THE ROSETTA STONE OF THE HUMAN MIND
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Three languages to integrate neurobiology and psychology

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For questioning is the piety of thought
(M. Heidegger, 1977, p. 35)
The Rosetta Stone in the British Museum
(Eastern Egyptian Gallery)
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I met Vincenzo Sanguineti at a crucial point of my career, when, after 20 years of involvement in biological research applied to psychiatric disorders, I started to feel the emptiness and aridity of biological explanations that, besides the evidence of being incomplete and rough, lack, as Mandell stated, “the beauty and generativity of premolecular research.” I realized that microscopic dissection had been the main objective of too many scientists, including myself, for too long and this attitude precluded us from developing a vision of the brain and of the mind in their entirety. Obviously, I do not reject neuroscience, I am still a neuroscientist, but now I know that neuroscience can provide me only with methods and not explanations. Meeting Vincenzo Sanguineti was an event that shaped my next steps, a bifurcation point, and the ensuing results were very fruitful, in that we arranged together two courses at the national meetings of the American Psychiatric Association that were a great success. On those occasions I could appreciate his broad mind and deep knowledge of neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and neurochemistry, and his expressed discomfort with the current existence of only a few theories of the mind and the fact that psychoanalysts and neuroscientists are often too dogmatic and closed in their own convictions to be able to cooperate in a positive way.

Therefore, I was not surprised when I received his new book, *The Rosetta Stone to the Human Mind: Three Languages to Integrate Psychology and Neurobiology*, because I knew that he cultivates the intent to explain the complexity of the mind from different perspectives that are not mutually exclusive. He shows that they simply represent the use of different languages to describe the same entity.

Obviously, this book is only an attempt to do so, and Vincenzo Sanguineti is very modest and underlines this aspect, but with no doubt it is a serious and exhaustive attempt toward the holistic comprehension of that complexity that is the human mind. For this reason, probably, he forced himself to be simple, but not simplistic, so that the book might be understood by both neuroscientists
and psychiatrists, coming as they do from different backgrounds. In addition, it is full of historical and literary references, as well as being in part centered on the myth of Eros and Psyche, with fascinating results.

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Over the past decade or so it has been my pleasure to help with the organization of and take part in several academic conferences and workshops in the general area of consciousness studies. Although I write pleasure, because there were opportunities to take in unfamiliar ideas and form new friendships, these experiences shared a frustrating feature that stemmed from the limited perspectives of the attendees.

For all our vaunted devotion to learning, we academics are a narrow lot with two major character flaws. First, we tend to favor the perspectives of reductionism. Overly impressed with the successes of the natural sciences, biologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, economists, cultural anthropologists, and even philosophers mold their disciplines with the same bottom-up logical character that works so well in physics and even some simpler branches of chemistry. This tendency persists in the face of what seems overwhelming evidence to the contrary from the humanities, not to mention the events of a normal day or a normal life. Second, academics don’t listen. Each one goes to a conference with the aim of convincing others that his point of view should prevail. Thus an interdisciplinary conference often collapses into a group of people talking past each other, generating impressive wind but little more. Of course I exaggerate here; many academics do listen to other perspectives and sincerely criticize their own, but not enough for the sounds of that wind to quiet.

And listen we must. Opening the doors to an appreciation of human spirit is now—as for many centuries—a central endeavor of our species, and it is becoming clear that no single perspective has a full set of keys. As people from different subcultures speak in diverse tongues, the first task that we face is to learn how to translate from one set of assumptions and jargon to those of another group. It is to this task that The Rosetta Stone to the Human Mind is directed.
Working at a level that transcends individual academic disciplines, Dr. Sanguineti sees three main subcultures that need to be introduced to each other. The first of these is mathematical science, with its ancient traditions, curious logic, and symbolic jottings that seem meaningless except to those who (strangely) find them exciting. Second is the subjective domain, from where we retrieve descriptions of that inner space that we call our psyche and that finds its finest expression in the arts, which predate recorded human history and continue to fascinate and confuse (not necessarily in that order) those trained in the sciences. Yet art springs directly from spirit and cries to be heard. Finally, there are observations of human mind and spirit by those who deal directly with it without preconceived limits on what they are allowed to see: the author’s “objective observers.”

