does announce his objective, in writing Crashing Thunder's life history, "the aim being not to obtain autobiographical details about some definite personage, but to have some representative, middle-aged individual of moderate ability describe his life in relation to the social group in which he has grown up." In other words, Radin is not interested in pushing one personage over another but neither is he interested in the general patterns of social and cultural life per se. Instead he is interested in a particular individual as an individual in relation to his society. So Crashing Thunder is presented as one person caught between two cultures. It is the story of one person's quest for a good way of life. Radin provides us with a view of personal disruption in Crashing Thunder's life with the onslaught of a new ideological focus of the peyote cult. Religion, in this case, is seen primarily as an individual rather than a
social experience. David Sapir (1961:67) suggests that for Radin "it is the particular performance of the particular raconteur that is of utmost importance..." (my emphasis).

We get more than a clue as to what Radin means to do with life history materials if we look at the way in which he considers how a life history is to be collected. Radin (1926;1933) stresses the value in any ethnographic account of starting from "internal evidence". First the task is to describe and interpret the life of a person during a specific period. Second, we must also provide the history as it is necessary for the elucidation of the particular period. Third, we must remember to stay as close to the evidence as possible. For example, David Sapir (1961:60) suggests that Radin's

...concern with facts is evident in everything he wrote. He seemed hesitant to make abstract generalizations and what ones he did make were always supported by considerable data. I remember once having quite an argument with him in which he staunchly supported the 'five foot shelf anthropologist': at least they got in all the facts...

For Radin the life history seemed the best way of combining these three aspects of study. These aspects of Radin's work puts it in line with what I consider to be a hermeneutical perspective. But how did Radin do his work; what makes his work hermeneutical and what can I gain from it in terms of my own purposes?
Radin explains that in his use of a life history we are given the unique opportunity of being able to combine both the textual and contextual aspects of the events that make up an individual's life. The text, of course, is the personal document itself, while the contexts are the ethnographic materials that mark the person's life and the ethnological descriptions that can be translated from native texts (e.g., myths, folktales, various individual narratives). Through the extensive use of ethnographic descriptions in the forms of the many Winnebago texts he had collected and in his specific footnoting Radin formulated the interplay between the individual and his culture. Together the text and the contexts were arranged in such a way as to represent the individual in his cultural context for the general reader. In his Autobiography of an American Indian Radin used this material to provide the cultural context for a study of the life events of Crashing Thunder.

Radin (1933:183-252) insisted that the reconstruction of an individual's life and his place in his culture could be accomplished only if we start from internal evidence. This is made clear in Method and Theory of Ethnology and in his book Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian. Radin stresses the text; it is the text that constitutes the major part of the life history documents that he collected.
With regard to the very first *Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian* (1914), Sapir (1927:303) rejected Radin's idea of leaving the text in its entirety without any contextual background annotation. He explains that Radin revised, added to and republished his 1920 work which became the *Crashing Thunder* of 1926. Sapir (1927:303) reports that

The new material in this book consists chiefly of myths and ethnological descriptions translated from Winnebago texts recorded by Dr. Radin. These insertions in the original narrative somewhat hinder its flow; but they are so packed with interesting data that we can readily pardon the writer for sacrificing something of the literary form of his document. As a matter of fact, there are many implications and allusions in the text of the narrative that require just such supplementary materials as *Crashing Thunder* presents.

I will now attempt to examine what are the possible significances of using life history materials with the type of systematic contextual annotation that Radin provides in his study of the individual, *Crashing Thunder*. To do this I will indicate to what extent I think Radin's work is, in fact, good hermeneutics and then I will explain how I consider my reinterpretation of the events in Crashing Thunder's life to be hermeneutical.

It is my contention, of course, that Radin in his work with *Crashing Thunder* was doing not only good ethnography but good hermeneutics. He was doing good ethnography
because in his interpretation he was staying as close as possible to the events that make up Crashing Thunder's life. One of his main goals in such an exegesis was to show the great advantage that accrues to our understanding of native individuals when it is studied in this way; i.e., from a life history reconstruction.

Radin (1933:252) points to two great dangers for ethnologists:

...first, that it is easy for the ethnologist, lord as he must feel himself of all he surveys, to persuade himself that he knows more about a given culture than he actually does, and, second, that of falling into speculation for its own sake.

We all might take a lesson from Radin's thoughtful message. In fact, it does make very good ethnographic sense. However, Radin not only adheres to this message, as in the case of most ethnographers who strive in their own work to remain as close to it as they can, but he also extends this ethnographic lesson to include the best of what I am calling a contribution to a personal-oriented hermeneutics.

When we look at the end result of Crashing Thunder's autobiography, we still have, "Crashing Thunder, an individual". In other words, he has not become, what becomes of persons in many of the various orthodox accounts extant, a "type". He does not become generic, another
standard representation, or reduced to the level of a "norm", or a deviant of it. Instead, the description is an interpretation of a specific individual while simultaneously in extensive footnoting we get ample description of the culture. The two together texture very well the individual in culture. The same can be said for the events of Crashing Thunder's life. They do not become transformed as they do in orthodox ethnographic style, to the level of generalized events, or to the level of specific examples. Instead, it is through the specific events of Crashing Thunder's life that we get a picture of the vitality of his life experiences and meaning takes on a personal representation that is open to various interpretation.  

In this way Radin enlarges upon Crashing Thunder's accounts of his life. He systematically stays away from imposing any specific theory upon either Crashing Thunder or the Winnebago. Radin does not overpower Crashing Thunder's life with the imposition of his own elegant and clever theoretical production. Instead he remains aware of the many problems of description, interpretation and translation. For Radin these three aspects are part of the process of enlarging the field of discourse about the meaning and significance of events in Crashing Thunder's life. Through the life history, Radin also has been able to interpret the meaning Crashing Thunder gives to events
in terms that we as members of another culture can understand and appreciate.

This brings me to my last point. I have provided what it is that shapes a personal hermeneutic and have briefly indicated how Radin created one. His major criterion is that the ethnographer stay as close to events that shape the native person's life as possible. Accordingly, for me to do reinterpretive justice to the specific individual, Crashing Thunder, I must stay close to those events and the interpretations that both he and Radin give to them. Underlying this is an attempt to open up to hermeneutical reflection the meaning of the actions and experiences that form the events that shape Crashing Thunder's life. But as I said, in doing this, I bring to bear my own preunderstandings and the reinterpretation of the events that make up Crashing Thunder's life is brought into a dialogue with Radin's copious footnoting of cultural description and Crashing Thunder's own interpretations.

How Did I Come to Rearrange and Select Radin's Life History Material in the Way that I Did?

While life history information is sometimes profuse and overly jumbled, depending on which of the several possible methods is used in the collection, selection and arrangement of material (see Kluckhohn 1945; Langness 1965),
there are ways in which it can be channelled into a meaningful reinterpretation without doing a lot of damage to the original life history narrative. Mandelbaum (1973: 180) suggests three ways of doing this.

They are in noting (1) the dimensions or aspects of a person's life; (2) the principal turnings and the life conditions between turnings; (3) the person's characteristic means of adaptation. The dimensions provide categories for understanding the main forces that affect a life. The turnings mark major changes that a person makes and thus demarcate periods of his life. A focus on adaptation directs our notice both to changes he makes and to continuities he maintains through his life course.

Together these procedures provide an organizing scheme for the interpretation and understanding of subjective experience of the life events that make up the personal history of an individual. They also provide a useful framework that can overcome many of the restrictions that are intrinsic and fundamental to the intention of the more orthodox ethnographic form. I must begin with a fixed point, but this point in time must be one that has been given form and substance by the native individual of the group described and not by an alien observer. This I do. Similarly, any internal reconstruction has to begin with an intensive and continuous study of an adequate body of texts, be they myths, other narratives or ethnological description. By using Radin's extensive footnoting I have been able to add
helpful contextual relevance to my reinterpretation.

In providing an outline for the selection and arrangement of material and, therefore, a format for a reinterpretation of human action and experience as acted document, I will form some meaning of the events that make up Crashing Thunder's life. As I have suggested, analysis must be placed within the context of the discourse of action and experience which includes, for my purposes, four essential critical turnings. These four "turnings" will serve as a framework for my reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life events. Situational events will be arranged in a way that emphasizes the crucial experiences that form them and that shape his life. I will use Mandelbaum's (1973:180) procedural suggestions and arrange this material in terms of the critical turnings that make up Crashing Thunder's life. This will consist of exploring those events that are critical to the way Crashing Thunder, as an individual, deals with and represents experience in his world. My primary concern is with providing some insight into the events that are initial to those critical turnings in his life.

The interaction and engagement of the different meaningful relationships that Crashing Thunder gives to events and the contextual dimensions within which those events can be understood will also be examined. In my examination of the critical turnings in Crashing Thunder's
life, I also will provide a picture of his adaptations to
the new critical roles that he creates for himself.
Throughout my examination, I will discuss many of the
dimensions and extensions of meaning in the discourse of
Crashing Thunder's experience that form his life events.
My intention is to reinterpret some of the more important
personal events that are formed out of the discourse of
Crashing Thunder's experience. This will give me the
opportunity to understand more clearly the quality of those
events that provide meaning to his life.

Radin's primary intention in presenting Crashing
Thunder's autobiography was specifically to capture the
latter's personal world of rich and varied experiences.
These experiences are presented by Crashing Thunder in a
particular way. There is a base theme that Crashing
Thunder begins with that structures the narrative through
to the end.

When Crashing Thunder was a small boy, he heard
what had been prophesied about him. He accepted this,
and the events that subsequently shaped his life provide
an ongoing attempt on his part to impress upon the world
around him the truth of this prophecy. Interestingly
enough, however, he sees no reason at all for dwelling upon
it to the exclusion of all the other pertinent facts in his
life. As Radin (1926:xvii-xviii) comments:
This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that he was a somewhat unusual man both in character and in intellect. Few people in any community, civilized or uncivilized, have ever had so full an experience with life in all its ramifications... Yet no man has ever so successfully refrained from dramatizing these experiences in the interest of an imaginary audience as did this (person)...

The rhythm of his life, like that of the generality of mankind, was a succession of climaxes and anti-climaxes, and so he portrays it (my emphasis).

In this analysis, I would like to stay as close as possible to this "succession of climaxes and anti-climaxes" and re-emphasize the critical turnings that took place in his life. There are four critical turnings and they are as follows: (1) Crashing Thunder's first lie and early disillusion; (2) his disillusion in learning the secrets of the Medicine Dance ceremony; (3) the sudden awareness of his spirit power when he cures his niece's condition; and (4) his conversion to the peyote cult. Around each of these critical turnings, there are a myriad of important events that mark the changes and continuities he makes in the course of his life. These are set as forces that affect him.

What I must do now, and indeed this will be the focus of the next section, is to reinterpret some of the important aspects of Crashing Thunder's life. In this we will see if a reasonable reinterpretation of the life events in his life history can provide an understanding
of him in his cultural setting.

**Reinterpreting Crashing Thunder**

First, I will provide a general overview of who the Winnebago are and where they live, the condition of Winnebago culture about the time of Radin's fieldwork (which will include a brief comment on the Peyote cult and its effects on the Winnebago) and finally a brief introduction to who Crashing Thunder was.

