DISCUSSION:

A leading Australian psychiatrist, writing under the name of Democritus, takes issue with Heraclitus' views on Freud.

"NEW Frontiers in Psychiatry", in No. 2 of Left Review, has probably suffered from attempting to deal with a complex and confused subject in a way digestible to the average lay person. However, there are certain points demanding comment.

The contribution irritated me not only because I happen to disagree on various matters of theory, but because it presents one side of a controversy in a rather trite dogmatic fashion which could reasonably lead the average reader into concluding that psychoanalysis, or some neo-Freudian derivative, is synonymous with psychiatry.

Also, just how fair is it to characterise psychiatrists who do not adhere to freudian or neo-freudian views as "old hat", and a dying race of men? The truth is that the psychiatric profession continues to debate the claims of the freudians, and the evidence is very clear, at least overseas, that it is the various psycho-dynamic schools which are dying.

Heraclitus himself indicates one of the reasons for this by referring to the impracticability of using psychoanalytic techniques except for a small and affluent section of the community. But he does sweeten the pill by suggesting that the effective alternative of social psychiatry owes a great deal to Freud. While this may be true of some group psychotherapeutic techniques, it is not true of all. So far as recent innovations in the psychiatric hospitals are concerned, few of the ideas are derived from psychoanalytic theories.

What Heraclitus should have pointed out is that the disenchantment with psychoanalysis has resulted, in many countries, in a strong movement towards the development of community health services, utilising sociologists and anthropologists. Although the theoretical goals of this movement vary a good deal from person to person and from country to country, their ideas are such that, generally speaking, they are regarded as heretics by the psychoanalysts.

An indication of the seriousness of the current tussle between the two groups is that in the USA the federal government is threatening to withdraw funds from the mainly analytically orientated child guidance movement, and re-channel them into the more effective and wider aiming field of community mental health.

Heraclitus several times claims that psychoanalysis is a scientific discipline. When they use the word "science" most people mean the systematised knowledge derived from observation, study and experimentation carried out in order to determine the nature or principles of what is being studied.

No matter how hard these protagonists push the "hard sell" technique, the fact is that psychoanalysis does not and cannot use scientific methods of research. By and large, the technique represents the analyst's attempt to interpret the patient's history and
symptoms within his preconceived theoretical framework, relating this back to his patient. If it is rejected, this is interpreted as "resistance" and a clear indication that therapy must continue. However, if the interpretations are accepted this is regarded as another triumph for psychoanalysis, and a proof of its validity. Tautological proof such as this is certainly not scientific method.

It has been pointed out by Orlanski, a well-known experimental psychologist, that most if not all psychoanalytic concepts, because of their subjectiveness, cannot be properly scrutinised in a scientific sense. This has been referred to at some length by H. J. Eysenck in his book, Uses and Abuses of Psychology.

Some indication of the subjectiveness of their findings may be gained from the troubled history of bickerings and schisms in the psychoanalytic camp. Glover, a British psychoanalyst, has gone on record with a probable explanation for this. A prospective practitioner of psychoanalysis is obliged to enter into a special type of training relationship with a senior and experienced analyst—a personal relationship so to speak—in order to receive long, intensive, and usually expensive supervision.

For economic reasons, among others, the trainee is virtually forced to drop out of training if he should find himself sceptical of what is presented in the matter of interpretation. But if he continues he must become a devotee of his training analyst, and such a coterie of devotees tend to follow an heretical training analyst in the establishment of a new school of analysis. All schools argue that they are correct, scientific, etc., but how scientific can a procedure be if an identical method of investigation results in such widely divergent conclusions?

The subjectivity of the investigatory process of the main originator of the theory, Sigmund Freud, is crucial and worthy of a few moments' study. It would be more accurate, incidentally, to use the term "formulations," for in many matters (e.g., the nature and origin of anxiety) Freud would make a hard and fast formulation on the basis of his "scientific" findings only to retract at a later date and substitute an alternate formulation.

In this regard, I would suggest reference to Fragments of My Analysis With Freud by Joseph Wortis. If Wortis was brash and provocative he could at least plead youth as an excuse. Freud on the contrary showed himself to be moralising, patronising, bullying and often self-contradictory—hardly the best characteristics for a man claiming objectivity.

