

30<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## Between

**“Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the shadow.”**

*T S Elliot, The Hollow Men*

I feel I'm in an "in-between" place: between Christmas and the New Year; between the arrival of a Covid-19 vaccine and the widespread use of it; between the awfulness of this past year and the hope and promise of a new one; between knowing and not-knowing; between now and then.

I've heard this called a "limbo" time. In Roman Catholic Theology, the "Limbo of the Fathers" (from the Latin *limbus* for an edge or boundary) is deemed to be the place where those who die in "original sin" are condemned to wait until their fate is ultimately decided. One of the most beautiful poems by the Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, is *Limbo* in which he uses the exquisite metaphor, "Now limbo will be a cold glitter of souls".

But perhaps the quote which truly describes where I am at the moment comes from John Milton, who wrote in *Paradise Lost*:

*Into a limbo, large and broad, since called  
The Paradise of Fools, to few unknown.*

Am I one of the "paradise of fools" to be in this "in-between" place, this limbo time? Has T S Elliot's shadow fallen on me as I wait between "the idea and the reality" or "the motion and the act"?

No! I am no fool, for I have to learn to be in that place of "not-knowing" and not to be stressed about things over which I have no control. This "large and broad" place may extend way beyond my horizon, deep into next year, until things are clearer. But I've decided this is no shadow that heralds a darkness, but simply a temporary respite, a moment of shade, which will be of benefit to me before I launch into the next unknown stage of my journey of discovery. And, yes, I can indeed see hope for my very soul, glittering in the coldness of my limbo time.

### **A prayer for today**

*Patient God, please wait with me between my knowing and not-knowing. Amen*

An original reflection © Tom Gordon  
Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>