

**Field Nocturne 35**  
**Helen's Halting Hand**

We have brushed past two senses, as they are describe by common sense. How many organs of sense there are: that is the larger issue of reading into scientific practice that heuristic sentence of study we paused over at the end of the previous *Field Nocturne*. This is certainly true of the generically described activity of touching. We dallied a little over that sense as we tried to share the mood of Merleau-Ponty, searching for a way out of his problem by focusing on peculiarities of touching.<sup>1</sup> In the essay before that we spent time - not enough, certainly, since life drags us away from our musings, but if we are professionals the longer time needs to be found<sup>2</sup> - in the presence of Helen Keller during her five weeks with Annie Sullivan. When Helen did by touch tied to desire we did at a much younger age using the complex of receptors we talked of in *Field Nocturne 34*: in commonsense terms, we had the benefit of eyesight and hearing.

What Helen and you and I did was done spontaneously but consciously. The but is put in there because it surprises some of us to hear or read the two words together. Sometimes we use the word *unconsciously* to describe spontaneity but it is used then loosely, which is O.K. : what is meant is **inadvertently**.<sup>3</sup> Better, as the footnote reveals,

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<sup>1</sup>See *Field Nocturne 28*: "A Touching of Touching: Getting on Your Nerves".

<sup>2</sup>I illustrate this challenge and this need in the first and last (14th) chapter of *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*. The last chapter slows up the reader by peculiar strategies like winding in a CD of Sinéad O'Connor. The first chapter enters into details regarding Goedel and pointers from Penrose that are related to the present effort. See further, note 5 below.

<sup>3</sup>An interesting anecdote worth relating. When doing the index to *Method* I came across the loose use of *unconsciously* and wrote to Lonergan, I think now I was fussing, but accuracy was a priority for me in 1971. He wrote back immediately with the replacement: *inadvertently*. It would not trouble printing, since *inadvertently* had - and no doubt he enjoyed this - the same number of letters as *unconsciously*!

to use the more precise word *inadvertently*. But even that word is troublesome, or rather our conventions of speaking lead us into trouble. Birds sing and dog's bark spontaneously and consciously and inadvertently; are you O.K. with that suggestion? The song or the bark never turns into a word: are you O.K. with that suggestion? A lot of energy and experimenting has gone into reversing that suggestion, but lets not go there into zones of talking parrots and counting horses and monkeys with vocabularies. Not do I wish to venture into **Neuroscience's** discussion of the topic: I invite you to find the flaws in your own good time, and I think here of you in the plural and the good time being a century of collaborative searching, in an increasingly new context.

"What is the new context? **What** is the new context." I pick up the question and the statement from Field Nocturnes 30, where I promised pointers here towards that new context.<sup>4</sup> The pointers need to be both elementary and complex, erudite. And I have mixed such pointers all along here in a very non-pedagogical manner. The elementary pointers, say towards the development of luminous elementary grammatology from elementary school onwards, may well be followed up in the next decade. But what of the suggestion that I pull out of the word *halting* in the title? On the elementary level it refers to the halt of a certain type of interrelating of Helen with Annie Sullivan. After the water-naming there was a leaving behind of a process of exchange in the creative leap involved there. There was a halting problem and a halting solution in the process. Now, I throw in another halting problem, to us **herenow**. How might we muck around with words to shift words to HOW- words? Not a matter of five weeks, but perhaps of five or five hundred generations.

But now let me stretch you fantasy considerably further. Roger Penrose ha two volumes that weave around the topic of a larger meaning of *halting*.<sup>5</sup> But that weaving

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<sup>4</sup>See the second page of *Field Nocturne 30*.

<sup>5</sup>Penrose's two volumes are *The Emperor's New Mind. Concerning Computers, Minds, and the Laws of Physics*, Oxford University Press, 1990 and *Shadows of the Mind. A Search for the Missing Science of Consciousness*, Oxford University Press, 1994. My website book

is obscure and dodgy. Penrose and Turing have a halting problem that needs a hand from a latter-day, latter eon, Annie Sullivan. The hand would be a hand into the new context, words that point Penrose and Turing and such folk to their subtle selves, so that self-identification lifts e.g. the two volumes of Penrose into a strange fresh universe of discourse, or the volumes of *Journal of Symbolic Logic* into a fleshy luminosity.

All this fantasy is noised abroad in the single word **What**: but only if the existential leap to self as **what** is weaved into all the scientific and aesthetic and ultimating reaches of humanity, making the globe a noosphere.

**What**, then, is Helen's halting hand, and your halting eye, in the fullness of their cosmic cranial neurodynamics. This is not the touching and the seeing that is the treated, or ill-treated, in the text, **Neuroscience**, or its many equivalents. When I began these essays I was foolish enough to think that we could rise to replacing such ill-treatments with the suggestions of a better treatment. So, here, what I had envisaged was a rewrite of Field Nocturne 26, "Helen and I" in a new context, where you and I might meet in a type of mutually mediating and mediated self-luminousness that would "take on the glory and the freshness of a dream."<sup>6</sup> But the rewriting is the task of the new context, possess of and by a radiance of humanity's **what**.

So I leave you would the meager suggestions of a the short section on "Elementary Grammatology" given in *Lack in the Beingstalk*,<sup>7</sup> and with the image that we humans are only on the threshold of speaking to each other about our longings and lonelinesses.

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*Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry* points to the challenge of dealing with four books. These two and the two books of Robert Doran, *The Dialectics of History* and *What is Systematics?*, both from University of Toronto Press. On the halting problem of Turing see *Shadows of the Mind*, 30, 205, 377, 379. The purpose of this odd paragraph is to call forth the molecules of your mind to envisage, with yogatic and yugatic molecular contortions, the very distant world era when halting problems will be considered in an integral finalistic fashion.

<sup>6</sup>*Insight* 532[556], recalling Wordsworth.

<sup>7</sup>Pages 137- 141.