

26th October 2023

Awareness

**“To become different from what we are,
we must have some awareness of what we are.”**

Eric Hoffer, *The Passionate State of Mind*

I found myself using an old Scots word the other day that got me thinking. The word (another favourite of my Granny's) is *tirrivee*. It has a range of meanings: a passion or rage; a fit of temper; or (the context in which my Granny used it) a commotion or disturbance. It derives from the verb to *tirr*, which has its roots in stripping something back to basics, like rethatching a roof, removing the turf before the peats are cut, or even taking your clothes off. This led to its use as a descriptor of human behaviour: to snarl – stripping away politeness and being rough of speech; or a label for a bad-tempered child – screaming in a tantrum, with no constraints. To witness a *tirrivee* can be an unpleasant experience.

But usually, my Granny used the word in positive sense, when someone “took a *tirrivee* to themselves”: going back to basics, getting to the root of things, often as the precursor to a life-change, be it major or minor. It's the equivalent in English of “coming to your senses”, realising things need to be different. It's awareness *and* doing something about it.

I had a young father in my congregation years ago who, to everyone, including me, was a fine, upstanding character. But he had a secret life and had become a gambling addict. He came to me before Christmas one year, broken hearted, because the family were in debt. There was no money for presents for his children; his marriage was rocky; the future hopeless. He knew it couldn't go on. Something had to change. He was in that place to which Eric Hoffer directs us in the quote above: “To become different from what we are, we must have some awareness of what we are.” In short, this young man had “taken a *tirrivee* to himself”, and that was the beginning of change and renewal. And, with the dedicated help of *Gamblers Anonymous*, his *tirrivee* led to him turning his life around.

If and when we need to, and even in small ways, do *we* not need to take a *tirrivee* to ourselves sometimes? If self-awareness matters, can we not then, under God, become different from what we are?

A prayer for today

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen*

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