The languages of these three—the theorist, the artist, and the objective observer—are interpreted in terms of each other by Dr. Sanguineti in this thoughtful book and used to create a metalanguage with sufficient depth to comprehend the nature of the human mind. It is a remarkable achievement, which all who wonder will profit from reading and cherish.

Alwyn Scott
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Foreword

How do the following words relate to one another: mind, soul, self, spirit, identity, character, subject, person, personality, psyche, individual, ego, consciousness, brain, I? In no other field of human investigation does such a rich proliferation of mysteries unfold from beneath the simplest question. Scientists who investigate the brain may be perfectly happy to admit that their methods are very different from those of psychoanalysts, priests, philosophers, and poets, but is it as easy to be certain that each of these thinkers is actually investigating the same thing? Is the brain consciousness? Is consciousness the subject? Is the ego the self? An irreducible complexity emerges not only between the languages used to explain human interior life, but even between their differing ways of conceiving of their object. Even when there is a clear sense of the differences between these various terms, the relationship between them remains mysterious. How does the spirit connect with the brain, for example? And where exactly is “the self”? Yet it is no easy matter to solve this disproportion by establishing an objective hierarchy of the more or less objective, the more or less hypothetical, or the more or less abstract. There is no ultimate theory of the self that will overrule or supplant all the others, and each one that aspires to this title soon reveals its limitations and provokes even more, often unanswerable questions. None of our many discourses of subjectivity can be ruled out absolutely as totally inappropriate or useless. Chemical therapy may prove profitable for a wide range of psychological conditions, but useless for the obscure abstract spiritual crisis; philosophers may puzzle over a weakening self-concept that behavioral modification therapy can allow to be managed. Science may aspire in the objective modeling of brain-function, at the expense of the representation of contingent lived experience. And all of this leaves aside the question of whether interior life is indeed a “problem” that can be met by a solution, an object that can be modeled, or a question that can be answered.
In the present book, Vincenzo Sanguineti accepts the many challenges of this situation head on, by refusing to settle for a simple, single approach as the ultimate methodology. The key themes of his study revolve around complexity, inclusiveness, and metaphoricity. First, interior life is so irreducibly complex and unstable that no final explanation or model of it will be possible. This not only resonates with the exploratory nature of thought, and the fact that so little consensus has been reached, but also with the open-endedness and wide-ranging possibilities of the subjectivity of daily life. Second, no single theory will ever achieve the status of the key to all (subjective) mythologies. The integration of different approaches—or at least the open conversation between them—beckons as the necessary path that will allow, not only for workable solutions to individuals who have to deal with biochemical imbalances but also uncertainties about culturally constituted identities and immediate human relationships. Finally, as he says (p. 87): “Choose your preferred metaphor”! The process of modeling can never reduce to zero its dependence on abstract, even fictional imagery and language as a way of allowing its insights to be represented. Whether it takes the form of diagrams, graphs, models, images, illustrations or labels, metaphor always plays a function in the revelation of the self. This practice finds its most happy example in the choice of the Rosetta Stone itself as the metaphor for the way different languages cohabit the same investigative space of the quest for understanding who or what we are.

Yet, even this usage leads to even more questions. The history of the reception of the Rosetta Stone required that the three languages be read for what they had in common. They were clues to each other, allowing obscure symbols to reveal their unknown significance. Yet, anyone who has experienced the liminal space where one language meets another is aware of the untranslatable dimension that divides one symbolic order from another. The three languages on the Rosetta Stone cannot be reduced to a single meaning, because this meaning will be at the cost of the minute but inescapable differences in tone, emphasis, and timbre that separate individual languages. What is it in each of these languages that cannot be translated into the others? The achievement of this book is to capture the complexity of the integration of different conceptual languages: What do they say together but what does each of them say that cannot be translated into the others? Where do they overlap, and where do they need the unique idiosyncratic contribution that only each particular language can provide?

