

ABSOLUTE

By A. O. MACRAE

"How happy should we be if we from Self could rest."

THIS expression in a brief poem by an intimate, brilliant university friend of Gladstone, finds echo today in the minds of many of this troubled world. In more or less similar strain, or suggestion, is this thought found in the minds of thinkers of the past. It could be found, suggestively, in the Know Thy Self of the Delphic Oracle, in Deny Thy Self, the admonition of the Galilean Teacher, in men's life on earth as a temptation, as from the Book of Job, and by the word of the prophet, "No flesh (Self) hath peace", or within the cry of the Apostle "Who shall deliver me from this Body (Self)".

From every angle of behaviors is the clamant constant, urgent, demand, or drive of Self and no rest from it. It's this *same* Self that haunts and hunts Personality in form of springs of action. Ceaseless it pushes, presses its interest in manifold guises as Love of Power, Pride of Power, as Rivalry, Acquisitiveness, Ostentation and, in truth, in the works of the Flesh.

Laying aside the present-day philosophic and psychological attitudes or explanations in this connection, let us rather turn to the ethical and the spiritual and the mystical in the face of this no rest from Self. For the spiritual, the religious, to get this rest, one proposed way was to deny Self. Another, Nirvana, or freedom from the wheel of life. Mysticism, in the effort to know or examine how to get rest from this Self, commonly interpreted Personality as at once two Selves, a lower and a higher.

Ethical's endeavour after this Rest tended to set Self in subjection to Kant's Categorical Imperative.

Deliberating in my own Person, my human Psyche, possible ways to rest from Self, was to be driven to re-echo the opening exclamation from the poet. Passing on, in personal examination, was to seek if there was any way of Rest from or Cease of Self. During a long varied experience and now "with 80 years and no tomorrow", at no stage has my Self permitted of rest. There is always acute apprehension that the course of my human nature, (Self, flesh) permits no cessation, naught that is Rest from Self.

I am ever seeking, craving rest, relief, release from this Self's constant conscious activity, but finding it quite beyond control of WILL, even when it may be wholly undesired and unrelated to the behavior of the occasion.

Thus no behavior for me, even such as is apparently pure altruism, gains rest, or finds it even as a concomitant. Ancient philosophy followed by Utilitarianism down the centuries, held the same view, that there is no pure altruism because no behavior escaped the touch or tinge of Self, as Self interest, in some form. Was it not this no cease of Self, no rest from it, that led to efforts after escapism, as in Asceticism, Buddhism, Paulinism?

When Life was regarded as but restless temptation, or trial, I saw Self comparable to the desperately wicked heart by the Prophet. Thus I sought rest by doing the will of Humility, forthwith Self suggested this humility as being but inferiority complex. Again no rest. When I exercised charity, with Self it meant How praiseworthy! No escape from double-mindedness, so no rest.

There is nothing in my behavior or activity that is not tinged, tarnished, affected by Self. There is no fruit of the Spirit that is not paralleled coetaneously by work of the Self (Flesh), so no rest. Evidently the Christian view recognizes this; again and again in prayer, in hymn is this evidence.

What then of the peace or rest, that passeth understanding? Certainly it is not to be found on the plane of what is termed the natural man for there Self is ever active.

If rest is to be possible at all, must we not draw a distinction, or accept the distinction between human nature (cf. the natural man) and the human mind, between, in fact, the natural and the Spiritual? The former is bound by chains of Self (Self Interest et al.), by location in time and space, by identity, by the finite. But human mind, as the mind of Spirit, is timeless, spaceless, free from the prison house, the Self.

Such are the mystics, *e.g.* Plotinus, a Kempis, Scotus Erigena, Eckhardt, or such an one as Paul the Apostle, in his vision; Socrates, when under his Daemon. Have they laid aside every weight; are they coursing unalloyed? Have they attained a plane of rapture, exaltation, and rest? Is there now neither Death nor Life, nor height nor depth to separate them from their State? Yet the course or play of their human nature, is still a weight. Are they then still left with no language but the cry, "Oh how happy should we be if we from Self could rest"?

Is their only course comparable to that of Alcoholics Anonymous, to admit and submit? To look to a Power, not their own, a Power that makes for Right and Peace?

According to the testimony of the Religious down the Ages, this makes for Rest and Cease from Self.