

# ***CPN Archives***

## Hostility

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It is a common experience among those who, in the headlong pursuit of their occupation, pause occasionally to sketch some guidelines for their patterns of thought to discover that the principles they have so carefully defined were once artfully portrayed in Greek legend. I have had this particular experience in connection with this afternoon's topic. It is a disconcerting experience for not only does it lead one to question his personal capacity for original thinking but it also casts doubt upon the wisdom of all those explicit verbal definitions upon which modern science so largely depends. Of the two, it is perhaps less upsetting to give up one's claim to originality. But definition - if one cannot define, how can he ever hope to progress? Yet it seems to be the irony of explicitly thinking that such great emphasis is placed on the outer boundaries that it never touches the heart of the idea.

Not so the Greeks. They, while they might be accused of being perfectionists, were certainly never literalists, and even now it seems as they were freer than to say what they meant than we are. So, before I start rounding up the precise scientific meaning of this hostility construct by modern-day methods of circumlocution, let me just tell you very briefly how the Greeks got to the heart of the matter and said it all much more simply than I would ever dare to.

There was a young man by the name of Theseus who had been reared under the domination of his mother. One day, out in the garage or some place, he ran onto an old sword and a pair of shoes that had belonged to his father. Right then and there

he decided to make a break for it and go look up his father, who, it appears, had gone away to a national convention a number of years before and somehow had managed to stay away on urgent business ever since. Just how his father managed this is part of the story that has never been quite clear to me. I did hear, once, that some scandal was involved, but since it seemed to be none of my business I never looked into the matter. I am sure that it is not an important part of the story.

Now this young victim of "momism," as it existed in the classic Greek era, became quite a hero by the time he caught up with his old man - a combination of fact which, it seems to me, some alert publicity-minded psychiatrist ought to be able to capitalize on. For one thing, along the road, Theseus ran into a character by the name of Procrustes.

This fellow had bought a small place way out in the country where the road wound through a deserted canyon. Some people say his real name was Damastes, while others insist it was Polypamon. The mix-up was probably because people going by there always in such a hurry that they didn't take time to read the Greek letters on his mailbox. In any case, people thereabouts all called him by his nickname, "Stretch," which is what the word "procrustes" means in English.

Stretch Damastes was hostile. That, of course, is the whole point of telling this story. I don't think he ever meant to be hostile. His feelings would probably have been hurt if anyone had even suggested the idea. As a matter of fact, it is quite possible that no one ever mention it to him. In those times not many people went in for psychoanalysis and you could easily go for weeks without so much as once having someone interpret your unconscious motivation to you.

I am sure that Stretch was not really out to hurt people. The fact that his guests always seemed to have such a bad time of it was just one of those unfortunate things that so often seem to happen in spite of everything you do to make people comfortable.

Because he happened to be hostile, Stretch was one of those unlucky souls in this world whose fate it is to be grossly misunderstood. Why? In the first place he was genuinely interested in people. I mean *genuinely*! He had bought this little chicken ranch, or whatever it was, with the express purpose of setting up a kind of wayside motel where travelers who found themselves in this lonely spot at nightfall could be

assured of some old-fashioned hospitality. Moreover, he had in mind that he would give them their supper and their lodging free. Breakfast, too, if they happened to want it! He was as thoughtful as that.

Stretch, like most hostile people, had a pretty clear idea of how guests should be treated. He really fancied himself as a host and along about sundown he used to stand out by the front gate, lean against the mailbox, and wait to see if he could persuade some traveler to stop in for supper. At the table he always proved to be an excellent conversationalist and, before his guest realized how late it had gotten to be, it would be time to go to bed.

There was a bed, as those of you who know the story probably remember. Some say there were two beds, but most everyone now agrees that there was only this one. Stretch was especially concerned that his guest would find the bed just right. He would fluff up the pillows, press down on the mattress to show how soft it was, and keep murmuring something about how much he hoped that the bed would be neither too long nor too short. In fact, he would fuss around long after the guest was yawning and ready to turn in. Showing all this solicitude was what really got him into trouble.