What this ambitious project captures is the necessary, inalienable mystery of the self, the fact that each of our languages for it remains provisional and open. Yet far from being locked in the domain of the religious, the obscure and the esoteric, this mystery is connected with the rigours of scientific investigation and intellectual analysis. To me, this seems appropriate to the task: only the
full, unreserved powers of the human intellect in all its variety can deal with the mystery of the human self, without ever absolutely reducing the awe, curiosity and sense of open-ended challenge it will always provoke.

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Foreword

The subject of consciousness has been and still is an enigma to the inquiring minds of multiple disciplines over the centuries. It has been addressed by poetry, art, and song; by myth, legend, theology, philosophy, and rational systems of classification; by psychology and psychoanalysis; and, more recently, by theoretical physics and the mathematics of quantum mechanics and nonlinear dynamics.

As has been stated by Dr. Sanguineti, the “bottom up” approach, although erudite, not only falls short but frankly is devoid of that \textit{elan vital} that signifies the successful illumination of a complex question. Therefore, there has been no “Eureka! We have found it!” epiphany that signifies or marks that the essence and core of an issue has at last been discovered. All of the above has led science to grudgingly deal with the much resisted enigma of subjectivity itself. This step requires a paradigm jump from intellect to spirit, from content to context, and away from the myopic literalness of the Newtonian system that condemns knowledge to the constraints of the epistemological blindness consequent to the limitation of the principles of causality and form.

Subjectivity is of a different domain. It is that of nonlinear context rather than linear content and the realm of noncausal reality. Newtonian description is always “about” and external to that which is described and is therefore devoid of essence or experience. We “talk about” the so-called objective, but we live completely, totally, and wholly within the ubiquitous, nonstop, alwaysness, and continuous nowness of the all-embracing subjectivity of existence itself.

The investigation of the immense “phase-space” of the human psyche has largely been like exploration without a compass, much less a global positioning system. In fact, researchers have not even been aware of what level of consciousness they were talking about nor was there a way to verify either discoveries or the suitability of even the investigative tools that were being hopefully relied upon (e.g., mathematics, intellect, reason, semantics, etc.). Dr. Sanguineti gets to the crux of the problem by stating that “humans do not
have any real sense of the profundity and intricacy of their minds, nor are they taught to identify the streams of collective data and affective states that participate to their own being” (p. 134). This is in agreement with our own published research, which documents that the unenlightened human mind is usually unable to discern truth from falsehood.

Actually, recent discoveries from this research about verifiable, quantifiable levels of consciousness allow us to establish common reference points that demystify and clarify the traditionally obscure realms of subjectivity. For instance, on the 1:1000 Scale of the Levels of Consciousness that we use for our research, truth “calibrates” at 200, the intellect is in the 400s, and the higher human qualities of compassion, love, joy, peace, and excellence are in the 500s. Level 600 denotes the unusual but remarkable level traditionally termed enlightenment. (The scale was based on the discovery of how to tell truth from falsehood and delineate the realms of the false from the true, of power versus force, of spiritual from intellectual, and of illuminated states of gnosis from merely intellectual positionalities and presumptions.)

In essence, the research cited above addresses the pressing need to recontextualize the study of the human psyche. Critical to this reframing is the demonstration of the relationship of content (linear), and context (nonlinear), and the critical clarification that the truth of any statement can only be of varying degrees which are powerfully determined by the usually unstated, ignored, undefined, or naively presumed context.