At the time of contact, from Vimont's description of 1640, the Winnebago were located "on the shores of the second Freshwater Sea (Green Bay)....This was on the information of Nicolet who had visited the region about 1634" (Kinietz 1975:308). In 1671 Dablon located Winnebago living on Green Bay (Ibid., 1975:309). Radin (1970:77) also describes Winnebago traditions which speak only of Green Bay as their original habitat, but that

Within 50 years of the landing of Nicollet the places were entirely shifted. Winnebago villages are found scattered all along the Fox River and Lake Winnebago, the Sauk and Fox and Kickapoo are on their way farther south, and the Potawatomi are in possession of the southern shore of Green Bay and the western shore of Lake Michigan. Later still we find the Winnebago extending all along the Wisconsin River and west of it to the Mississippi, and, at the same time, occupying the territory south of Lake Winnebago through the region of the Four Lakes, the shores of Lake Koshkonong and further down along the Rock River into Illinois. Their eastern boundary was determined by the Potawatomi.
Generally the Winnebago occupied the south side of Green Bay extending inland to Lake Winnebago and south along Lake Michigan (Murdock and O'Leary 1975:184). They possess a plains Indian culture and speak a Siouan language related to Iowa-Oto. They numbered 2,832 persons in 1970 (Ibid., 1975:184).

At the time of Radin's fieldwork the Winnebago lived on two reservations, one in northeastern Nebraska and the other in west-central Wisconsin. This was only one of the many changes in original Winnebago culture that Radin would have noticed. Similarly, by the time Radin visited the Winnebago in 1908, direct native-to-white culture change included the Winnebagos' use of Euro-American foods, houses, clothing, and many of the other aspects of Euro-American culture which now have become part of the Winnebagos' lives. With the decline of traditional subsistence techniques, which included hunting, fishing, some agriculture and gathering, many Winnebago took up trapping for the fur market. By 1944 they were spending most of their summers harvesting various Wisconsin and Nebraska farm crops as farm labourers, but still maintained their trapping practices during the winter. There were still a few Winnebago who lived a semi-nomadic life at this time (Oestreich 1944:124).

Changes in personal attitudes were observable among the Winnebago early in this century. Young people were
generally more "progressive" and better educated than the older and more conservative elements of the Winnebago tribe. This led to a contrast in attitudes between the "older" and "younger" generations (Oestreich 1944:120).

Oestreich has not picked a particular age to denote older or younger. Instead she suggests that in 1944 somewhere between the ages of 45 and 50 seems to be a dividing line. Those who are more "progressive", more acculturated, were younger than 45 or 50 while those who were more conservative in 1944 tended to be older than 45 or 50. Oestreich provides one such example of this change in attitudes.

The young people, through contact with the older generation, or by taking part in tourist-trade ceremonials, are apt to know the old dances and songs, but seem to feel that these things are pointless or merely a means of making a living. They have been living in an unstable, changing society since birth and follow along in the uncertain Indian-white pattern of culture with no particular ambitions or interests in what it may eventually produce in their own futures.

On the other hand,

Many of the older people...can remember when the Winnebago retained enough of their original culture to have a fairly complete and working social organization. They blame all the misfortunes of the tribe on the young people, who according to the old people, do just as they please in matters of morals, ethics and religion, and they furthermore have no respect for the opinions of the older members of the tribe...A few realize that the unhappy
plight of the younger generation is but one of the many changes in their society brought on by the breakdown of tribal organization due to contact with white religion, liquor, and government (Oestreich 1944:120-121).

Another type of change is found in the Winnebago modification of some aspect of white culture with a number of elements of their original culture to suit their needs. One such example is the introduction of the peyote religion and the Native American Church with the teachings of Christ and a translation of the Bible. Oestreich (1944:122) believes that "The Peyote religion is basically Christian, stressing the literal acceptance of the Bible and the strict following of Christ's teachings."

Radin (1914b; 1937; 1970) believed otherwise. His reasons for doubting the Christian basis of the peyote cult are found in his study of its introduction into the Winnebago culture.

John Rave was the first person to introduce the peyote to the Winnebago. He was introduced and converted to it in 1893 while in Oklahoma. Soon after, he returned to his Winnebago home and began to "convert" people to peyote. To judge from Radin's (1914b:9) interpretation of Rave's words, "his first belief in the peyote had nothing of the nature of a conversion to a new religion. It seems to have been similar to the average Winnebago attitude toward a medical herb obtained either as a gift
or through purchase. There is only one new note—stimulation by a narcotic." Radin believed that other than the actual use of the narcotic everything else seemed to have been typically Winnebago, and in consonance with their shamanistic practices.

Rave's testimony and that of others seems to have emphasized the curative aspects of the peyote. Rave suggested that the peyote cured him of a disease. When his wife finally consented to take peyote she was similarly cured of the same disease. Rave gives a number of instances in which venereal diseases and consumption were cured by the use of peyote. Rave relied principally upon the great curative powers of the peyote as its major benefit. Most of the Winnebago who were converted by Rave suggested that it was the particular curative effects of the peyote that convinced them to take it. In other words, there was little of a "new" religion connected with it at first (Radin 1914b:9,13).

In fact a quick glance at the peyote ceremony indicates a number of old cultural elements being continued. For example, Rave would paint the face of an initiate with 'holy water'. While this has the appearance of the Christian baptism, it is more likely a continuation of a prominent feature in the shaman's treatment of a disease. In fact Rave spoke of the practice as such (Radin 1914b:2). Rave also would use the rattle and sing peyote songs while
the initiate would eat the peyote; another part of the shaman's practice. Rave's attitude throughout, both from his own testimony and from that of others, seems to have been practically the old attitude of a Winnebago shaman.

It also "must be regarded as significant that other of the characteristics of the old religious experiences have become associated with the peyote--the hearing of voices, a visit to the home of God, the gift of song, etc. In a similar manner, the power of a shaman, such as the foretelling of events, reading the thoughts of others, etc., have been connected with it" (Radin 1914b:21). On the whole, then,

...the extension of the Winnebago cultural background seems to have been so instantaneous that as far as the specific cultural traits of the Winnebago are concerned there was no introduction of a new element. This view does not, of course, interfere in the least with the fact that to the Winnebago themselves the presence of peyote represented the introduction of a new element (Radin 1914b:9).

Before turning to the topic of the introduction of Christian element into the peyote ceremony it might be useful to understand why it was that the conservative Winnebago disliked Rave's introduction of the peyote religion. At every phase of the peyote cult's development Rave had to contend with the hostility of the conservative members of his tribe.

To review: In the beginning there was very little
difference between the beliefs relating to peyote and those connected with the old Winnebago medicinal plants (Radin 1914b:17). Similarly, to one Winnebago

...the eating of the peyote gave the same magical powers as were formerly associated with membership in the Medicine Dance; to another, the visions were direct blessings from God, directing him to perform certain actions. To a third, faithfulness to the teachings of the peyote cult became associated with a certainty of reaching God, of being able to take the right road in the journey to the spirit land... In its totality, the atmosphere of the peyote cult became thus highly charged with the old Winnebago background (Radin 1914b:15-16).

But if the only thing Rave's converts brought to the cult as specific additions were more Winnebago; and with that, the emotional and cultural setting of the traditional religious background, then why was there so much hostility toward the peyote from the conservative Winnebago? Radin (194b:17-18) believes that they were not against it because they thought that it was of alien origin but because "the teachings of the peyote departed from those of their ancestors, and that the peyote people were aping the habits of the whites."

Radin (1933:202) suggests that all the overt Christian dogmas were introduced into the peyote cult between 1905 and 1910 by a Winnebago named Albert Hensley. Hensley had been brought up in a devout Episcopal family and brought many of these Christian elements to the cult.
For example, he introduced the Bible so that it became one of the sacred objects in the cult, the reading of the Bible, the Christian exegesis, etc. Radin (1914b:10) explains that Hensley

...revolutionized the entire cult by introducing the reading of the Bible and positioning the dogma that the peyote opened the Bible to the understanding of the people; and by adding a number of Christian practices, such as, perhaps, the interpretation of giving public testimony and Bible interpretation. He too had been in Oklahoma for a long time. He brought with him many peyote songs, generally in other languages, and dealing with Christian ideas, upon which subsequently Winnebago songs were modeled. He introduced likewise either baptism itself, or an interpretation of baptism, and induced Rave to attempt a union with the Christian church.

To Rave all this was of no special consequence. As long as the peyote remained supreme and the ritualistic procedure which he had originated was not questioned everything would be fine. Hensley could introduce these elements as long as the fundamental interpretation of the peyote itself was not challenged. The Bible, in other words, could be interpreted in terms of the peyote but not vice versa. To Rave, "the peyote was the principal element; and if Hensley chose to insist that the Bible was only intelligible to those who partook of the peyote, why, that naturally fell within its magical powers" (Radin 1914b:11).
Finally Hensley, a much younger man than Rave, conceited, quick-tempered, subject to epileptic fits, dogmatic, having a strong mixture of Puritan Protestant ideas, questioned Rave's idea of peyote being the principal element of the cult (Radin 1914b:11). Hensley thereupon seceded, taking with him a number of followers, most of which by 1911 had rejoined Rave's group of peyote-eaters. From then Hensley ceased to be any kind of force, although Rave retained a number of Hensley's additions. The peyote religion continues to be an important factor in the lives of many Winnebago.

Despite this constant and long-continued process of change which included the change in subsistence techniques, the onslaught of Christian missionaries, the peyote religion, the influence of various government agencies, etc., a surprising amount of traditional culture remained intact. Oestreicher (1944:123-124) found many examples of Winnebago clan organization, the religious societies, the Medicine Lodge which, in 1944, still played an important part in people's lives.

Crashing Thunder, otherwise known as Sam Blowsnake, the individual from whom Radin collected an autobiography during the period between 1908 and 1913 was a Winnebago. He was brought up during a time of great culture change for the Winnebago and subsequently was caught between two cultures. He was a member of the Thunderbird clan and
became a member in the Medicine Lodge. Later he joined the peyote-eaters, but his life is best told by him. Crashing Thunder begins his autobiography with his early youth.

1. Early Youth and the Lie: The First Critical Turning

Shortly before he was born, Crashing Thunder informs us, his mother had been told by one of her uncles, a very prominent member of the tribe, "You are about to give birth to a child who will not be an ordinary individual" (Radin 1926:1). Crashing Thunder begins the story of his life with this statement. Although he makes this the theme of his life story, he does not attempt to prove or disprove the prophecy. In effect, we are taken into his confidence from the very beginning. We will see that he never confuses his reputation, his own explorations of himself, with his "real" self. At all times, he accepts and mostly approves of himself in an honest way. As we go through his life events we will be able to see how he keeps the three separate until the final merge at the time of his conversion to the peyote cult. At the time of his conversion he recognizes it at once as a fundamental religious experience, the visionary experience "which his marked non-suggestibility when a child prevented him from then obtaining" (Radin 1926:xx).
Early in the autobiography, Crashing Thunder provides a complete description of the seasonal round of subsistence activities while he was a young man. The Winnebago still held to a traditional hunting and gathering way of life. Crashing Thunder's father, a famous hunter, always hunted and trapped during the winter period. After they had hunted for a considerable time in one place, they would move. They usually travelled on foot, carrying all of their equipment. This is the way they would live until spring time when they would move close to a stream where Crashing Thunder's father could hunt, trap muskrat, mink, otter, beaver, etc., and fish. In the summer, his family would move to a community where other Winnebago also would return. Summertime activities centered around picking berries. 