In fact, the poor man would get himself so worked up over his social role as a host that later, back in his own room and long after his guest was comfortably asleep, he would be tossing and turning, worrying himself sick over the possibility that there might be some flaw in his hospitality. Was his guest comfortable or not? Had he used the dainty guest towels in the bathroom? And the guest bed - that was what worried him most. Did it fit? Maybe he was a little too tall for it; maybe a little too short - which was it? Throughout the restless night the thoughts nagged and mounted until they were unbearable.

You can guess what happened, if you do not already know. In the wee hours of the morning Stretch would tiptoe to the door of the guest room, open it ever so softly, and peek in, just to make sure. You can also guess what he saw and what utter consternation seized him at finding his guest either too short or too long - never a perfect fit. And now, knowing how it was that Stretch was trying so hard to be a perfect host, it is quite easy to see that next he simply had to do what he did.

There are some folks - not very practical folks, I'm afraid - who think that what he should have done was cut off the bed to fit the guest; or stretch it, as the case might be. But if such people would only stop to think for a moment, they would readily perceive that this would not be socially adaptive behavior. It would be bound to make the bed the wrong size for the next guest, not to mention the damage to an expensive piece of furniture. Of course, Stretch could have gone back to bed, pulled the covers over his head and said, "To heck with it!" as some folks who do not have a sincere interest in people, no doubt, would do.

The rest of the story is not very important, now that we all appreciate Stretch's predicament and have feelings of genuine acceptance for him as a person. You know, of course, that Theseus who was not a particularly sensitive person, did Procrustes in - not because of any deep sense of hostile regard, I'm afraid, but only because Procrustes happened to get in his way. Theseus was young and ambitious and had his heart set on being a hero. To his immature mind, life was simply an aggressive adventure and he still lacked that subtle capacity for exactitude in the interpretation of human nature that genuinely hostile people have.

Let me turn now from this classical mode of expression to the form of semantic discourse with which we are more familiar. It will take longer to say the same thing, and much of the meaning will be lost in literalism, but it will sound more scientific and much more like what a psychologist is expected to say on an occasion like this.

Over a period of a good many years - many of them not very productive of publications, I fear - I have attempted to come to grips with the psychology of man as if I had only recently come across the species. It was like pretending to be someone from Mars who had just dropped in to meet these earth-creatures for the first time and was trying to understand them. More and more, it seemed to me that what I wanted, in my role as a stranger on earth, was man's own account of things as he saw them, as he experienced them, and not merely what outsiders said about him.

Early in my clinical experience I found myself repeating over and over to my students, "If you don't know what is troubling a child, ask him, maybe he'll tell you." And often he did; although it never proved easy for a clinician to quiet down and hear what the child was saying. To do so he had to brush away his literalistic biases

about what words naturally meant and pay more attention to what the child meant. He had to set aside also many of his diagnostic presentiments about what kinds of packages children come wrapped up in. And as for listening to adults; that is even harder. So often the adult has long since lost track himself of what it was he started out to say many years ago. By the time he meets the clinician he can repeat only words and words, wearily making the kinds of vocal sounds that quickly reverberate themselves away into lexical emptiness.

If we were to develop a psychology of man from his own point of view - a psychology of man himself - it could obviously be neither a prejudiced kind of psychology, nor an objective one. I repeat - neither prejudiced nor objective! Under no condition could it be the kind of psychology that merely points objectively to a man and says, "That thing out there; let me prod it. I want to see which way it will hop." Instead, it would have to be an experimental kind of psychology that would enable one to look all about him and say "So this is how it is to be a man. So this is the way the world looks through his eyes. So this is the sense of his behavior. So this is his framework of cause and effect. So this, at last, is the mind of man."

At first we - my students and I - started calling this new psychological point of view, "role theory". The term seemed a likely name for what we were thinking. Not only was our route to the understanding of clients via an appreciation of the part they were attempting to enact, but psychotherapy, we soon discovered, could often be developed in terms of a way of life - a role - rather than in terms of so-called insights which reduced behavior to motivation, and motivation, in turn, to atavism.