As Dr. Sanguineti concludes from his courageous exploratory plunge into the historic phantasmagoria of the human psyche, the recognition of the sovereignty of subjectivity is the great missing link and, therefore, the crucial reality that has eluded conventional scientific explanations of such a vast and seemingly undecipherable challenge as the human psyche. The subjective experience of reading Dr. Sanguineti’s *Rosetta Stone* was quite interesting and relatively unique. At the conclusion of reading most books, there is a feeling of conclusion, a sort of “Well, that’s that” finalization that the subject matter has supplied information and now the experience of its perusal is over and relatively “done with.” This book resulted in an altogether different response in that, at its conclusion, there was the feeling of having really just started to understand its content. I found myself rereading the book, which, in itself, is quite unusual. The material is presented in a freewheeling style instead of the usual progressive constraint of some epistemological positionality or conventional manner of subject presentation. This turned out to be quite productive. For example, I just had to check out the validity of the cited ancient Egyptians’ realization that the “Ka” is the spirit body that is concordant with the physical body and leaves it to continue on as life after physical death. This “Ka” is the energy body of consciousness, and, as research confirmed, it is the locus of the centralizing sense of “I-ness.” Research indicates that subjective awareness,
out of which any capacity to “know” arises, is a faculty of the *etheric* brain, not the physical one (e.g., the Ka is noumenal, science is phenomenal). To progress, consciousness research therefore has to transcend the limitation of the intellect and affirm the internal core reality of the self and not just the perceptual delineation of the ego.

How do we know that statement to be true? Because the Ka of the reader already knows it by gnosis. Dr. Sanguineti’s book inspires one to break the chains and slavery of neural chemistry and its horrible microtubules. Escape to freedom—the Ka is immortal and laughs at puny physicality and the egomania of the intellect.

The evolution of consciousness is conclusively and provably transcendent. When, through meditation and spiritual endeavor, the identification with the ego of the individual self ceases, then the radical subjectivity of the divinity of the “I” of the self shines forth and the illusion of a separate personal self dissolves into the ultimate context which is the very source of awareness and existence itself. The presence is overwhelming, total, and outside of time. The self replaces the illusory self and the mind goes permanently silent. The condition is total and, in most cases, the subject retires from the world. Accordingly, after many years, the capacity to speak of the condition may return. The *ineffable* is neither definable nor describable and is of a different domain. To be at one with allness leaves nothing to speak about; to truly “know” is to “be.” One cannot *know* thy self but only *be* thy self.

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Introduction

In 1799, while working at the reconstruction of Fort St. Julien, north of the little town of Rashid on the left bank of what in ancient times had been called the Bolbitinic arm of the river Nile, a French soldier in the Napoleonic army dislodged a large slab of black basalt covered with carvings (Budge, 1989).

The stone was taken to Cairo and eventually examined by archaeologists and Egyptologists accompanying the French army at Bonaparte’s expressed request. They quickly realized that the slab of basalt carried a “trilingual” message (actually, inscriptions in two languages and three alphabets). The first was in ideograms, the pictorial and as yet bewildering “hieroglyphs” that were still baffling all those who attempted to translate them. The second inscription was carved in “demotic” Egyptian, the colloquial writing system of ancient Egypt. The third inscription was written in ancient Greek. After reading the Greek passage it became clear that the stone carried an invaluable gift: the same text written in hieroglyphs, demotic Egyptian, and Greek.

The slab was to be shipped to France for display in the Louvre, but Napoleon was defeated by the British, and the stone was shipped to London instead. Named the Rosetta Stone from the place of its unearthing (Rosetta being the European name for Rashid), it is still on display in the British Museum, one of the most important archaeological discoveries of all time. Eventually, by integrating the information on the same phenomenon described in the three very diverse alphabets, the secrets imbedded in the Egyptian hieroglyphs gradually became apparent. The exquisite images became verbal sounds that reflect the everyday language of the Egyptian people, and the depth and complexity of that ancient culture was slowly revealed, making humanity that much richer in the process.

The pictorial alphabet had been the tool of expression of the religious-political system of ancient Egypt. Its invention was attributed to the God Thoth, “the heart and tongue” of the sun god Ra, and it carried instructions on how to deal with the universal themes of gods, death, and the afterlife. It