

# TWIN TEL THE ILLUSION

by Diane H. Powell

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**M**AINSTREAM SCIENCE HAS BECOME so theory-driven that it accepts data only from experiments designed to develop its theories, whereas scientific revolutions occur when science is data-driven and regards anomalous phenomena as evidence that a new theory is needed. Anomalies such as telepathy have been dismissed or ignored by mainstream science because they do not fit into the current model of the brain and consciousness. In that model, we couldn't possibly perceive the experiences or thoughts of someone far away, because our consciousness is confined to brains that receive input solely from their neurologically attached sensory organs. And because we are rational beings, we are skeptical of something that cannot be scientifically explained.

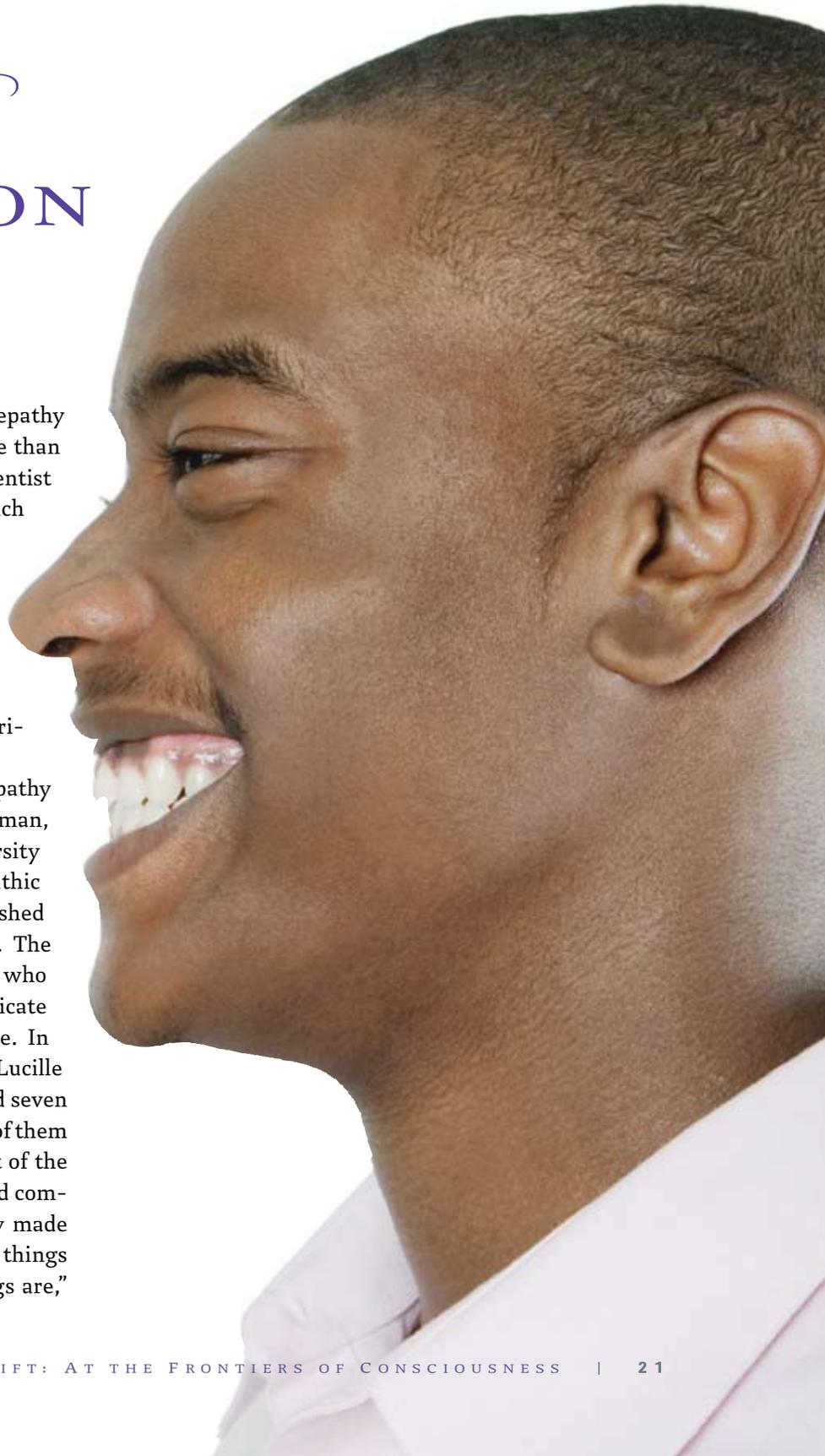
Some scientists are intrigued by *psi*, the technical term for psychic abilities, but have openly worried they will lose their credibility if they investigate it. A primary reason the scientific community hotly contests psychic phenomena is that their validity would—or should—spark a scientific revolution similar to the Copernican upheaval, which forced us to accept the sun as the center of the solar system. As everyone knows, scientific revolutions are not easy matters. Strong evidence for *psi* phenomena such as telepathy is thus vitally important, for it has the capacity to be the revolutionary catalyst that will redefine our understanding of consciousness.