"[G]enerally the people [would] go out in bands and settle here and there" (Radin 1963:10). At this time of the year families would move from one band settlement to another visiting, staying for days or sometimes weeks at a time. In the fall of the year, people would pick berries, and when hunting season opened the larger communities would break up again.

During the fall and early winter, while he was still very young (no actual age is given), Crashing Thunder was instructed by his father to fast. In fact, his father repeatedly urged him to fast, saying:
Do not be afraid of the burnt remains of the lodge center-pole (he is talking about the charcoal with which people fasting would blacken their faces). Those which are the true possessions of men, the apparel of men, and also the gift of doctoring—these powers that are spread out before you—do try and obtain one of them (he was accustomed to saying to us) (Radin 1963:4).

Crashing Thunder considered himself to be:

...a good-tempered boy... At boyhood my father told me to fast and I obeyed. In the winter every morning I would crush charcoal and blacken my face with it. I would arise very early and do it. As soon as the sun rose I would go outside and sit looking at the sun and I would cry to the spirits (Radin 1963:3).

Both Crashing Thunder and one of his brothers used to fast together.

One year, at a special sacred location, at the "place where all the leaders used to give their feasts", a lodge was built. It was built on a special spot under the tree where a black-hawk's nest was located. It was in this lodge where Crashing Thunder and his brother were to fast. Crashing Thunder stated that "(i)t was said that if anyone fasted at such a place for four nights he would always be blessed with victory and the power to cure the sick" (Radin 1963:6).

The two placed their family's war-bundle in the lodge. Radin (1963:6) explains that each family possessed
at least one war-bundle. This particular family

...possessed one, and most of the 'power' resident in this particular bundle was supposed to have been bestowed by the thunderbirds and night-spirits. Perhaps that is why a black-hawk's nest was selected for the fasting-lodge, the black-hawk being regarded as a thunderbird (Radin 1963:6).

Crashing Thunder explains the visionary experiences a Winnebago boy is supposed to have, as follows:

'The first night spent there one imagined oneself surrounded by spirits whose whisperings were heard outside of the lodge,' they said. The spirits would even whistle. I would be frightened and nervous, and if I remained there I would be molested by large monsters, fearful to look upon. Even (the bravest) might be frightened, I was told. Should I, however, get through the night, I would on the following night be molested by ghosts whom I would hear speaking outside. They would say things that might cause me to run away. Towards morning they would even take my blanket away from me. They would grab hold of me and drive me out of the lodge, and they would not stop until the sun rose. If I was able to endure the third night, on the fourth night I would really be addressed by spirits, it was said, who would bless me, saying, "I bless you. We had turned you over to the (monsters, etc.) and that is why they approached you, but you overcame them and now they will not be able to take you away. Now you may go home, for with victory and long life we bless you and also with the power of healing the sick. Nor shall you lack wealth (literally, 'people's possessions'). So go home and eat, for a large war-party is soon to fall upon you who, as soon as the sun rises in the morning, will give the war whoop and if you do not go home now, they will kill you."
Thus the spirits would speak to me. However if I did not do the bidding of this particular spirit, then another one would address me and say very much the same sort of thing. So they would speak until the break of day, and just before sunrise a man in warrior's regalia would come and peep in. He would be a scout. Then I would surely think a war-party had come upon me, I was told.

Then another spirit would come and say, "Well, grandson, I have taken pity upon you and I bless you with all the good things that the earth holds. Go home now for the war-party is about to rush upon you." And if I then went home, as soon as the sun rose the war whoop would be given. The members of the war party would give the war whoop all at the same time. They would rush upon me and capture me and after the fourth one had counted coup, then they would say, "Now then, grandson, this we did to teach you. Thus you shall act. You have completed your fasting." Thus they would talk to me, I was told. This war party was composed entirely of spirits, I was told, spirits from the heavens and from the earth; indeed all the spirits that exist would all be there. These would all bless me. They also told me that it would be a very difficult thing to accomplish this particular fasting (Radin 1963:6-8).

During this sacred time and at this sacred place both boys fasted. On the first night nothing happened to Crashing Thunder. He did not hear or experience any of the activities of the spirits. The second night, even after the late night visit from his father who sang medicine songs and narrated the sacred fasting stories concerning fasting precepts, precepts concerning social position and the values of medicines and precepts concerning marriage, there was still no spirit vision. The third night was identical to the second:
I stood beside him (his father) without any clothing on me...and holding tobacco in each hand I uttered my cry to the spirits as my father sang. He sang war-bundle songs and he wept as he sang. I also wept as I uttered my cry to the spirits. When he was finished he told me some sacred stories and then went home (Radin 1963:8).

The fourth night produced no better results. Then, as the fifth day dawned upon Crashing Thunder he told his elder brother that he had been blessed by the spirits:

However I was not telling the truth. I was hungry and I also know that on the following night we were going to have a feast and that I would have to utter my cry to the spirits again. I dreaded that. So I went home. When I got there I told my people the story I had told my brother; that I had been blessed and that the spirits had told me to eat. I was not speaking the truth, yet they gave me the food that is carefully prepared for those who have been blessed (Radin 1926:26).

This is the very first critical turning in Crashing Thunder's life and it can be said to have affected his life up until his conversion to the peyote religion. The vision was the essential and salient religious experience which ideally every member of the Winnebago tribed obtained in early youth. Crashing Thunder, Radin (1963:8) explains, expected some definite inward change and because he did not personally receive it, he considered himself as not having been blessed. Further,
Most youths got it. It was something of a disgrace not to. Yet he did not. In spite of his dishonesty persuading his father that he had been properly blessed, he never deluded himself about the matter (Radin 1926:xx).

This experiential state of dreaming and vision is integrated into the cultural pattern in that each Winnebago boy is expected to have some kind of subjective experience that can be called a vision. The cultural representations re-enacted in the visions are themselves brought into being through reflexive negotiation with the experience of each individual youth. In this respect it is in this special fasting event that the visionary experience becomes meaningful.

Up until the moment of his lie, Crashing Thunder's life had been very much like every other Winnebago youth's life. But now he was different and, as I will point out shortly, he begins to live and act out his lie. Most important, though, is that he recognizes the lie for what it is. "What neither life nor his own nature could do... was to delude him into believing that he...had had an experience when he knew he had not yet had it" (Radin 1926: xxiii). While it seems that he did not believe that he was anything other than what he was, i.e., a liar, the truth of this fact seems to have deeply affected him.

There are a number of other examples that indicate to us that from the very early years of his life, Crashing
Thunder is not strong-charactered enough to admit his failure openly. Instead, he falls into other deceptions. He deceives his parents and he deceives his associates.

All of this is exemplified in Radin's (1926:xxiii) suggestion that from the first time he and Crashing Thunder sat down to create this autobiography, the latter showed "an unusual insistence in separating what he has actually experienced from what he should have experienced. Here is the major psychological split that can be exemplified from his actual experiences during this period in his life. I think this bears some comparison with the tendency of "saved" people to detail their former weaknesses in contrast to their received, blessed, new condition. To a much greater extent, though, I believe from what Radin suggests, that Crashing Thunder was intelligent, introspective, and self-reflective and that it was these qualities that made him such a gifted consultant.

Crashing Thunder describes how he acquired the habit of eating rapidly and how he acquired the particular habit of taking the sleeping blanket away from those with whom he slept. He describes these events with meticulous care. For Crashing Thunder, his life during this early period meant something very specific, and he describes in some detail the significant experiences of his early childhood.

Two other experiences predominate at this time. Crashing Thunder remembered when he first began to have a
memory of events in his life and afterwards, the first stirrings of sex. He describes with some delight the time when he "secretly got the desire to make myself pleasing to the opposite sex" (Radin 1963:5).

...[T]here were four girls who always carried the wood. When these girls went out to carry the wood my older brother and I would play around with them a good deal. We did this even although we were fasting at the time...When the girls with whom I used to play (in secret) moved away I became very lonesome. In the evenings I used to cry. I longed for them greatly, and they had moved far away (Radin 1963:6).

There are other experiences that Crashing Thunder more humorously recounts.

It was at this time that I desired to court women and I tried it. However, I did not know the proper thing to say. The young men always went around at night courting. I used to mix with the women in the day time but when I went to them at night I did not know what to say. A brother of mine, the oldest, seemed to know how to do it. He was a handsome man and he offered to show me how...When girls get their menses they always have to live apart. It was to such a one that we went. We were very cautious about the matter for the girls were always carefully watched as their relatives knew that it was customary to court them at such a time...

Once I went to see a young girl and arrived there before the people had retired, so I waited near the lodge until they would go to sleep. As I lay there waiting, listening to them, I fell asleep. When I woke up it was morning and as the people got up they found me sleeping there. I felt very much ashamed of myself and they laughed at me...
On another occasion... I was crawling into a lodge when someone woke up as I was about halfway in. I immediately stopped and remained quiet and waited for the people to fall asleep again. However in waiting, I myself, fell asleep. When they woke me up in the morning I was laying halfway inside the lodge, asleep. After waking me up they asked me whether I would not stay for breakfast, but I immediately ran away... I used to go out courting and be among the lodges all night, and yet, most of the time, I did not succeed in speaking to any of the girls. However I did not mind that for I was doing it in order to be among the girls and I enjoyed it. I would even go around telling people that I was really keeping company with some of the girls. I used to say this to some of my men associates. In reality, however, I did not get much more than a smile from one or two of the girls, but even that I prized as a great thing (my emphasis, Radin 1963:11-12).

In the same way that he confesses to being unsuccessful with having a vision guest, he confesses as having been unsuccessful with the young women of his tribe. While knowing the truth behind both these lies he still pretends to being successful. Similarly, although Crashing Thunder never explicitly stated it, it is believed that any contact with menstruating women, or any of the objects in any way associated with them, will destroy the power of individuals that are temporarily sacred (Radin 1963:5). Crashing Thunder, as a fasting youth, was regarded as such. So any contact with a menstruating woman would have rendered him powerless as an initiate seeking a vision. Whether he states this or not, it could have had an effect on him. On the one hand, he does not speak directly of any connection between the two
events and neither does Radin, which leads me to suggest it was not particularly important to Crashing Thunder. He seems to suggest that it was an event feared more by his parents.

At that time my parents greatly feared that I might come in contact with women who were having their menses, so I went out secretly. My parents were even afraid to have me cross the path over which a woman in such a condition had passed. The reason they worried so much about it at that particular time was because I was to fast as soon as autumn came; and it was for that reason they did not wish me to be near menstruating women, for were I to grow up in the midst of such women I would assuredly be weak and of little account. Such was their reason (Radin 1963:5).

On the other hand, in the narrative, Crashing Thunder relates this event first just before he speaks about the importance of the fast that he experienced. The set of events, as he relates them in retrospect as a middle-aged man, might have had some effect on him, but, again, it is never explicitly suggested. If we are to suggest any relationship between his "pollution" and subsequent failure to have a vision it will have to come directly from the juxtaposition of events in his life at this period of time as he describes them.