This is still more clearly demonstrated in Psychoanalysis: A Critique Based on Freud's Case of Little Hans by Wolpe and Rachman (Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 1960), in which the writers review evidence of Freud bullying the child and his father into modifying the history in order to make it conform with Freud's preconceived notions.

Concerning Freud's rejection of the technique of hypnosis because symptom suppression was followed rapidly by return of symptoms, Ernest Jones the English psychoanalyst comments that Freud admitted his personal difficulty in inducing hypnotic states. One wonders how much Freud's objection was, to use his own term, a good old-fashioned rationalisation. Be that as it may, Janet, the French pioneer in hypnosis, did not experience
the same difficulty and is numbered amongst the many workers who have used hypnosis and various conditioning therapies for symptom suppression, with excellent results and without return of symptoms. See Janet's *Psychological Healing* and Wolpe's *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition*.

I am of the opinion that not only does psycho-analysis suffer the defect of being applicable only to a small group of patients, but that it suffers many other defects, including the claim it makes of being able to explain every eventuality of human behaviour—a claim only possible because of the subjectivity and vagueness of most of its concepts. However it is this which lulls many psychiatrists into believing that there is no further room for research other than filling in certain gaps of psychoanalytic theory.

Heraclitus' treatment of the organismists and learning theory schools (Pavlov was only one of many learning theorists incidentally), illustrates his restricted concept of future research prospects. His last paragraph shows, if I may be excused for saying it, either gross ignorance, or negligent writing. Behaviorism is not mechanistic materialism, unless he be referring to the J. B. Watson school of reflexology, which was so popular in the 1920s, and which stated that all human behaviour could be understood in terms of simple reflex actions. Most, though it is true not all, learning theorists or theories of behaviorism are intimately concerned with man's inner subjective life—but not with vague subjective descriptions. Rather, they are concerned with determining the objectively measured features of perception, cognition, mood, etc.

For technical reasons the workers in this field do not generally start their investigation with man and his behavior, but with animal experimentation, hoping, in time, to move much more thoroughly into the realm of scientific investigation of man himself.

For this reason what they have to offer in clinical practice is, as yet, relatively crude and improvised, and is limited to only a number of psychiatric conditions . . . as is also the case with psychoanalytic methods of treatment. But newer and more sophisticated techniques are constantly appearing—for example, see the excellent review on the subject by McConaghy in the May, 1964, issue of *Medical Journal of Australia*. It should also be mentioned that a number of figures are available supporting the view that behavioral techniques of therapy are significantly more effective than eclectic and psychoanalytic oriented therapy (see Wolpe, Rachman, Costello, Eysenck, Bentler, etc.).

Heraclitus has a poor opinion of organismists, but I think his opinions smack too much of what he has been told, and not enough of what he has experienced. While it is true that they did, and still do, regard the problem as basically a medical-pathology problem, not all took this attitude. In fact, they have made very important contributions to our present day understanding of the physical consequences of the inner life we are both so eager to know about. See Selye and Gellhorn to gain some novel insights.

I would suggest that the writer should not forget that, anti-psychological as many of these workers were, history shows us they achieved a great deal, unless of course Heraclitus denies the help in his clinical practice of such well established treatments as
electroshock, antidepressant drugs, tranquilisers, lithium, sleep therapy, not to speak of the conventional use of sedatives. Mechanistic materialists many of them were, but we should not forget their historical contribution. And I feel there is ample un­surveyed ground yet for them to continue to contribute.

I am not sure that it is correct to say the majority of psychiatrists have a “basic psycho-dynamic orientation.” Certainly, for want of a well systematised theory to be used in post-graduate psychiatric training, it is usual to present psychoanalysis to the students; and while most of them feel they have a use for one or several of the concepts (e.g., the unconscious, or various of the defence mechanisms), it is my experience that few show a fondness for the more “way out” concepts such as fixation, oedipal situation, regression, incorporation, and cathexis.