# TELEPATHY *and* SEPARATION

## Twins and Coupled Consciousness

Some of the most compelling evidence for telepathy comes from the study of identical twins. More than one hundred years ago, the eminent British scientist Francis Galton published a short article in which he commented that twins in the company of each other were witnessed to “make the same remarks on the same occasion” or “begin singing the same song at the same moment.”<sup>1</sup> According to Guy Playfair, author of *Twin Telepathy* (Vega, 2002), as many as 30 percent of identical twins appear to experience telepathic interconnection.

Some of the earliest research on twin telepathy was done by a twin, Professor Horatio Newman, head of the zoology department at the University of Chicago. He had what he considered telepathic experiences with his twin brother and published a book called *Twins and Super-Twins* in 1942. The section on telepathy discussed identical twins who were mystified by the way they could communicate with each other without any verbal exchange. In 1961, Robert Sommer, Humphry Osmond, and Lucille Pancyr interviewed fourteen pairs of twins and seven single members of a twin pair to see how many of them reported experiences of telepathy.<sup>2</sup> Twelve out of the thirty-five participants believed that they could communicate telepathically with their twin. They made statements such as, “We both think the same things at the same time,” “I can tell what her feelings are,”



and, “When my twin goes out, I can imagine what he is doing and see the place, like right now, even if I’ve never been there or seen the place described.”

Telepathy happens frequently between closely connected twins during crisis. The term *crisis telepathy* was coined after several dramatic accounts such as the following: Martha Burke felt as if she “had been cut in two” one day in 1977 when a searing pain crossed her chest and abdomen. Hours later she discovered that her twin sister had died in a plane crash halfway across the world. Similarly, in July 1975, Nita Hurst’s left leg became agonizingly painful as bruises spread spontaneously up the left side of her body. She later discovered that her twin, Nettie Porter, had been in a car crash at the very same time four hundred miles away.

BRIDGET HARRISON OF LEICESTER, ENGLAND, AND DOROTHY LOWE OF BURNLEY, LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND, WERE REUNITED IN 1979 AFTER 34 YEARS APART. WHEN THEY MET, BOTH WORE SEVEN RINGS, TWO BRACELETS ON ONE WRIST, AND A WATCH AND A BRACELET ON THE OTHER.

Despite the many anecdotes, there is a shortage of convincing evidence from laboratory studies. One reason is that there have been very few studies. Another is that among the studies conducted, factors known to enhance the chances of telepathic contact weren’t, or couldn’t be, incorporated, such as inducing danger to a twin to evoke crisis telepathy. Other variables that have been scientifically associated with a higher probability of telepathic occurrences are extroversion and a belief in telepathy, but subjects are not usually screened for these attributes. Also, studies by skeptics are less likely to get positive results because the experimenters’ disbelief can influence the outcome.<sup>3</sup>

### Identical Twins Raised Apart

The natural laboratory we call “life” is often much more informative about the way the world works

than is the artificial setting of a man-made laboratory. We can see this in research launched in 1979 by the University of Minnesota on identical twins raised apart. The findings were startling, and many of them are discussed in Nancy Segal’s book *Entwined Lives* (Plume, 2000). Sixty-eight cases were extensively studied. The twins who were reunited often felt as though they had known each other their entire lives. Communication between them immediately flowed easily, as though they had been in contact all along. There were remarkable similarities in personality and appearance, of course, which could be explained by their identical genetics, but what startled the researchers were the many similar life details that defied the odds of chance and conventional understanding.

The “Jim twins,” for example, had been separated at four-weeks-old and were apart for 39 years. Both were named Jim, married a woman named Linda, divorced, and then married another woman named Betty. However, one Jim was on his third marriage. They both had had childhood dogs named Toy and sons named James. One son was James Allen and the other James Alan. They both had been firemen and sheriffs. Both bit their nails, suffered from migraines, smoked Salem cigarettes, and drank Miller Lite beer. Each was six feet tall and weighed exactly 180 pounds, but they wore their hair differently. Among the most remarkable shared details was that both had a compulsion to build a circular white bench around a tree in their yard during the time right before they met. Also, they both had owned light-blue Chevrolets, which they had regularly driven to Pass-a-Grille Beach, Florida, for family vacations. They also enjoyed leaving love notes to their wives throughout their homes. Their facial expressions, IQs, habits, brain waves, and handwriting were nearly identical. To top it all off, they died from the same illness on the same day.