It is my suggestion that there is an insufficient amount of information that can correspond to Crashing Thunder's experience of either his dealings with menstruating
women or with his failure to have a vision. Consequently, any meaningful correspondence between the two events must remain open. Similarly, I do not want to reduce Crashing Thunder's experiences to singular event-to-event relationships with their subsequent interpretation of the meanings of each event. If I cannot form direct relationships from what Crashing Thunder says and does then I will suggest possible correspondences between events and their meaning for Crashing Thunder. But, these are open suggestions and should be considered only as possible connections taken usually from my reading of Radin's ethnographic works.

2. Events Leading Up to the Medicine Dance and More
Deception: The Second Critical Turning.

Once when Crashing Thunder was still young he became very ill. It was incumbent upon his brother-in-law, Thunder Cloud, the husband of his oldest sister, to cure him. It had been said that Thunder Cloud was living his third life as a human being on earth. He was indeed a powerful shaman and medicine man, who could do both harmful and beneficial things to and for the Winnebago. More importantly, though, among Crashing Thunder's family he was feared as being bad, "a poisoner" who had come from the spirits in the form of a reincarnated man and, if displeased with people, would poison them. Thunder Cloud
claimed control over Crashing Thunder's household and the latter's "family would do nothing without consulting him" (Radin 1926:13).

Radin (1963:13) explains that Thunder Cloud did have a remarkable influence on Crashing Thunder. Crashing Thunder reinforces Radin's statement.

My brother-in-law thought a good deal of me. He was a holy man and a shaman. One day he said to me, 'Brother-in-law, I am going to bless you although you will have to fast for it. I was once blessed by four spirits, brothers called Good giant-Cannibals. They said that they had never before blessed any one. They promised me that if I ever got into any difficulty they would help me. They blessed me with long life. Now this blessing I will give to you. If, for four nights, you fast without a break, these giants will speak to you.' Thus he spoke to me. Then he continued, 'These four brothers are called Good-giant, Good-heart, Good-as-he-walk-about, Good-where-he-lifts-his-foot-from' (Radin 1926:78).

Radin (1963:13) suggests that "it was not uncommon for an older man to bestow his blessing upon a younger man. As indicated here, the young man would in any case have to fast for it. However, it was a foregone conclusion that he would receive it in such a case."

It was at this time in Crashing Thunder's life that he began to participate in the war-bundle feasts. It was absolutely essential in order to obtain a blessing or derive any real advantage from participation in a ceremony to be "lowly at heart, and also keep one's attention fixed
firmly and exclusively on the fast or the ceremony. [A person's] thoughts are not supposed to wander for a moment" (Radin 1963:15). Interestingly enough Crashing Thunder confesses that while throughout the ceremony he

...was not in the least conscious of any dreams or blessings. All that I was aware of was that all the people around me were taking pity on me. Throughout it all I had my mind fixed on women. In doing these things I imagined that I had risen greatly in women's estimation. Even though I tried to render myself pitiable in the sight of the spirits yet through it all, my thoughts were centered upon them. I was never lowly at heart and never really desired the blessing of the spirits. All that I thought of was that I was a great man (Radin 1926:86).

Crashing Thunder felt that since his thoughts were so scattered in different directions he could not hope to obtain the desired blessings. Some spirits are more difficult to approach than others. Blessings from the black-hawk, regarded as the chief of the thunderbirds and as one of the most difficult spirits to obtain blessings from, were customary in Crashing Thunder's family. He explained his lack of success as due to his failure to "concentrate" his attention properly. Instead his thought and attention were directed towards women and his own self-image as a great man in the eyes of women.

While his attention was being deflected elsewhere during ceremonies, his interests began to turn towards the ways of the white population in the area. For example, when
Crashing Thunder's family was camped close to a town, he used to get in the habit of visiting the white communities. Here, he explains, he "used to steal a great deal."

Similarly, when his father's trapping and hunting activities brought him into an area close to the various small farming communities, as they did over the years of his youth, he and his family would go into towns to sell craft products.

We also used to circulate a petition asking for any help people cared to give us. Whenever they went on this kind of trip I always went along with them, for sometimes people would take pity on us and give us some old clothes. Sometimes we would even get a good meal at some farmer's house. Whenever the older people went to town circulating petitions for help we youngsters always went along. We always took our bows and arrows with us for the Whites wanted to see how well we could shoot. Often they placed five-cent pieces on some object at a considerable distance and had us shoot at them. We generally hit a number. I would also let my brother shoot twenty-five cent pieces that I held between my fingers and he never hit my fingers. We would often make as much as five dollars in this way and this money we always gave to our parents (Radin 1926:88).

Contact with the white population was an influence that seems to have provided an important, useful conceptual model for him to exploit in his adult years. These "theatrical stunts" and some of the native performance "arts" like the Medicine Dance were used by Crashing Thunder as a means for a livelihood in the country fairs and circuses that travelled this area of the United States during this period.
There was also another event that had an effect on Crashing Thunder. He was adopted by his "grandfather."\(^3\)

This grandfather

...had just lost a son, a young man and the last of his children. They had all died...After that I stayed with my grandfather. He thought a great deal of me and I got along very well in every way. He was a great man, one who had great knowledge of medicine (Radin 1926:89).

It was at this time that Crashing Thunder was introduced to white education. A school had been built at Tomah, Wisconsin, and Crashing Thunder wanted very much to attend. Crashing Thunder was given the permission of his grandfather and he spent a year in the white school system. Shortly thereafter, his grandfather died.

Upon his death, a Medicine Dance was to be held and Crashing Thunder's father was picked to represent the dead man in a Medicine Dance performance. Crashing Thunder was asked to take his father's place. His father was getting old and thought that he could not control his urge to drink liquor. He, therefore, thought himself unable to live up to the teachings of the Thunderbird Clan lodge. Crashing Thunder accepted and was duly initiated into the Medicine Dance to represent his grandfather.

There were four preparatory nights before the Medicine Dance performance during which the "nephew" (the initiate is always called "nephew") learns a great deal
about sacred affairs. As Crashing Thunder explains, he "was anxious not to be an ordinary person any longer but to be a medicine man" (Radin 1963:19). Each night they instructed him in many of the songs and myths of the medicine society, especially in those directly related to the medicine dance performance. The morning of the day of the medicine dance Crashing Thunder recalls that

...they preached to me and they told me that the most fearful things imaginable would happen to me if I made public any of this affair. The world would come to an end, they said. Then again they told me to keep everything a secret, and that if I told anyone, I would surely die. After that they showed me how to fall down and lie guivering (on the ground) and how to appear dead. I was very much disappointed for I had far more exalted idea of it (the [ritual] shooting). 'Why, it amounts to nothing, I thought. I also thought then that probably many of the sacred things of which they told me were not true either. However, I kept on and did as I was told to do for I had been taught to deceive in the ceremony in the wilderness. As soon as I was proficient in the act (of feigning death), we started back (they had been in the countryside during these four days)...

They told me that I would become just like them in body, but I did not have the sensation of any change in me. All that I had felt was that I had become a deceiver in one of earthmaker's creations...

We are simply deceiving the spectators. When we were through, those in my band told me that in two years I would be able to imitate the sounds of animals as much as I wanted to, for I had taken the place of a great medicine man...I was told that I...would be a great medicine man immediately. That pleased me. I was given a grey squirrel skin for a medicine bag and they told me that it was alive and that I could make it cry out loud. I had heard them
do it and had always envied them in this regard (my emphasis, Radin 1963:20-22).

As if this were not enough of a disillusionment, this whole experience was given added emphasis when Crashing Thunder was

...told that if a person initiated into the Medicine Dance did not regard the affair as sacred, that this was a sign that he was to die soon. This frightened me a great deal, for I had been thinking of the whole matter in a light manner and I felt that this was an indication that I was really going to die soon. I therefore did my best to consider it a sacred ceremony, but in spite of it all I did not succeed (Radin 1963:22).

After this event Crashing Thunder went to live with another "grandfather" and from him he was taught all of the pertinent details of the Medicine Dance. Before long, Crashing Thunder had learned all of the sacred songs and dances the old man knew. After that, when Crashing Thunder was invited to a Medicine Dance he would do all the singing and dancing. From that time on, he regarded the Medicine Dance as a sacred affair and he began to take part in the ceremonies "for the greatness it possessed" (Radin 1963:22). But this boasting was complimentary with the urgings of sex which figured prominently in the Medicine Dance ceremony and Crashing Thunder "boasted the greatness of the ceremony in the presence of women in order to make a good impression on them" (Radin 1963:22). As if this were not enough, he
began to travel with the fairs and circuses as an "Indian song and dance" performer. He explains that he "was fond of dancing and now (he) had a chance to go around and dance all the time and even get paid for it. I had money all the time" (Radin 1963:22). Crashing Thunder never did go back to school but rather began to get involved in the white man's world in other ways.

At the age of twenty-three he was convinced by the grandfather he was living with to get married to a certain girl. As Crashing Thunder explains:

I had courted women ever since I was old enough to do so. Every time I did anything I always thought of women in connection with it. I tried to court as many as I could. I wanted badly to be a beau, for I considered it a great thing. I wanted to be a ladies' man (Radin 1926:127).

We have seen in Crashing Thunder's childhood how his interest in women took on its various forms and substance. Now we are given the opportunity to see the development of his courtship patterns and the various experiences that he had with women and with drinking liquor.

Shortly after his marriage to his first wife Crashing Thunder left her. This was primarily a family matter, and he did it to satisfy his grandfather. This event was a consequence of traditional Winnebago beliefs, as explained to Crashing Thunder by his grandfather.
'Grandson, it is said that this girl you have married is not a maiden but really a widow, and I am not pleased with it, as this is your first marriage and you are a young man. I suppose you know whether this is true or not whether she is a maiden or not? 'Yes', I answered. 'You can stop living with her if you wish', he said (Radin 1963:24).

Crashing Thunder did stop living with her. This was the beginning of a period of other less formal involvements with many women and his subsequent introduction to the use of liquor. He also began to work with the various travelling shows and fairs that journeyed through this area of the United States.

His experiences with liquor and women were varied and extensive and he quickly acquired a liking for both. This was also the time that his relatives first saw him drunk, an activity he attempted to keep secret. After his first few experiences with liquor he decided that he did not want to drink any longer. That year he went back to his family's hunting camp. In this camp he found not only his family but also his grandfather and one of the two women that he had lived with during the period in which he had travelled with the shows. This woman Crashing Thunder reports

...used some medicine on me...A medicine feast was made and my scalp was operated upon. It was said that she took one of my hairs and put it in a medicine bundle of hers. It was said that she did this
in order that I might not leave her, and that if I left her I would get a headache, and perhaps even die. Thus they said. However, this was discovered, and my scalp was operated upon and the hair she had taken was washed in medicine. Consequently nothing happened to me.

After this I began to try and live with as many women as I could, for I had gotten the notion that I was a lady-killer. So I tried to live with as many women as I could (Radin 1963:26).

This was also the period of Crashing Thunder's life during which he began to drink liquor steadily. One major event reinforced his steady drunkenness and continued dissipation. It was at about this time that his older brother was murdered. Crashing Thunder relates this event in the following way:

We had grown up together and were hardly ever separated from each other. I felt heartbroken over the matter. I longed to kill the one who had murdered him. I felt that I would be better off if I were dead myself. That is how I felt. After that I began to drink much more. I wanted to die drinking, that is what I used to say, while I was drinking so heavily. Up to this time I had drunk only secretly, but now I drank heavily and openly. After a while I became a confirmed drunkard. I had by this time quite forgotten that I wanted to die, and really enjoyed the drinking very much (Radin 1963:26).