Soon, however, the term "role" began to appear widely in psychological literature in quite a different sense. So we temporarily abandoned use of the term and began talking about a psychology of personal constructs. By this we did not mean merely a kind of perceptual theory, nor did we mean merely the realm of objects that fall within a given man's purview. Rather, we had in mind a psychology that dealt with the manner in which man comes to grips with his world of reality. The task was not so much to choose a theory of psychology for ourselves but, first of all, to establish a frame of reference in terms of which we might appreciate any man's personal theory of psychology. For, it seemed to us, it would have to be at the level of the personal construction of events, without which construction no man has any psychological footing, that the task of the psychologist must begin. Indeed, only at this level of the

man's personal construction, can it ever be said that an event becomes a stimulus for him, or that an action becomes an expression of motives within him, or that his behavior is learned. To overlook this crucial point at which events start to be interpreted as psychological variables is to become enmeshed in what Bertrand Russell and others have called the subject-predicate error of the Indo-European mode of thought.

So we turned to a psychology of personal constructs. The venture, so far, has been exciting. There have been hidden surprises waiting for us along the way. Some of them have been occasions for dismay. I have already mentioned one surprise when I said that we would have to abandon prejudice and objectivity both! The very thought of abandoning objectivity sounds just as wicked to the narrowly indoctrinated psychologist of today as the idea of abandoning other forms of revealed truths sounded to the fundamentalists of another generation. Yet the doctrine of objectivity as currently practiced in our world of psychology, looks to events as if they somehow abstracted themselves and spoke out in their own direct revelations of profound truth.

As we pursue further our line of thinking the concept of stimulus drops out also. There is simply no way to keep it in. Reinforcement becomes a question-begging term, at least in the sense in which it is commonly used. The whole conceptual area of motivation, as we know it in psychology today, vanished. Even learning is washed up; when the theory gets through with it it sounds like a synonym for the verb *to become*. In brief, this is not a theory for anyone who likes to display his Ph.D. diploma on the wall of his office, for several times a day he will find it glowering down on him in silent disapproval.

Now, having stirred up this hornets' nest of scientific convictions, let us deal with a limited part of the confusion we have attempted to create. (This is known as establishing an initial atmosphere of unacceptance, in the hope that in what follows the listener will grasp more eagerly for a little of something he can make sense out of.) We have chosen the topic of hostility. Hostility is one of the clinician's most crucial concerns. Let us see what happens when we apply this kind of thinking to it. What will it help him to notice? What will it lead him to look for? What new openings to psychotherapeutic movement will it provide for his client?

In the psychological realm of discourse, as contrasted with some of our better developed realms of discourse such as physics, most of our concepts are projections of two principle axes of reference - pleasure versus pain and good versus evil. Since it is assumed that each of us automatically heads for pleasure and away from pain while trying to get other people to head for good and away from evil, our psychological dimensions all begin to look like one-way streets, every one of them leading in the same general direction. One is reminded of the fellow who offered to solve any city's traffic problem, simply by marking a system of one-way streets all leading out of town. The hitch in such a traffic system is that it does not provide the citizens with any true mobility. So it is with much of our psychological thinking; our conceptual network is so aligned that it does not permit us much mobility in dealing with our personal problems.

The concept of hostility, as commonly understood, is just such a notion. If you have got it, it may be fun but it's bad. If the fellow next door has got it, you may get hurt. The only thing to do with hostility is get rid of it or get away from it. Nice people try to keep it bottled up and psychoanalyzed people try to dump it out somewhere where it won't do any harm.

The usual understanding of hostility is that it is an impulse to hurt someone, to cause pain. This definition, it must be noticed, puts the limiting condition in the experience of the other person, not in the experience of the hostile person himself. Yet if we are to have a psychology of man's own experience, we must anchor our basic concepts in that personal experience, not in the experiences he causes others to have or which he appears to seek to cause others to have. Thus, if we wish to use a concept of hostility at all, we have to ask, what is the experimental nature of hostility from the standpoint of the person that has it. Only by answering this question in some sensible way will we arrive at a concept which makes pure psychological sense, rather than sociological or moral sense merely.