Bridget Harrison of Leicester, England, and Dorothy Lowe of Burnley, Lancashire, England, were reunited in 1979 after 34 years apart. When they met, both wore seven rings, two bracelets on one wrist, and a watch and a bracelet on the other. One’s son was named Richard Andrew, and the other’s son was Andrew Richard. Both had a cat named Tiger, had stopped taking piano lessons at the same age, and had kept a diary in 1960 that was exactly the same brand and

color. The diaries even had the same days blank during the year.

Barbara Herbert found Daphne Goodship, her lost twin, after forty years of separation. Both grew up outside London, left school at age 14, fell down stairs and injured their ankles at age 15, worked in local government, met their future husbands at the town hall dance at age 16, miscarried in the same month, and then gave birth to two boys and one girl. Both tinted their hair auburn when they were younger, were squeamish about heights and blood, preferred cold coffee, and readily burst into laughter. They both had a habit of pushing their noses up with the palm of their hand, an act they both called “squidging.” And when they met, they both wore cream-colored dresses and brown velvet jackets.

## Defying Conventional Explanations

What explains these remarkable findings? Are they because of the twins’ identical genetics, similar brain wiring, or both? The Minnesota data confirms that the commonalities aren’t because of the amount of time the twins spent together. How much can we attribute to genetics, and how much to environment? And how do these two influences interact?

I’ve personally known fifteen sets of identical twins and three sets of identical triplets during my life. They are one of the reasons I have been so intrigued by what makes us who we are. Each of the twins and triplets I’ve known was raised with his or her identical sibling(s) in the United States, where the need to be recognized as an individual is very strong. This conditioned inclination is amplified for twins raised in the same household, where the desire to distinguish themselves from each other is heightened. When identical twins grow up in different households (and sometimes different cultures), none of their choices stem from such a need. So while twins raised apart have the same opportunity for self-expression as anyone else, the absence of common-household pressure to do so may explain why they can end up more similar than their common-household counterparts. But there is far more to the story.

Researchers consider genetics, environmental influences, and the interaction between genetics and environment to be the variables that determine

our psychological makeup. Because the Minnesota study’s twins shared identical genes but had entirely different environments after birth, scientists have used the twins-separated-at-birth data to justify the idea that our genes play a far greater role in who we are than we previously realized. However, the problem with this conclusion is that the human genome isn’t complex enough. The Human Genome Project predicted that humans would have more than 100,000 genes. Scientists were surprised when the entire human genome turned out to contain only around 35,000. Given that the mustard plant has 25,000 genes, a life form’s complexity is not proportional to its number of genes.

Also, many diverse life forms share the same genes, but the amount of genetic overlap between two

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distantly related species is obviously far greater. The banana plant and humans share 43 percent of their genes, for example, while chimpanzees and humans share 98.5 percent. Estimates say that only 3 million pairs of nucleotides (the basic components of DNA) distinguish each of us from any other person on the planet. This may sound like a lot, but the human genome contains roughly 3 billion nucleotide pairs. So the distinguishing DNA between each of us is no more than one-thousandth of the total, and yet there are a seemingly infinite number of ways in which we are distinct. The complex similarities between separated twins simply cannot be accounted for by science’s genetic model.

This isn’t to say that genes don’t explain some of the similarities, such as similar tastes in cigarettes or colognes, similar interests or careers, similar looks, similar IQs, and so on, but some parallels—such as

building a circular white fence around a tree—do not have a genetic explanation. If such things were genetic, it would suggest that we are just biological machines. If that were the case, identical twins would be even more alike. How could genes possibly be coding for this, especially given the size of the human genome?

Could the answer be with the chromosomes? Ninety-eight percent of the content of our chromosomes isn't genes; it's what has been called "junk DNA." It was considered "junk" because, although it is made up of the same DNA bases as genes are, it cannot be translated directly into the manufacture of proteins, which is how genes produce their effects. Mutations within junk DNA are common and don't have obvious consequences or get eliminated by the evolutionary process of natural selection. So junk DNA was considered just a placeholder, or framework,

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for the important DNA. Now that the human genome has been found to be too small to explain human complexity, researchers are turning to junk DNA for answers. But exactly how junk DNA could contribute to our diversity is unknown and would require a mechanism different from protein production.