It was during this period of his life that he began drinking with women, and when they and others he drank with were drunk he would steal from them. He no longer drank secretly but rather he drank openly. He also learned how to box
and would give the people he drank with severe beatings. People, including his family, were frightened of him for these reasons. He was about six feet, two inches tall and weighed two hundred and fifty pounds (Radin 1926:134).

Summing up his perception of himself during this period of his life, he considered himself to be arrogant. He wandered around visiting different women. In one instance that lasted some months, he was cohabiting with four women at the same time. He was a self-confessed liar, braggart and thief. He had four children born to him, each from a different woman. Even so, he continued to court women and drink; all his money went to such pursuits.

3. The Recognition of Power: The Third Critical Turning

At this time Crashing Thunder realized that he was a heavy drinker but at the same time this served his purposes for he

...began to boast about being a holy man. I claimed that I had been blessed by spirits and I kept on claiming this again and again. I was, of course, not telling the truth, for I had never felt the stirring of anything of that kind within me...Generally when I was just about drunk and on the verge of getting boisterous, yet still conscious of what I am saying, I would make this claim. Then I would say that I was blessed by a Grizzly-Bear spirit, that it had blessed me with the power of being uncontrollable; that I had been taught certain songs and these I would sing at the top of my voice. I used to imitate a grizzly bear and begin to exert my power. Then the people (around) would (try to) hold
me. It generally required a large number of people to control me. Now I thought this (exhibition of mine) an act worthy of praise (my emphasis, Radin 1963:27-28).

Radin (1963:28) believes that although Crashing Thunder knew that he was lying about these experiences of obtaining the Grizzly-Bear spirit that there is much more to this experience than simply calling it a lie. The power of being uncontrollable was the characteristic gift of the grizzly-bear and Crashing Thunder was correct in using this as an interpretation of his drinking activities. In other words, there is more to this connection than Crashing Thunder realizes. For example, he also makes other comparable claims:

After a while I began to claim that I was blessed by many spiritual beings. Some time after I said that I was one of the giant beings called Good-Giants, that I was the second-born one of these and that my name was Good-Heart; that I had become reincarnate among human beings, dwelling with them. All this I would claim and they would believe me (Radin 1963:28).

Although this claim is an unusual one, it seems it is not untypical of Crashing Thunder's world of experiences. Radin (1963:28) comments that:
(i)n the light of this statement, remembering that his brother-in-law (Thunder Cloud) had actually turned over to him the blessings he had obtained from these cannibal spirits, it seems reasonable to believe that S.B. (Crashing Thunder) is unjust to himself in insisting that he lied about these blessings.

Crashing Thunder recalls an incident that adds an interesting perspective to the effects of his so called "pretended blessing". Once when one of his nieces complained to him about the problems she encountered each time she gave birth to a child, each time she bore a child she barely managed to escape death, he told her of the powers he had and then told her what to do to prevent her from having such problems. In fact, in his estimation, he had "told her a tremendous falsehood. I said all of this because I was hungry. Then they gave me enough to appease my hunger." (Radin 1963:29).

Some time after this event took place Crashing Thunder was told that the woman was in excellent condition as he had claimed she would be if she followed his instructions. She had had an easy delivery and was in very good health. He explains further that he
...was surprised. Perhaps I am really a holy man, I thought.

After (this incident) I boasted even more (of my powers), for now I really thought I possessed sacred power. I therefore talked as those do who have knowledge of all spiritual beings that exist. I also spoke with the authority of a medicine man (Radin 1963:29).

This particular event gives focus to the question of two sets of relationships, one between Crashing Thunder and the spirits and the second between him and the nature of the acquisition and efficacy of spirit power. Apparently Crashing Thunder had not received the power to help a woman have an easy time of childbirth. He had not fasted for it, purchased it, nor had he been given it as a gift (Radin 1963:29). There is an important point to be made here about the nature of the relationships I have just described. Radin (1963:29) suggests that Crashing Thunder

...wanted to help (his niece), and, while strictly speaking he had no right to call upon the spirits who had not blessed him, yet every Winnebago had more or less the right to offer tobacco to any spirits he wished. (This was part of the offering Crashing Thunder made to the spirits for his niece)...To the practical minded among them there seems to have been the feeling that if you were to offer tobacco and murmur the proper prayers and be sincere in your desire for help, although the latter was absolutely necessary, the spirits would be likely to help you; that, as a matter of fact, they are constrained to help you. All this S.B. (Crashing Thunder) did. His success would have been accepted by any Winnebago as a proof that the spirits had harkened; for some it would have been regarded as a proof that he had been blessed.
But Crashing Thunder was genuinely surprised, for he believed that he had not yet, up to this point in his life, obtained the major warrant of the experience of being blessed. In other words, he had not yet been blessed; that is, he had not yet had a vision, a stirring of something that was within him that could be externalized and expressed in some form of power.

This is comparable also with what I explained earlier about Crashing Thunder's pretended acquisition of the power of the Grizzly-Bear Spirit. His drinking did have a strong inner effect on him although he did not know how it should have been interpreted. Whenever a Medicine Dance was given he would drink a good deal "and (frequently)... would knock people unconscious..." (Radin 1963:29). This he said was caused by the Grizzly-Bear Spirit, although he did not believe it himself. Generally Crashing Thunder's drinking began as a simple pleasure but it began to take on added dimensions of meaning, first as an escape mechanism, (he wanted to drink himself to death when he heard of his brother's murder), second as a means for acquiring money, (he would steal valuables from the people he drank with), and finally as a spiritual blessing of the Grizzly-Bear Spirit, (the "pretended" acquisition of special powers that would help him in acquiring more status, power and prestige in the eyes of the tribe and especially the women).

All of these experiences are inextricably woven
together as they texture his life. Crashing Thunder could not be tricked into thinking that any of these events were formed out of anything but superficial orders of experience. But might there be more to Crashing Thunder's experience than mere superficiality? Radin (1963:29) explains that Crashing Thunder's desire to appear powerful and important in each of these events played a minor role and was relatively unimportant. Crashing Thunder had done all that was technically required of him during his life to actively gain support for his endeavours and therefore many of the people believed him. Yet underlying this is the very serious suggestion of success in each of these events; that is, there was the sign of acquired during power in what he did for his niece, and there was the sign of the Grizzly-Bear Spirit as indicated in the violent acts he performed while he was intoxicated. Radin (1963:29) suggests, as a result, that Crashing Thunder was now "beginning to realize that power from the spirits could be obtained in another way."

Steager (1976:192), in a paper that he wrote on necessity, ambiguity and confusion in myth, has this to say about deception which applies altogether to Crashing Thunder. The suggestion is that for someone like Crashing Thunder,
...like ourselves, things must be what they seem—that is the only determinate logical way in which the world can be put together. This at least is what we place reliance upon, but there is always the possibility that we might be mistaken...if we are mistaken and things can be other than what they seem, we cannot know that this would be for it would be invisible to us. All that we would see would be the intrusion into the world of misguided actions, poor judgment, inexplicable changes in mood, misfortune, tragedy, etc. Now all of these are the constant companions of human life and raise the spectre that determinacy just might be always coming apart, necessity unravelling into the snare of delusion (Steager 1976:192).

In other words, what happens when the meaning of events remain obscure and elusive to Crashing Thunder's realm of experience? What happens if the personal significance of particular actions and events result in experience being interpreted in an ambiguous way? This is where a particular event in Crashing Thunder's life makes an exceptionally remarkable statement about Crashing Thunder personally and about an interpretive indeterminacy to the meaning he gives the events that make up his life.

In Crashing Thunder's case the events that formed and shaped his life, up to this point, had taken on an added dimension of meaning. In other words, their appearance remained for Crashing Thunder somewhat different than their significance. This was due primarily to his failure to have a vision, so that what events meant for a "blessed" Crashing Thunder created a gap between events as he saw them (their
appearance) and events as they were if he had correctly interpreted them (their significance). For example, his ability to cure his niece of the complications she usually had while giving birth to children left Crashing Thunder baffled and surprised. He, in effect, had misinterpreted these events and their outcome was something very much different than he had planned on.

The indeterminacy in Crashing Thunder's experiences indicates that events can become other than what they appear to be and what they appear to mean, which is different from what he thought they signified. Crashing Thunder relied on what his experiences seemed to mean to him and what events seemed to be, and he risked misrepresentation and misinterpretation. The result was a dilemma that he could not logically reconcile with these experiences.

From the event of his very first lie about the vision through to the deception of the Medicine Dance ceremony, which had a devastating impact upon him, Crashing Thunder learned a model of deception that became a general standard for him. In other words, misguidance, deception, trickery, theft and fraud provided a standard, an ethic and a value, upon which he could rely up to this point. This was evident when he went to work for the circus. During this time he often drank and fought. He did all this because he considered himself to be wild. He grew his hair long and "told people that...Trickster had
instructed me to do this and that he had blessed me" (Radin 1963:30). Crashing Thunder became a wife stealer, a thief and an adulterer.

By this time I was spending all my time drinking...Whenever I saw a person drunk I would steal whatever he had for that was what I was (a thief). If I saw a woman drunk, I would steal her, for that was what I was (an adulterer). What I was looking around for mainly was to induce a woman to live with me, for in this way I was able to get money from her. If any women wanted to marry me while staying with me, she would give me all the money she had. This is the kind of work I was doing. I would often, in this way, induce two or three (women) to live with me (Radin 1963:34).

In the interpretation of his own activities Crashing Thunder could not provide the safeguard against the possibility of things becoming other than what they seemed. He never really had the power (that comes from having a vision and being blessed) to express internal control or to knowingly and actively direct events. His experiences were bred of indeterminacy, ambiguity, deceit and deception, while in the experience of the event of curing his niece he created even more of the same for himself. At the level of personal adjustment and experience, a unique and complex integration occurred between events that form a 'life world', molded out of confusion, deception and delusion, and the possibility of events being other than what they are. Mirrored in this,
expression of the events that make up his life united with the potential that these events have in relation to his interpretation of them. Upon this the imagination works and begins to transform for Crashing Thunder his understanding of the significance of events. His interpretation of events and the choice of contexts he preferred to use, which were constructed through an act of the imagination, promoted ambiguity rather than understanding. Crashing Thunder, in effect, has been left unprotected, understanding only the superficiality of his experiences and the appearance of events.

Similarly, we also see Crashing Thunder relying on Trickster. In Trickster, Crashing Thunder finds a figure upon which he can model his behaviour. Radin (1963:30) suggests that Trickster is "not one of the bona fide spirits", but neither is it true that Crashing Thunder had been blessed by "real" spirits. Instead, as he acts from his early youth, Crashing Thunder's activities are formed out of lies and deception. He journeys through life doing the kinds of things Trickster is good at doing; i.e., stealing women, stealing people's valuables, adultery, etc. But finally, with the surprising success of the curing event Crashing Thunder had produced, Trickster seems to have tricked him. After his timely deception and trick of telling everyone that he was a holy man who had been blessed with many special powers, he suddenly found that
the events in his life were taking on new meaning. In effect, the meaning he gave to his experiences had lied to him and for the first time in his life, so far as we (and he) can tell, he was fooled.