What is it like to be hostile? How does it feel? How does hostility creep into the human enterprise? In order to get the answers to these questions we have to talk to people like Procrustes, rather than Theseus. It is in this respect that psychoanalysis has made two priceless contributions to the symptomatic understanding of hostility, although I fear the analyses have done little to develop hostility as a psychological concept.

One of these contributions has to do with the recognition of what is symptomatically called, "passive hostility." This is seen as a way of inflicting injury by letting people stew in their own juice. It involves keeping someone's juice as hot as possible in eager anticipation of his falling in and, when he does fall in, piously pointing out to him how hot it is.

The other psychoanalytic contribution to our understanding of hostility symptoms is the description of incorporative hostility that robs others of their individuality and brings them helplessly into the orbit of the hostile person's world. This is what is sometimes called, in the poetic idiom of psychoanalysis, oral hostility. One of its manifestations has been coined into the currently popular phrase, "smother love."

But while the clinical experience of psychoanalysts, as well as that of psychotherapists of other persuasions, has led us all to a greater sensitivity to the variety of symptoms through which hostility is expressed, it has not so far resulted in better conceptualization, nor has it contributed much to the movement of psychological theory dealing with the essential nature of hostility. Hostility is still seen as the urge to hurt someone, sometimes as the urge to hurt one's self. Even guilt is seen as the urge to hurt turned against the self as substitute - preparing one's own juice to be stewed in. Oral hostility, still viewed as the urge to hurt, is described as the impulse to destroy as one destroys food by eating it.

But I think the Greeks, at least the early Greeks who mostly understood the impulses of man in terms of his adventures, probably sensed something about hostility that is easily missed by those who feel they must deal with man in terms of his pathological symptoms. In this early story of Procrustes they appear to have embodied part of what they knew about the nature of the hostile man. There is something humanly plausible about Procrustes. He did what people do. He could not bear the thought of being wrong in his estimate of the stature of his guests. Rather than change his estimate he corrected his guests. And so this part of the Thesean story has lived and the poetic imagery of the Procrustean bed has survived to this day.

It is at the point of Procrustes' failure to anticipate correctly the stature of his guests that the legend places the fulcrum of his hostility. But this point of frustration is still only the fulcrum. It takes a massive weight of personal meaning to tip the scales. In my paraphrasing I have underscored one original feature of the tale by describing

Procrustes as an ardent host who was genuinely interested in people. It was only because so much of his world was centered in his claim to knowing the true dimensions of man that the invalidating evidence assumed such overwhelming proportions. When he peeked through the bedroom door that world of his threatened to collapse.

How to save it! If his bed - his only bed - did not fit his guest, his guest must be made to fit the bed. Regardless of the cost, the validity of his bed and the integrity of his world - which were one and the same thing - must be sustained. That piece of psychological furniture was for him, not just a bed, but a vital institution - more important by far than the physical well-being of just one guest. It was a key to his way of life. Under the circumstances he did the only thing as far as he could see, that made sense. And, as I said before, it is really too bad that Theseus did not sense the situation and do something constructive about it. Ambitious people are so often dull-witted about such matters.

From the standpoint of a psychology of personal constructs, each person, like Procrustes, devises as best he can a structure for making sense out of a world of humanity in which he finds himself. Some of this personal structure is cast in terms of words and he can name the parts for us. But most of it is expressed only in terms of talk - which is something quite different from semantic communication - and some of it stands way back in the shadows of human expression as a background pattern that is never traced with the fine lines of verbal detail.

Without such patterned structure it would appear that no man can come to grips with his seething world of people, nor can he establish himself as a psychological entity. If one wishes, he can look upon this personal structure of man as a network of hypotheses: about human nature. But if he does think of it in terms of hypotheses he should be prepared to envision hypotheses that are not verbally formulated as well as the kind of explicitly stated hypotheses that are familiar to research settings. In any case, like all psychological structure and all hypotheses, this personal construct system tempts man to make predictions. And predictions, in turn, have a way of either occurring or not occurring, and usually being rather obvious about it.. It is in terms of his predictions, then, that the mind of man comes at last into firm contact with reality. I would go even further and say that it is only in terms of his predictions that man ever touches the real world about him.