Some researchers suggest that the phenomenon of twin telepathy can be explained by looking at what regulates genes, or causes them to turn on and off (the field of epigenetics). Genes are turned off by methylation, which is the addition of a small carbon-based molecule to the backbone of DNA by a substance called a methyl donor. Environmental factors can cause this methylation of genes at any time in life, including during critical stages of development in the womb. The parallels between twins raised apart clearly don't come from a shared environment after birth, but the twins did, to differing degrees, share environmental factors

in the womb. However, we are continuously exposed to epigenetic factors throughout our lives. Although the time spent in the womb is especially important for our development, those months comprise only a fraction of our existence. Nonetheless, the main reason epigenetics can't explain the uncanny similarities between twins who were raised apart is that it still depends upon the genome as its vehicle for expression. We would have to possess genes that influence our name preferences, the events we experience, and other odds-defying coincidences.

The explanation also can't come from the shared hardwiring in the twins' brains. The brain has a "plastic" quality, meaning it is highly influenced by its environment. Its connections are continually changing in response to what is learned, reinforced, or ignored. There is so much variation in the wiring of each individual that brain surgeons test certain areas in their patients' brains before cutting to avoid unnecessary interference with the most critical sections. Such a highly changeable and environmentally influenced system makes many of the commonalities among the separated twins even more remarkable.

Richard Rose, professor of psychology and medical genetics at Indiana University in Bloomington, has studied personality in more than seven thousand sets of twins.<sup>4</sup> He believes that environment, whether shared or unshared, plays a larger role in their personality development than do genetics. Our genes only create the potential for what we could become, but our environments largely shape that potential into who we actually do become. For example, we could have a gene for alcoholism in our genome, but it wouldn't be expressed if we lived in a culture without alcohol. We might have the genetics for a calm temperament, but experiencing severe trauma could leave us easily startled and afraid.

Rose examined a factor unique to identical twins that correlated with the degree to which the twins were similar: the length of time they were joined in the womb. Identical twins result when a single egg is fertilized and separates into two developing embryos shortly afterward. The timing of when the developing embryo separates into identical twins appears to play a significant role in how alike they are later in life. If the separation occurs in the first four days

of pregnancy, each twin has his or her own placenta, chorionic sac, and amniotic sac, as with nonidentical twins. If the split happens between the fifth and eighth days, identical twins have separate amniotic sacs but shared placentas and chorionic sacs. Twins who split between eight and twelve days share all three, thus lacking the separation that would keep their umbilical cords from getting tangled up with each other. When the developing embryo splits after twelve days, they are conjoined twins, which means that their bodies did not fully separate. Rose found that the earlier the egg separates, the less alike the twins are in personality.

### The Illusion of Separation

In the research to date, the twins who were the most alike were those whose cluster of undifferentiated cells separated one day before the biological deadline that would have resulted in their becoming physically conjoined. This made me wonder whether telepathic twins could be an illustration on the macro scale of what physicists see on the micro scale between electrons that have been entangled, or coupled. Entangled electrons must always have spins that are complementary, or opposite, to each other. If entangled electrons are allowed to travel light-years away from each other, they still maintain complementary spins. If the spin of one of them is altered, the spin of the other instantaneously changes. This “nonlocal” effect is due not to a signal between the two electrons but rather to the fact that in some way they have remained interconnected.

How can electrons be light-years apart but not separate? Superstring theories propose that there are at least six more dimensions than the four (time and three physical ones) that we experience directly. Perhaps entangled electrons only separate in the dimensions we knowingly experience but not in one or more of the “higher” dimensions. What if the time that identical twins spend as “one” similarly keeps them from separating in one or more of these other dimensions?

Identical twins may just be one example of how those who are close to each other can tap into a “field of interconnection” and experience it as telepathy. Mothers and their children spend many months as “one” during pregnancy and later show a higher level of shared

telepathic experiences with each other than they have with strangers. Increased experiences of telepathy also occur when people meditate together and synchronize their brain activity. Lovers who have moments when they feel they are “one” have also reported a sense of interconnection when apart. How frequently could we be experiencing the same thoughts as someone to whom we feel closely connected? It probably happens far more often than we’ve ever imagined. 🧠

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### NOTES

1. F. Galton, “The History of Twins as a Criterion of the Relative Powers of Nature and Nurture,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 5 (1876), pp. 391–406.
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