Most psychiatrists, in my experience, reject the various schools’ (note “schools”) formulations about symbolism, unless it be a rather bemused acceptance of unconsciously motivated errors as exampled in Psychopathology of Everyday Life, a book that most teeth on, leaving the Collected Papers of Freud unread, but prominently displayed on the office bookshelf.

I don’t wish to belabor the point, but it does seem to me that psychiatrists in hospital and office practice owe a lot to descriptive psychiatry, and tend to mete out a glorious pot-pourri of psychotherapy which tends to be given the high sounding title of “rational psychotherapy.” They are frequently directive and reassuring, and so often reflect their own personal views of how emotional, social or economic problems can be solved. Otherwise, they make full use of physical methods of psychiatric treatments.

It is substantially for these reasons I object to the article New Frontiers in Psychiatry. I agree, however, that the analytic schools have made important contributions to present day psychiatry, and there can be no doubt that they have made a number of exciting, novel and particularly astute observations of human behavior. But I do not think they constitute a new frontier. Whatever the case, I think that Heraclitus’ comments should be answered if for no other reason than they are so one-sided.

(In view of the importance of the subject and the distinction of the writer, the 1000 word limit in discussion articles was waived in this case—Ed.)

UNION AMALGAMATIONS

THE queries raised by J. O’N. about some of the problems of amalgamation, and the call by him for deeper re-thinking of the subject is a welcome addition to discussion on trade union questions.

He is right in pointing out that as the present rules of Labor Councils apply there is a loss in representation when unions amalgamate. When the Unions concerned are militant led it does of course reduce the numbers of left-wing delegates and can have an adverse effect for a period.

However, the real strength of unionism lies in the unions, not the central
bodies, and the more positive aspect is that amalgamations create newer, stronger organisations, which can more effectively fight for the workers' interests. How many times have we seen good policy decisions on a central body, such as the Australian Council of Trade Unions, remain a mere paper resolution, either because affiliated unions are not active about it, or, more often, the ACTU leadership does nothing to carry out the decision.

In my view, the important thing is for progressive unionists to cast aside conservative, one-sided thinking and set out to build further the influence and organisation of the trade unions. This does not mean an exclusive concern with amalgamations as the only way; but I believe amalgamation is a qualitatively higher form than federations, industry groups or similar organisational forms.

While proceeding towards amalgamation we should also be simultaneously seeking to improve the method of representation on central bodies, to make them more fully reflect the true position of affiliated unions.

I cannot agree with J.O’N’s comment that State and Federal industry federations are more suitable to large or medium unions than amalgamation. Within these federations the unions remain separate autonomous bodies, with the right of deciding whether a decision should be carried out or not.

The duplication of time and effort by officials and staff continues, with officials of all the unions in the federation visiting the same job, often to speak to or for a handful of members. Demarcation disputes remain and are a source of conflict and division. It is worth noting, by the way, that since the Boilermakers-Blacksmiths amalgamation, the once frequent demarcation disputes between these groups of tradesmen have virtually disappeared.

However, I think it incorrect to be at odds about the respective merits of amalgamation or federation. Federations are an important advance in union organisation. They bring unions together on common issues and can be, and often are, necessary steps to amalgamation.

Another aspect of the question which needs consideration is the form of union organisation an amalgamated union should adopt. Amalgamation alone is not the complete answer. We need forms of union organisation which meet today's requirements, which place greater emphasis on organisation in the work place.

The old style form of union meetings, particularly evening meetings, are no longer attractive, as is shown by the general decline of, and poor attendance at, most union meetings. These meetings are often loaded up with trifling administrative questions which are boring to most unionists and prevent lively discussion on vital issues with which workers are most concerned.

A form of union structure which ensures firm rank and file control on the main policy questions, and allows maximum flexibility for job implementation would seem to be the main requirement today.

The points raised on the interference by the State forces, and anti-union organisations such as the National Civic Council, require close consideration. A correct general line, based firmly upon the fundamental
interests of the working class, and
correct methods of work by the left
forces, can counter the efforts of both
the State forces and extreme right-
wing groupings within the labor
movement.

The workers are looking for strong­
er and more united trade unionism,
organised in such a way as to give
effective leadership; it is the responsi­
bility of the left to step out boldly
towards newer and more effective
forms of organisation.