Having gone this far with our theorizing it seems that we have involved ourselves in a kind of psychological theory in which the notion of validation will have to play a major part. This is quite all right with us. It fits our clinical experience. It fits the report experiences of others. It offers promise of a psychology that will turn its attention to man's plastic future rather than to his fateful past.

Man predicts what will happen. If it happens, his prediction is validated, the grounds he used in making it are strengthened, and he can venture further next time. If it does not happen, his prediction is invalidated, the structure he used in making the prediction is brought into question, and the road ahead becomes less clear.

If now we wish to understand the implications of an event in a person's life, we shall, in terms of his kind of psychology, look not only at the event but also at the kind of wager that was laid on it. Events come and go without necessarily having anything to do with a person's psychological processes. Of themselves, they are neither validating nor invalidating, nor is it meaningful to describe some of them as reinforcements. Validity is a matter of the relationship between the event as it happened and what the person expected to happen. More correctly stated, it is the relationship between the event as he construed it to happen and what he anticipated.

It is in this relationship between anticipation and realization that the real fate of man lies. It is a fate in which he himself is always a key participant, not simply the victim. To miss this point and to allow ourselves to become preoccupied with independent forces, socio-dynamics, psychodynamics, leprechaun theory, demonology, or stimulus-response mechanics, is to lose sight of the essential feature of the whole human enterprise.

Now let us strip the Procrustean legend of its rich narrative structure and trace the central theme of hostility in the more barren terminology of personal construct theory. A person has a construct system. It gives him identity. Right or wrong, it serves to put him in touch with reality. It provides him with grounds for formulating his anticipations, including his anticipations about people. Then, one day, perhaps after a long wait, his expectations are not confirmed. He is staggered by the implications of his disconfirmation for he has wagered more of his construct system on the outcome of his venture than he can afford to lose. If he accepts the outcome

and all its presumed implications he will be left in a state of deep and pervading confusion.

But wait! There is still something he can do to save the situation. If he acts quickly he may be able to force the outcome to conform to his original expectations and give him a last-minute confirmation of his major premises about human nature. This is the hostile choice. The key to understanding hostility from the standpoint of the person himself is in this instant of decision. Or is it an instant of impulse - it makes no difference; this is where it is!

In the language of research, we may say that the hostile person distorts his data to fit his hypotheses. In the language of the classroom, he puts people in their place. In the language of economics, he extorts tokens of subservience to his system of values. In the language of the child, he threatens to scream loud enough to prove to the neighbors that his parents have made a horrible mistake. In the language of the divorce court, since his spouse did not conform to his idealized image of what a wife should be, the husband sees to it that she is exhibited to the world as the other kind of woman, "the kind of person he has always known most women were." Ditto, hostile wives and "the kind of person they always knew men were." In the language of nations - we all know how clearly everything the enemy does expresses "his cruel and vicious nature."

Instead of saying that such goings-on are the outcroppings of hostility - hostility being an extrapersonal force that is supposed to invest the organism - we are saying that they are the hostility. The essence of hostility is not in its motivational property - anyone who is alive is on the move - but in its characteristic way of following up one's mistakes. It is the substitution of extortion for problem solving. It is the attempt to collect a bet on a horse that has already lost. The hostile person turns from events as they are to payoffs that belie reality. "See," he says, "I got paid, didn't I? That means I was right all along."

Psychologists make frequent use of the frustration-aggression hypothesis - the notion that the greater one's disappointment the more violently he will react to it. What we have been saying may appear to be a restatement of that hypothesis. But there are important differences. Hostility is not aggression, although the two terms are frequently used synonymously. The simplest way to look at aggression is to view

it as adventuresomeness. It means actively formulating one's expectations specifically about many things, about big things and, sometimes, about remote matters. It means taking steps to bring one's hunches to test. And it often means betting large stakes on the outcome.