It was also about this time in Crashing Thunder's life that he decided that he should collect war honours. His father and grandfathers had raised him so that he should desire them, so that he should not be like those who wear skirts (effeminate) (Radin 1926:148; 1963:35). This was one of the main reasons he gave for joining the Medicine Dance, so that he would not be ridiculed as being effeminate. He and a friend decided that it was time to obtain some external emblem of their bravery. Crashing Thunder asked of his friend at the time:

'[d]o we not always try and wear feathers at a Warrior Dance? Well, then, let us try to obtain war honors so that we can wear head ornaments.' So did we both speak to each other...We decided to kill a man of another tribe, we meant to perform an act of bravery (Radin 1926:148-149).

Four men led by Crashing Thunder went together to Potawatomi territory. They took ropes along because they were also going to steal horses, and if they came across a man, they would kill him. Horse stealing was also considered a praiseworthy feat. Crashing Thunder explained that one of the strong reasons why he wanted to do all of this was because he had admired the people who
had told stories of their experiences doing such things. The rest of the story is best told by Crashing Thunder.

We proceeded to a place where horses of other tribes used to pasture. Just as we got there we saw the owner of some of these horses and killed him. My friend killed him. Then we went home, and secretly I told my father all about it. I said to him, "Father, you said it was good to be a warrior and you encouraged me to fast and I did so. You encouraged me to give feasts and I did so. Now we have just returned from a trip. We were looking for war honors and the young people who were accompanying me decided that I should lead them. I told them that it was a difficult thing to lead warriors, my father had always told me, and that I had always been given to understand that a person could lead a war-party only in consequence of a specific blessing received from the spirits. I was not conscious of having received any such, I told him. Thus I spoke. However, they made me an offering of tobacco as they asked me, and I accepted the tobacco saying that I would at least make an offering of tobacco for them. Then I offered tobacco to the Thunderbirds and asked them for rain, that we might walk in the protection and power of rain. This offering we made in the morning and it rained all that day. Then we went to the place where we knew that we could find horses. When we got there we met the owner of the horses and spoke to him. We accompanied him to a carpenter shop nearby, and there killed him. I struck his dead body, counted coup first, and announced my new name, as I gave a war-whoop. I shouted 'Big Winnebago has counted coup on his man.' Then the others counted coup also. We searched his pockets and found medicine and money in them. The money we divided among ourselves. After that we cut out his heart, for we had heard that hearts were used for medicine. That is why we cut out his heart. He had a gun and that we took away from him and hid."
Then my father said to me, "My son, it is good. Your life is no longer an effeminate one. This is the manner in which our ancestors encouraged us to live. It is the will of the spirits in control of war that has led you to do this. Of your own initiative you could not possibly have done it" (Radin 1926:149-151).

After these events Crashing Thunder begins to drink to excess again. He finally got delirium tremens and while sick he had a vision of a drunken ghost. His ghost vision was terrifying to him. Ghosts of men he had known appeared to him. They were all on horseback and they were all singing a song with a theme: "We all must die sometime, so of what value is anything, I think" (Radin 1963:41). Upon gaining sobriety, Crashing Thunder found that he was now also a poet and his song became a popular drinking song among many.

His dissipation continued for two more years and then he was arrested with three other men for the murder of the Potawatomi man. While they were in prison awaiting trial (the trial date kept getting postponed and systematically set back), the more upsetting and bothersome prison became.

Winnebago men try not to exhibit emotions, first of all because it is a true sign of effeminacy, and second, because of the ridicule he would be open to, which every male Winnebago dreads (Radin 1963:45). As Crashing Thunder explains, it is the latter instance of
which he was most mindful.

I was very tired of it (being in prison) but I kept that secret, because we used to tease one another. Sometimes I would feel like crying, but I would act as though I did not care at all. I was married at that time and I longed to see my wife and was terribly wrought up, but I told the others that I did not care in the least... sometimes one of the women would visit us and the others always said that I was the only one who did not seem to care. (As a matter of fact), I could hardly stand it, but I kept my condition quite secret...

One day my wife came to visit me. I talked with her through the iron grating. They allowed me to talk to her for a long time. All I could do was to desire her. I wanted her badly. When the wives of the others came they felt just as I did...

Some time after this, we found out that my wife had married again. I did not feel like eating, but I tried hard to do so, because I thought that the others would notice it. Then I said, "I am glad to hear that it is reported that my wife has married again. When I get out of prison, I will pay the one who has (married her), for he is going to take care of her until I get out. I had been quite uneasy about her for some time, and now I feel quite relieved, for she is going to be taken care of." Thus I said. But the truth of it was that I was about as angry as I could be. I made up my mind that I would take her away from whomever she might be living with. Then I thought I would make her feel as sad as I could. I thought that I would disfigure her and leave her; or take her away in the wilderness, whip her soundly, and then leave her there. I could not think of anything else and I did not even know how the food tasted. I often felt like crying. At night I would not be able to sleep, for I could not forget it. I would try to dream of her when I went to sleep at night. Sometimes I would dream of seeing her and then in the morning I would tell the others about it and I would feel better. I never thought of
any of my relatives who were really the ones who felt deeply for me. I was not even that (grateful). I only thought of the woman (Radin 1963:46-47).

It was shortly after this that Crashing Thunder was set free from prison. Upon his release he immediately took to drinking and womanizing. It was sometime later before he got back together with his former wife.


Crashing Thunder's first introduction to the peyote eaters was when shortly after his release from prison, he found out that his parents had been converted to a peyote cult in the region. His immediate reaction to the news was one of intense animosity toward the peyote eaters, primarily because the peyote followers insisted that all of the traditional Winnebago ceremonies were wrong and that they must be abandoned. In fact these peyote eaters actually destroyed war-bundles, medicine-bags and other Winnebago sacred objects (Radin 1963:48). Crashing Thunder had been warned by other conservative Winnebago against the degrading effects of eating the peyote.

Peyote eaters were said to be foolish because they cried when they felt happy about anything. They threw away their medicines, they gave up the blessings they received while fasting and they gave up all the spirits
that blessed them in their fasts. They also stopped giving feasts and stopped making offerings of tobacco and, instead, they burned their holy things. Above all they claimed that they hold nothing except Earthmaker (God) as holy (Radin 1963:49-50). Crashing Thunder felt ashamed of some of the things the closest members of his family had done. However, he did sit and listen to them. In fact even early in his introduction to the various members of the peyote cult he

...was rather fond of them...They would give me a little money now and then and they treated me with tender regard. They did everything that they thought would make me feel good, and in consequence I used to speak as though I liked their ceremony. However, I was only deceiving them. I only said it because they were good to me (Radin 1963:50).

He comments further that he knew that they were being kind to him so that they could influence him to join.

Crashing Thunder finally decided that he would take peyote. He explained that he thought that he was fooling them and that they thought that they were converting him. He told them that he believed in peyote only because they treated him so nicely (Radin 1963:51).

His first experience was not a particularly influencing one. The peyote, he observed, weakened him and he listened attentively to the singing and recalled that he liked it very much. He felt different from his
normal self, but he saw nothing wrong with himself.

What is of extreme importance here is that Crashing Thunder is again in an expectant mood. He is waiting for some strong visionary experience, but, as in his former fasts, nothing powerful happened. Nothing truly different was happening to him. He watched the proceedings with some anticipation. People began to cry and he became frightened. He also noticed that when he sat still and closed his eyes, he began to see strange things.

His next peyote experience came to him the next night. He ate peyote and watched his brother-in-law and sister "give themselves up"; that is, the actual rite of standing before the leader who preached to them and offered prayers. This in itself was generally a very dramatic moment (Radin 1963:56). Both of them asked Crashing Thunder to stand before the leader with them. Although reluctant to do so, he finally stood up.

...I stood up. The leader began to talk and I (suddenly) began to feel sick. It got worse and worse and finally I lost consciousness entirely. When I recovered I was lying flat on my back...I felt like leaving the place that night, but I did not do it. I was quite tired out. "Why have I done this?" I said to myself...So I thought and then I tried to leave, but I could not. I suffered intensely. At last daylight came upon me. Now I thought that they regarded me as one who had had a trance and found out something (Radin 1963:56).
Here again we see Crashing Thunder's use of his very first lie about his fasting vision. He is still unconverted. But having gone through what he thought the ceremony was supposed to accomplish in his own being, that is, having become unconscious, he quite willingly would have let them imagine that he had the vision that they told him he would have. He carried this to its logical conclusion. He cut his long hair and destroyed his courting medicines in accordance with his new religion. Finally, he began to cry as he handed over the last remnants of his old religion, his medicine bundle.

From these experiences we can see that at least externally he had become a member of the cult. He is on the verge of conversion as we can see from his crying as he gives up the powerful symbols of his old belief system. As Crashing Thunder comments,

The fact that he (my brother-in-law) told me that I understood, pleased me, and I felt good when day light came. (As a matter of fact), I had not received any knowledge. However, I thought it was the proper way to act, so I did it (Radin 1963: 57).

Of course this only confirms for him the kind of experiences he had been receiving all his life. He really did not expect to gain anything more. He had not yet experienced any inward change and did not really expect one.
One night Crashing Thunder was urged to eat a large amount of peyote, and he did. The only experience he had was that of being very tired, and suddenly,

...I looked at the peyote and there stood an eagle with outspread wings. It was as beautiful a sight as one could behold. Each of the feathers seemed to have a mark. The eagle stood looking at me. I looked around thinking that perhaps there was something the matter with my sight. Then I looked again and it was really there. I then looked in a different direction and it disappeared. Only the small peyote remained. I looked around at the other people but they all had their heads bowed and were singing. I was very much surprised.

Some time after this (I saw) a lion lying in the same place (where I had seen the eagle). I watched it very closely. It was alive and looking at me. I looked at it very closely and when I turned my eyes away just the least little bit, it disappeared. "I suppose they all know this and I am just beginning to know of it", I thought. Then I thought. Then I saw a small person (at the same place). He wore blue clothes and a shining brimmed cap. He had on a soldier's uniform. He was sitting on the arm of the person who was drumming, and he looked at every one. He was a little man, perfect (in all proportions). Finally I lost sight of him. I was very much surprised indeed. I sat very quietly. "This is what it is", I thought, "this is what they all probably see and I am just beginning to find out."

Then I prayed to Earthmaker (God): "This, your ceremony, let me hereafter perform" (Radin 1963:58).

Radin (1963:58) points to a number of things in his observations of Crashing Thunder's experience. First, apparently Crashing Thunder had one of the splendid colour
visions which are frequently induced by ingesting peyote. Radin (1963:58) observes that Crashing Thunder's eagle vision and his vision of the little soldier man are

...the customary visions in fasts. Such (spirits) appeared to S.B.'s (Crashing Thunder's) brother when he was fasting. This unquestionable reminiscence of the old fasting experiences suggests that...

Altogether, these three visions gave him the sense of inward change for which he had sought during his vision fast, in subsequent fasts and in the Medicine Dance ceremony.

He had another vision:

As I looked again, I saw a flag. I looked more carefully and (I saw) the house full of flags. They had the most beautiful marks on them. In the middle (of the room) there was a very large flag and it was a live one; it was moving. In the doorway there was another one not entirely visible. I had never seen anything so beautiful in all my life before.