PAT CLANCY.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

ONE can agree with Alf Watt that
"the possibility of a serious collapse,
affecting Australia, if not the world,
should not be discounted" and "that
it is good politics to take this into
account".

But is this really the issue facing
the Communist Party today? Is it not
rather that we have been “preparing”
for a long time for the serious collapse
that we expected and have done all
too little to cope with the problems of
the present-day economic reality?

The merit of B. Taft’s article lies
precisely in that it posed the need to
deal with these problems and gave
some of the reasons for it. These
reasons Alf Watt does not tackle.

It is unfortunately true that our
thinking on these questions has far
too long been dominated by static non-
Marxist repetition of formulas, in
place of a creative analysis of phen­
omena.

There is no doubt that cyclical
crises continue, as B. Taft points out;
there is equally no doubt that the
new objective and subjective factors
which he deals with operate and that
they have affected the course of
cyclical crises in post-war years.

A serious analysis must deal with
these factors and their likely course
of operation.

MAX LORKIN

CHINA’S “CULTURAL
REVOLUTION”

BEFORE Laurie Aarons’ article
China’s Ten Years, with which we
agree, appeared in ALR No. 3, the
Parramatta Branch of the Communist
Party had discussed the question and
had decided as follows:

AS Australian Communists, we are
extremely disturbed by reports of
“The Great Proletarian Cultural Re­
volution” occurring in the People’s
Republic of China today.

Many outrageous attacks have been
made upon the dignity of the indivi­
dual, the right to personal privacy,
the merit of scholarship and the
worth of the art treasures of the
world—all in the name of marxism-
leninism, of international communism.
But the burning of books, the destruc­
tion of priceless art treasures, the ban­
ning of music and drama—all
denounced as “foreign” and “bour­
geois”—has nothing to do with the
name and spirit of marxism-leninism,
with international communism.

Marx was German, not Chinese. He
was however a great admirer of all
the treasures of art, regardless of their
country of origin. He was a scholar
of the English playwright Shakes­
peare, the French novelist Balzac, the
Spanish writer Cervantes and the Ger-
man poets Goethe and Heine. An authority on the poetry of Aeschylus, Marx had a special love for all the works of the classic world. "He was always a faithful lover of the ancient Greeks and he would have scourged those contemptible souls from the temple who would prevent the workers from appreciating the culture of the classic world." (Marx and Literature by Franz Mehring, quoted in Literature and Art, (International Publishers, New York, 1947 — page 142). It is said that the favourite motto of Marx was "Nihil humanum a me alienum pute", which translated from the Latin means "I regard nothing human as alien to me". Such was the man who gave his name to marxism.

The Russian leader Lenin, no less gifted than Marx, addressed the young generation of the Soviet Union in 1920 in these words: "It would be a mistake to think that it is enough to imbibe communist science, without acquiring the sum total of knowledge of which communism itself is a consequence... You can become a communist only by enriching your mind with the knowledge of all the treasures created by mankind." (The Tasks of the Youth Leagues, a speech delivered by Lenin in 1920, quoted in The Young Generation by Lenin, International Publishers, New York, 1940 — pages 30 & 32). Such was the man who gave his name to leninism.

Communists look to the day when all the works of all the peoples of the world are owned in common. We feel that we must protest against the outrages committed by the "Red Guards" in the People's Republic of China which have brought the ideals of marxism-leninism, of international communism, into disrepute throughout the world. History will decide if the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is indeed "Great". It is certainly not "Proletarian". It is anti-cultural, not in any sense "Cultural". And not by any definition could this irresponsible behaviour be called a "Revolution".

"SHAKESPEARE in his day had a progressive side. He represented something of the rising capitalist struggle against the then reactionary feudal classes. But is it correct in socialist society to glorify the capitalist ideas, to portray as the heroes of socialist society people like Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello and to fail to portray the heroism of the ordinary workers and peasants who are the real makers of history? The reality of Shakespeare's day is a far cry from the reality of socialist society. Certainly let us respect and preserve the progressive side but let us smash any idea that perpetuates the old. If Shakespeare is presented without criticism and in a spirit of acceptance it inevitably means the victory of bourgeois ideas."