While an aggressive person sticks his neck out, he is not necessarily hostile. He does not necessarily extort confirmation of personal hypotheses that have already proved themselves to be invalid. An aggressive conversationalist may press a point to the place where his companions have to come out and say exactly what they think. That, of course, is what the aggressive but non-hostile person wants to know. His companions may be furious at finding themselves smoked out but, unless their aggressive friend has a streak of hostility in him, he will not try to compromise them into agreeing with him. He only wants to know.

If we take the traditional view that hostility is the impulse to hurt, it is easy to see how aggression can be interpreted as hostility. The moment someone hurts he cries "foul" or "ouch" and the aggressive person is immediately labeled as hostile, not so much because of any psychological property of his own make-up but because of the make-up of the person who is hurt. Of course, if we are rigorous about it, we can hold to the definition that hostility is present only when the actor wants to hurt someone. But this definition is hard to maintain in a world of social thought that describes persons in terms of how they are reacted to, rather than in terms of what they are up to. A psychology that is based on the outlook of man himself does not find it very helpful to define hostility in terms of its anticipated effect on others. It asks, instead, for an understanding of the hostile person in terms of what is at stake in his own life. If we want to understand Procrustes we talk to Procrustes, not Theseus. We talk to him about his bed. We talk to him about his role as a host. We find out what he expects guests to be like.

Now it is quite possible for an aggressive person to become hostile and, conversely, it is quite possible for a hostile person to pursue his extortionism by aggressive means. The aggressive conversationalist we mentioned may, for example, get himself so far out on a limb that when he discovers what his friends actually do think he may not be able to take it. He may then go to pieces in anxious confusion. Or he may pull in his horns. But he may - he just may - take the hostile course of action and try to put his friends in some kind of spot where they appear to confirm his point

in spite of the realities of the social situation. On the other hand, take the person who is hostile to begin with. In his frantic efforts to make the data fit the hypothesis he may resort to vigorous measures. We can then say he is also aggressive. Not all hostile people do it this way; some express their hostility very effectively by the most passive of means. But they can. And when they do, it is correct to speak of aggressive hostility.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis, as any psychologist will tell you, is not a simple formula to apply. In order to use the formula one has to introduce a number of qualifications, both as to what is to be labeled frustration and what is to be construed as aggression. Nor can we, from the standpoint of the psychology of personal constructs, re-label the formula as a frustration-hostility hypothesis. The hostility is not proportional to the frustration - to say that would be to reduce the formula to the stimulus-response paradigm. The hostility is in the type of solution the person attempts - that is the personal construct theoretical view.

What about the person who is sadistic? Can we say that he is simply trying to make his experiment with social relations yield affirmative evidence? What if he feels like jumping up and down with glee and excitement every time he sees a person writhing in pain? Or what about the military flyers who slap each other on the back and show great delight at having scored a hit on a military target? Are they thinking of the agony they have left there on the ground? In either of these instances, our understanding of hostility would not place the psychological value primarily on the pain others experienced - even though we may reserve the right to judge such acts in terms of moral or social values - but on what is confirmed in the act. The sadist may (indeed, from our clinical experience we believe that he does) see in the other person's injury a long overdue confirmation of his own outlook, a confirmation that has been denied him in the natural state of affairs. The military aviator probably tries not to think of what is going on down on the ground in the target area in the wake of his bomb. In his case the suffering is less likely to be a relevant psychological variable. In both cases, what is happening to the other person is incidental, what is happening to the person himself is what is crucial.

It may be helpful to see hostility in the flesh. Before we illustrate in terms of case material, however, let us review the essential features of hostility from the standpoint of the psychology of personal constructs. A person construes human

nature in his own way. He makes social predictions on the basis of this construction. To set the stage they must be crucial predictions; that is to say, he must have wagered more on them than he can afford to lose - more of his construct system, that is. He turns up invalidating evidence. It is clear that he was wrong about people. He can no longer ignore the fact. Moreover, he was overwhelmingly wrong - basically wrong. In the face of the harsh facts he can, of course, revise his outlook. But the revision would shake him so deeply that he is reluctant to undertake it. Alternatively, he could let matters ride - say to himself, "So I just don't understand people very well." But this too is an alternative he is reluctant to choose. Finally, he can close his eyes to reality and attempt to make people fit the construct bed his system provides. This is the hostile choice.