Then again I prayed to Earthmaker (God). I bowed my head and closed my eyes and began (to speak). I said many things that I would ordinarily never have spoken about. As I prayed, I was aware of something above me and there he was; Earthmaker (God) to whom I was praying, he it was. That which is called the soul, that is it, that is what one calls Earthmaker (God). Now this is what I felt and saw. The one called Earthmaker (God) is a spirit and that is what I felt and saw. All of us sitting there, we had all together one spirit or soul; at least that is what I learned. I instantly became the spirit and I was their spirit or soul. Whatever they thought of, I (immediately) knew it.
I did not have to speak to them and get an answer to know what their thoughts had been. Then I thought of a certain place, far away, and immediately I was there. I was my thought.

I looked around and noticed how everything seemed about me, and when I opened my eyes I was myself in the body again. From this time on I thought, thus I shall be. This is the way they are, and I am only just beginning to be that way. "All those that heed Earthmaker (God) must be thus", I thought. "I would not need any more food", I thought, "for was I not my spirit? Nor would I have any more use of my body", I felt. "My corporeal affairs are over", I felt (Radin 1963:59-60).

Radin (1963:59) suggests that the power of knowing beforehand what a person was thinking of was an old Winnebago belief and is one of the specific gifts one receives when he joins the Medicine Dance. In fact it is called a magical gift for members of that organization. Here, Crashing Thunder experienced this power, and it flowed directly from his predication of a corporate soul, with which his individual soul is temporarily identified (Radin 1963:59). Similarly, the power of transporting one's self at will to a distant place is an old Winnebago conception which members of the Medicine Dance were supposed to possess. "Thought, feeling, etc., were regarded by the Winnebago as objective realities, or, to put it more correctly perhaps, as things that existed just as definitely as what was perceived directly through the senses (Radin 1963:60).
This experience of separation from the body was important for Crashing Thunder and he speaks further about this experience.

On one occasion they had a peyote-meeting which lasted two nights. I ate a good deal of peyote. The next morning I tried to sleep. I suffered a great deal. I lay down in a very comfortable position. After a while a (nameless) fear arose in me. I could not remain in that place, so I went out into the prairie, but here again I was seized with this fear. Finally I returned to a lodge near the lodge in which the peyote meeting was being held and lay down alone. I feared that I might do something foolish to myself (if I remained there alone), and I hoped that someone would come and talk to me. Then someone did come and talk to me, but I did not feel better, so I thought I would go inside where the meeting was going on. "I am going inside", I said to him. He laughed. "All right, do so", said he. I went in and sat down. It was very hot and I felt as though I were going to die. I was very thirsty but I feared to ask for water. I thought that I was certainly going to die. I began to totter over.

I died, and my body was moved to another life. It began to move about; to move about and make signs. It was not I and I could not see it. At last it stood up. The regalia--eagle feathers and gourds--these were holy, they said... My body spoke of many things and it spoke of what was true. Indeed it spoke of many things. It spoke of all the things that were being done (by the pagan Indians) and which were evil. A long time it spoke. At last it stopped. Not I, but my body standing there, had done the talking. Earthmaker (God had done his own talking). I would be confessing myself a fool if I were to think that I had said all this, it (my body) told me (Radin 1963:64-65).

Crashing Thunder finally returned to his normal
state. Some people thought he had gone crazy while others considered it a good sign. The peyote eaters called this state the "shaking" state. While this condition was regarded as important to the peyote cult, even more importantly, it was considered a "holy" among the conservative Winnebago (Radin 1963:65).

Crashing Thunder provides another example:

Once we had a meeting at the home of a member who was sick. The sick would always get well when a meeting was held in their home, and that is why we did it. At that meeting I got into the 'shaking' condition again. My body told (us) how our religion (peyote) was an affair of Earthmaker's (God's) and even if one knew only a portion of it, one could still see (partake of) Earthmaker's (God's religion (Radin 1963:66).

There was one further consequence of Crashing Thunder's conversion that is important to mention. Whenever he went to a peyote meeting his thoughts still remained fixed on women. He thought that if he were to marry a woman that these thoughts would leave him and then he could concentrate completely on the ceremony. As he thought these things and prayed to Earthmaker he had a vision:

Suddenly I saw something. This was tied up. The rope with which this object was tied up was long. The object itself was running around and around (in a circle). There was a pathway there in which it ought to go, but it was tied up and unable to get there. The road was an
excellent one. Along its edge blue grass grew and on each side there grew many varieties of pretty flowers. Sweet-smelling flowers sprang up all along this road. Far off in the distance appeared a bright light. There a city was visible of a beauty indescribable by tongue. A cross was in full sight. The object that was tied up would always fall just short of reaching the road. It seemed to lack sufficient strength to break loose (of what was holding it). (Near it) lay something which would have given it sufficient strength to break its fastenings, if it were only able to get hold of it.

I looked at what was so inextricably tied up and saw that it was myself. I was forever thinking of women. "This it is with which I was tied", I thought. "Were I married, I would have strength enough to break my fastening and be able to travel in the good road", I thought. Then daylight came upon us and we stopped (Radin 1963:61-62).

This vision is clearly the description of Earth-maker's lodge as seen from a distance after one has crossed the four hills as depicted in the myth of the journey to spirit-land in the Medicine Dance. This myth was well-known by S.B. (Crashing Thunder). Crashing Thunder finally found a wife. With the help of an old peyote man he found a young woman just out of the government school. He married her and was still living with her at the time he wrote his autobiography.

Finally, as Crashing Thunder explained,
...since that time (of my conversion) no matter where I am I always think of this religion. I still remember it and I think I will remember it as long as I live. It is the only holy thing that I have ever been aware of in all my life (Radin 1963:61).

After this he gave up chewing or smoking tobacco, he gave up drinking and finally he learned from the peyote

...that all I had done in the past, that it had all been evil. This was plainly revealed to me. What I thought was holy, and (by thus thinking) was lost, that I now know was false. (It is false) this giving of (pagan) feasts, of holding (the old) things holy, the Medicine Dance, and all the Indian customs (Radin 1963:67).

By the end of Crashing Thunder's narrative he completed all physical and emotional severence of ties that bound him to his former mode of life. He explains in his last few statements that he is now completely happy doing the work of the peyote cult.
Footnotes

1 Another way in which this exercise could have been carried out is if I had collected my own life history material. This would have subtracted one step from this exercise, that of reinterpreting Radin's life history material. Similarly my observations about fieldwork and the collecting, arranging and presentation of material would have been extended by personal experience in the writing of a life history. Fortunately I can rely upon Radin's most eloquent autobiography of Crashing Thunder and his work on the collection, arranging and presentation of life history materials.

2 By Medicine-man, Crashing Thunder means only that Thunder Cloud was a member of the Medicine Dance (Radin 1963:17).

3 By grandfather, Crashing Thunder means a particular relationship that every Winnebago bears to old men (Radin 1963:17). In this case the man was an uncle of Crashing Thunder's father.

4 It is interesting to note that what made Crashing Thunder give up on his vision quest was that he was getting hungry. Here again he lies to his niece and uses the excuse that he is hungry and he is rewarded both times with food. He may have had Trickster's appetites, it seems, but maybe not all of his other attributes.
In Summary

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to show that there is a value in featuring the individual in culture; in other words, showing that the individual can be the major emphasis of an ethnological endeavour. The individual's place, I have tried to show, is not as a model representation of culture (i.e., a generic individual who becomes the food for explanations that express the typical dispositions of more or less anonymous, generalized individuals) but as an individual-as-individual.

I attempted to provide reasons for studying the individual in culture by explaining the various pitfalls of thinking of him simply as an adjustment to his culture. Instead, I tried to show how an individual does not just react or make external and internal adjustments to events that make up his life but also that he has a causal influence upon perception, thought, feeling and action. To think of a person simply as a type of individual that can be used in a general fashion to talk about culture has limited value because it oversimplifies the subtlety and complexity of human interaction that comes from studying
an individual in culture, and thereby restricts the range of an individual's meanings, motives and feelings.

There are probably a number of different ways in which the individual could be viewed. However, I feel that the way I have chosen best illustrates the value of studying a single person. I picked a life history for this purpose. I am firmly convinced that the events that make up a person's life and his experience of those events as well as the outward sign of this experience reflected in his behaviour, show a complex and meaningful integration. In this respect, very few systematic descriptions of a person's activities, as given in ethnological monographs, etc., have allowed much insight into the mental adjustments and attitudes and the meaning of personal experiences and events in a person's life. I asked why it was that so little effort had been given to gaining insights into the personal side of an individual's life. I realized that this is primarily what anthropologists began with in the fieldwork that they did; that is, with the systematic collection of information from individual informants. But, that after the article, monograph, book, etc., was completed, I saw little left of the individual the investigator began with.

I suggest that much of the reason behind this state of affairs is that many investigators, in their analysis, neglect to preserve the level of events and the meaning and significance of experience and events as they affect a person.
This is usually because they feel that the importance of such things as they affect a person is subsidiary to the study of more general patterns, rules or aspects of society or culture as such. Guided by some norm of ethnographic description these investigators provide models of explanations that regard the individual as secondary to the study of anthropology. Thought, action, meaning and life events are seen simply as expressions strictly defined in terms of the model of cultural form or context that are being used to study phenomena. Any significance that was given to the individual remained peculiarly distant from the phenomenal level of their activities. By overestimating the importance of their models of explanation, these investigators hold to the concept of an individual's personal meanings, thoughts, actions and events, as reactive, passive and invariant. By doing this they leave little room for trying to understand the effects that specific individuals have on the construction of a phenomenal world of meanings, thoughts, feelings and beliefs. Again, these investigators maintain that the mental and physical activities of the individual are already more or less determined by culture. What they are not aware of, of course, is that perceptual and cognitive operations underlying the creation of ideas, meanings, feelings, etc., are simply more indirect, idiosyncratic and metaphorical than those that facilitate communicative clarity and precise
formulation in a theory.

This led me to look at life histories as a possible way in which to gain an understanding of the events and experiences, their significances and meanings, in one person's life. Events and experiences can be described and interpreted without taking them out of the context of the person's life. The clarity of the description and interpretation of events and their meanings seemed to make good ethnographic sense. However, I also needed to find a way of looking at a person's life at a level of abstraction that did the least amount of violence to the quality of a person's life and my interpretation and understanding of that life. To this end I needed to apply a personal hermeneutic to the life of an individual.

A personal hermeneutical approach to life history is important in that it works against theoretical over-simplification or reductionist interpretations of events that make up a person's life. To provide an example, which I will use for illustrative purposes here, I could explain all of a person's present adult behaviour and the various meanings that a person gives to this behaviour and an interpretation of those meanings on the basis of the rigidifying effects of early childhood experiences. This is, of course, based on a Freudian notion which assumes that the major principle governing man's functioning is the homeostatic tendency to return to or maintain a rather
steady or low state of psychic and organic tension. Hence, any meaning that the person gives to events, if he deviates from what is considered to be the normal well-balanced behavioural environment of adult life as a member of his culture, is considered to be a product of a neurosis, a psychosis, a regression in service of the ego, etc. Once this theoretical construct has been given status and importance as a way in which to explain meanings in events, actions, motivations, feelings, etc., of a person, he has then been labeled (indeed, he has been rendered and reified) by the terminology of the theory. Alternatively, rather than a psychoanalytic reduction, I could have used Crashing Thunder as the typical artifact of cultural disintegration, embodying the failure of the Winnebago culture to provide the context for a proper vision.

The other side of this situation is that the investigator has already decided what it is that is making the individual in question act and behave in the way that he does or give the meanings to events, feelings, motives, etc., that he does. In fact, what the investigator does not negotiate for himself or does not care to engage with for himself is the existence in a large measure of the intuitive, preformal interpretations that make up his interpretation and understanding of feelings, thoughts, motives, ideas and the meaning of the native person's events or how the latter defines his activities for himself.
within his own empirical world and behavioural environment.

A personal hermeneutic provides a format within which the investigator may come into contact with the way in which he is thinking with and about the native person with whom he is exploring a particular set of phenomena that make up the latter's life events. This brings to bear upon them both a self-critical (intersubjective) reflection and a dialectical process that emerges from a dialogue that appears out of the questions that are being asked about a phenomenon. Hermeneutics, in this respect, opens up for personal interpretation and understanding the meaning of the events, actions and experiences that make up this person's life.

With a personal hermeneutic in mind, I held up Radin's edited autobiography of Crashing Thunder, a Winnebago Indian, to reinterpretation. Through this life history I attempted to bring Crashing Thunder's interpretation of the meaning and significance of experience, actions and events in his life into a context of understanding that would recognize that I too was a part of the interpreting process, trying to gain some understanding of the experiences and events in Crashing Thunder's life. More importantly, I attempted to stay as close to the events of Crashing Thunder's life as possible. It is in this attempt, I think, that a close interpretation of the meaning of experience and events in Crashing Thunder's life takes on its most
important significance. The interpretation stays close to events and not to a theory and certainly not to speculation.

First, in interpreting Crashing Thunder's life history I emphasize four crucial events that seem to have provoked him into acting in his world in the way that he does. I used Mandelbaum's (1973:179-190) concept of "turnings" to emphasize these particular events and then studied his life as it could be seen in relation to these events. The first three critical turnings are as follows: (1) his early failure to have a fasting vision and the lie he subsequently tells his family suggesting that he did have a vision; (2) the deception he experiences when he finds out the disastrous secrets of the Medicine Dance; (3) his evident ability to cure his niece of her problem of bearing children.

The first two turnings form a contextual model that Crashing Thunder acts upon for the better part of his first forty-five years. In other words, he has lied about his vision but his lie has been matched with the deception of the secrets of the Medicine Dance. Throughout his life he lives with his lie and deception while he becomes successful at swindling people out of their money, stealing money, taking other men's wives, drinking and fighting, stealing women, etc. He tells the people that he is like Trickster, in fact, that he is blessed by Trickster.
He also tells the people that he is a holy man, that he has been blessed by the spirits, because he has had a fasting vision, because he is a member of the Medicine Dance, because he is given special spirit powers from his brother-in-law, a powerful shaman. In actual fact he has had no inner experiences of change whatsoever, and neither has he been blessed. Although he realizes that he is lying, many Winnebago believe him to be a true holy man. Accordingly, when he "pretends" to cure his niece and she is cured by his power, he is taken completely by surprise. For the first time he begins to think that maybe he has spirit power, but he has not been blessed nor has he had a proper vision. For the first time Trickster, it seems, has tricked him. In effect, Crashing Thunder's interpretation of the significance and meaning of his experiences and the events in his life become ambiguous and they can be seen to take on an appearance much different than what they really do signify. Crashing Thunder now begins to wonder about some of the interpretations he has given events.

Finally, a number of years after this encounter with his niece, he is initiated into the peyote religion. He receives the powerful and important visions that eluded him throughout his life. This brings about the fourth critical turning and the subsequent transformation of his personality. He settles down with one wife, quits chewing and smoking tobacco, fighting, drinking, etc., and proceeds
to do the work of his new peyote religion. Crashing Thunder explains that this "is the only holy thing that I have been aware of in all my life" (Radin 1963:61).

My reinterpretation of Crashing Thunder's life events is grounded in those same events. I try to interpret them in light of the ongoing context of his life. To step out of this format would put me into the realm of speculation for speculation's sake and out of touch with the world of Crashing Thunder's experience. What would be put in jeopardy is the value of interpretation. In this manner, I stay close to the actual life of the individual and I am able to bring to our understanding some of the meanings of Crashing Thunder's experiences and events. Not only do we get a picture of Crashing Thunder in the context of a Winnebago culture, but we also are able to see some of the ways in which he acts upon and transforms for himself his life and, in effect, his culture. But Crashing Thunder's life is not just anchored in the physical and social patterns of adjustment but also in the implicit mental and imaginative actions that he is able to bring to bear on his event specific world. At the level of experience and imagination a unique and complex integration occurs between the world of objects and actions and the world of meaning, thought, feeling and motive. The impetus of this integration is in Crashing Thunder's every action which is not only in reaction to his world, but also in his creatively acting
upon phenomena to make up his world, which, in effect, shapes events and the meaning of events that make up his life.

In Reflection

One of the major questions that underlies this thesis is how can we as anthropologists release ourselves from the philosophical dogmas and the concept of natural systems and laws modeled on constructs of the natural sciences? Evans-Pritchard (1962:26-28; 1973:763-764) suggested that it was important for the discipline to do so. This was the guiding premise from which he fashioned his idea of a hermeneutical approach for the discipline. Similarly this is the approach that I use in this thesis.

Descartes suggested that man is a "rational soul, set over and against the extended physical world, and only contingently related to it" (Gauld and Shotter, 1977:3). He further stated that

...if we rightly use our capacity for rational thought...we may in time achieve control over the material world of which we are the detached observers...

[We become increasingly the]...Masters and possessors of nature. By conceiving the physical world as made up of elementary and separable particles of matter in blind but lawful interaction, and by developing methods of controlled experimentation with which to investigate them, we have greatly increased our power to control at least certain aspects
of that world. But in what terms are we to conceive and understand the knower whose knowledge has been so strikingly advanced, the 'rational soul' whose intellectual activities, directed upon the natural realm of which he is not a part, yet have rendered him master and possessor of nature? (Ibid. 1977:3).

Natural scientific knowledge in the Cartesian tradition has grown to be an ideal of all knowledge. In fact there would probably be something to this view of natural scientific knowledge in anthropology if it were not for the great care and concern which marks the pages of the best ethnographies. For anthropologists, in spite of what they might say and do, work as persons in the midst of other persons. While this is true, many anthropologists choose to forget it. For example Kroeber (1948:841) believed

If there is one a priori postulate on which all anthropologists are unanimous, it is that they wish to study men's physiques and men's cultures as other natural scientists study stars or rocks or lightning or elements or trees or animals or what goes on inside animals. Man, to every anthropologist, is an animal in the given world of nature: that and nothing more— not an animal with a soul or immortality or destiny or anything else attached to him before hand, but an animal to be compared as to structure and to function on equal terms with other animals; and with the unshakable conviction that any special traits and qualities which may ultimately be assigned to him are to eventuate from inquiry instead of being presupposed... There is no room in anthropology for a shred of ethnocentricity, of
homi-centricity; for if prevaluation in favor of our civilization, our religion, our philosophy, our standards; nor room either for reservation of this product or that belief as being too noble or too fine to be studied by the ordinary methods of natural science.

That is why alone among what is customary to call the social sciences, anthropology is recognized by astronomers, physicists, chemists, geologists, and biologists as a sister natural science—or at any rate as a potential one. Our accomplishments may not yet be as precise or as sure as theirs: but we are shooting at the same kind of marks in a similar way.

It is my contention that Kroeber's descriptive reports are not simply those of a rock collector. Perhaps it could be argued that in spite of Kroeber's unfortunate metaphors he was really trying to say that the anthropologist must leave behind all that he takes for granted in his culture while studying another culture. It then could be said that Kroeber was merely suggesting that the anthropologist must suspend his particular common sense notions of the world or at least be aware of them and how they effectively help fashion his descriptions out of which his report is shaped.

If this is what Kroeber was saying then I could at least support him. But I think that this precisely is what he does not mean. This is an important point to understand. I think it is an illusion that the anthropologist views people of another culture strictly in terms of
that culture itself. It is this illusion that keeps the anthropologist from the self-reflective understanding of his practice. A closer look indicates that Kroeber is calling for and asserting a crude kind of cultural relativism. In this way he asks us to realize that our standards may be no better than those of the people we judge. He invokes a personal detachment or neutrality, a position founded upon the assumption that the method of natural science is adequate to the understanding of everything—the joys and sorrows of a person, his life experiences, the birth, growth and death of those he associates with, and the meaning he finds in all of these things. This kind of detachment is really sensitive to nothing because it attempts to objectify everything. Similarly I find it strange, indeed, that after rejecting our civilization, our philosophies and our religions as embodying prevaluations which might bias our view of others, we then are required to employ the ordinary methods of our natural science. What Kroeber conveniently left out is the thinking mind of the scientist himself.

Anthropology has developed as a discipline since the time of Kroeber and others like him, yet it is his shade which still haunts anthropology when it seeks to deny the very self-knowledge necessary to allow it a hermeneutical perspective. To accept a critical, reflexive anthropology we must embrace the place of the practising
anthropologist. We must accept that the anthropologist is more than remotely involved in the recovery of the meaning and significance of events in the life of a native person. Such work requires a discipline of committal to openness and expectation, the actual discipline of intersubjectivity. This subject has not been fully explored in anthropology and deserves much more attention.

We open ourselves in a dialogue with a native person when, as ethnographers, we work with that person in recording the events of his life. There is a lot to be said for life history in this regard because it lets the subject speak for himself; because the ethnographer refuses to independently frame the other's life. This attempt is hermeneutical if the significance and meaning of actions and experiences of the native person are grasped by both the native person and the ethnographer and is indeed in a sense a matter for negotiation between them.

Radin was one of the first anthropologists to understand, recognize and use this kind of approach. As Diamond (1974:428-429) explains,

One can understand why Paul Radin, alone among the anthropologists of his generation, insisted that the only acceptable ethnology is life history, told by members of an indigenous society themselves. Radin defined this as both the method and the theory of ethnology...in this perspective he severely criticized the Boas school, especially Mead and Benedict. Radin's view is necessarily incomplete (he himself
continued to ask critical questions throughout his career), but what is more pertinent is that his view was exactly the reverse of the objectifying trend; he spotted it, and tried to combat it early on.

Much more study needs to be done on Radin and his contemporaries. The work of Radin and indeed the man himself also deserve much more attention than has been given them in the past.

Finally, I consider this thesis to be an overview of some of the root notions in the development of an hermeneutical approach in anthropology. While I have mentioned my own moments of discovery, I have concentrated on the benefits of using an hermeneutical approach, focusing on its use in the ethnographic setting; its use in the analysis of the life history form; its use in the selection and arrangement of life history materials; and its use in my reinterpretation of a particular life history. These aspects of its use intersect each other to form a process called a hermeneutic motion. This motion has gone virtually unrecognized in anthropology for a very long time. We all take part in the process when we describe and interpret. It simply is up to each of us to come to some understanding of the process and its place in the discipline.
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