Consider a young woman, aged thirty. She grew up in a home where she was secure in her parents' love, where her father was a stable and constant figure and the neighborhood, with its beaches and sand dunes, was a safe and ever-interesting place to roam in search of childhood adventure. The only important male figure in her life, aside from her father, was a boy who was fenced out of that world with social taboos. At the turn of adolescence her girlfriends start to desert her and the forms of play they have enjoyed together and direct their attention to the female pursuit of catching boys with their newly found charms. What she had discovered up to this time, to be true about both males and females now seems to be invalid. At first she is only puzzled. Later she is more than puzzled - she is confused and anxious. Her mother, too, seems perturbed that she seems too immature. What the child does not realize, of course, is that the mother knows that her own years are rapidly running out and she is unduly apprehensive lest her daughter still be a child when the time comes to go it alone. Soon the mother's death comes. The father is prostrated with grief and he is perceived by the child as letting her down. Her first efforts are to get another man. She will have a man, the kind of strong man her outlook insists men must be. Even cruelty is acceptable, if it is accompanied by strength. Yet, whatever male substitute she finds, the apparent failure of her father to live up to her expectations of him is still, to her, an inescapable fact. For a time she extorts from him the tokens of paternal support - clothes, luxuries, indulgences. This is hostility. But hostility is difficult to contain within reasonable bounds. She now has a disillusioned version of what men are - all men. To make a long story short, she fits all men, including her husband, into this Procrustean Bed. They are often surprised at how neatly she tricks them into confirming her hypotheses about the

contemptible weak-kneed creatures. And so, to some extent, is she. Her gay and tantalizing manner is misleading. Like Procrustes, she is interested in people, she cannot live without their company. Like Procrustes, she is an excellent conversationalist. And, like Procrustes, she has a bed. Soon each man in her life wakes up to find that he has been chopped down to just the right size to fit it. This is hostility in the flesh.

Most psychotherapists understand, regardless of their theoretical persuasion, that the key to the alleviation of hostility lies in the proper use of aggression. The psychoanalysts and others look upon aggression as the dynamic feature of the hostile pattern and insist that it must be allowed to vent itself before it can be brought under self-control. The Rogerians provide an atmosphere of acceptance for their clients, in which we could say, in terms of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, that the frustration is minimized in order to keep the aggressive pressure down to a point where the person can gently come to terms with himself. (There is, of course, much more to both of these points of view). Certainly both of these outlooks, I would insist, can be taken as grounds by clinicians for doing something effective about the hostility.

From the standpoint of the psychology of personal constructs, however, the emphasis is placed not on the conceptualization forces driving the individual in spite of himself but on what he himself does. Hostility is not a dynamism in the personality, it is part of the personality pattern. Unfortunate people are not acted upon by hostility, they themselves make the choices which are describable as hostile. The psychotherapist turns to aggressive experimentation under proper psychotherapeutic controls, not to drain it out, but in order to help the client find other ways of dealing with the invalidity that confronts him. He reinstates imaginative adventure, but with fresh ways of dealing with the outcomes. He helps the client to make use of negative evidence instead of displacing it with extorted and unrealistic positive evidence.

Probably all of us have daily bouts in some measure with hostility. Most of us are traditionally inclined to see this hostility as a force welling up within us. When seen in others, it is easy to interpret only as a desire to hurt, especially if we must bear the brunt. Yet whether we experience it in ourselves, or have to deal with it in our associates, the key to its understanding is an appreciation of the person himself.

Behind the mask of his hostility, we find these key features: deep concern with social relations, his far-reaching convictions regarding human nature, the wager that he could not afford to lose, and his frantic effort to collect winnings long after the race was run and hopelessly lost.