



Twin Telepathy Reconsidered

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This important topic sheds light on the nature of consciousness and interconnectedness with examples of what I call 'empathetic resonance', our capacity to enter subjectively into the experience of others. Some cases also exhibit what Ian Stevenson calls telesomatic phenomena where bodily symptoms are reproduced non-locally.

The 3rd edition of *Twin Telepathy* (2012) by Guy Lyon Playfair has been thoroughly updated to include the latest research on all fronts. The 12 chapters are fully referenced and supplemented with an extensive bibliography. Playfair, quite literally, is the only world authority on the subject of twin telepathy and everything in the book has been thoroughly researched. Questionnaire surveys of identical twins that include questions as to whether they have experienced telepathy-like experiences indicate that around 30-40% say that they do. Identical twins, especially those who parted late in the pregnancy (known as 'late splitters') are more likely to report such experiences than non identical twins or non-twin siblings. These experiences can range from an uneasy presentiment urging one twin to contact the other 'right now'; to shared thoughts and imagery even in dreams; to sudden inexplicable pain or terror and, in some case, the onset of localised severe pain and bruising that mirrors what the other twin is experiencing. Here are some examples of the latter.

- Kelly and his brother went to different schools. One day, Kelly felt sudden severe pains in his eyes, nose, back of his head and his ribs. He heard later that his brother had been badly beaten up at about the same time and was in hospital, suffering from a broken nose, fractured eye sockets and cheekbones, a fractured skull and rib injuries.
- Nita, a hospital worker, suddenly felt acute pains in her left side and down her left leg. Baffled and worried she decided to seek help from the matron who saw large bruises forming without any apparent cause. At the same time, and some 400 miles away, her twin sister Nettie was involved in a car accident, suffering injury and identical bruising to her left side.
- Alice is sitting at home quietly reading when she feels a massive blow to her left side that made her scream out that 'Something has happened to Dianne' before fainting and falling from her chair. At the same moment Dianne had been involved in a train accident in which she breaks two ribs on her left side. Over the next three weeks Alice's pain is so severe she is X rayed, and the plate showed fractures in the same two ribs.
- Twins Aily Biggs and Alison Armour, had many such experiences. Alison was out running when she tripped over a pothole, falling and badly spraining her ankle. Aily, elsewhere, felt a sudden pain in the same foot and ankle that spread up her body. On another occasion Alison, now a hospital doctor in Scotland, had returned home tired out from her shift and gone to bed early. At 9.30 pm, she felt a sudden pain in her nose that became so severe that she had to take some analgesics. At the same time Aily, some 80 miles away in Edinburgh, was swimming in a pool when another swimmer shot up, ramming her in the face and breaking her nose.

- In 1976 Marta and Silvia Landa are two, four year old, extravert, identical twins living near Madrid. When Marta has tonsillitis and a temperature of 102F Silvia, whose tonsils are not inflamed, says she feels unwell, looks unwell, and has a temperature of 102F. Marta jumps out of the car, runs into the house and suddenly complains for no observable reason that she can't move her foot. At the same time Silvia has got her foot entangled with the seat belt. One twin gets a slap for being naughty, the other suddenly bursts into tears although well out of sight and sound. Silvia goes to stay with her grandparents. Marta, at home, burns her hand on touching a clothes iron with a resulting large, painful, and angry red blister that needs dressing. At the same moment Silvia feels a sudden sharp pain in her hand with a resulting large and angry red blister that is dressed by the local GP. When compared, their blisters are mirror images of each other on the same part of the hand, *but the grandparents state that Silvia was not near anything hot and had not touched anything hot.*

When news of the blister incident becomes public nine Spanish investigators - psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors - decide to visit and investigate further:

- Marta stays on the ground floor with her mother and some investigators to receive sudden stimuli tests. Silvia goes upstairs to the second floor with her father and the rest of the team where her reactions, if any, will be observed. Everything is filmed and taped. One of the investigators shows off his skill as a glove puppeteer to Marta while Silvia is just given a glove puppet to hold. Marta suddenly snatches the puppet and throws it at the puppeteer and Silvia throws her puppet at an investigator. A light is repeatedly shone in Marta's eye and Silvia blinks rapidly as if dazzled. Marta's left knee-jerk reflex is tested with sharp taps on the patella tendon and Silvia's left leg jerks so much that her father had to hold her still. Marta sniffs different strong perfumes and Silvia puts her hand over her nose. They are each asked to arrange several coloured discs in whatever order they like - they do the same pattern. They are then asked to arrange a set of pictures, numbered one to six. Marta's arrangement is 4, 3, 1, 2, 5, 6. Silvia's is 3, 4, 1, 2, 5, 6. Only the '4.3/3.4 is different.
- In Australia Peg Crominski is involved in a car accident resulting in her chest being crushed against the steering wheel. She dies in the ambulance before it can reach hospital. Helen, her twin sister, wakes up screaming with pain in her chest and dies in the ambulance on her way to hospital.

- Lady Furness, pregnant, was on holiday in Europe and expected the birth to be in May. Gloria Vanderbilt, her twin, was in New York and planned to travel to Europe to be with her sister for the birth. In late March, preparing to go out for lunch, she developed such abdominal pains that she said to her maid 'If I didn't know such a thing was out of the question, I would think I was having a baby'. Telling her maid to cancel the engagement she took some sedatives, retired to bed, and managed to sleep for a few hours. On waking she saw a cable from Lord Furness announcing the premature birth of a baby son.
- A mother of identical twins, one of whom suffers from epileptic fits, told Playfair that the other twin would say to her 'Mom, she's going to have a seizure'. This could be up to several minutes before the seizure occurs. When her mother asks how she can possibly know that when, as the mother, she never knows, she replies 'It's no big deal. I just know'.

Finally, on the most dramatic note:

- Romanian twins, 26 year old Romulus and Remus Cozma live in towns some 500 miles apart. Throughout life they had mirrored each other's illnesses and injuries, even to the extent of Romulus breaking his right leg in a fall while climbing and Remus simultaneously breaking his right leg when falling downstairs (Playfair recounts many such simultaneous twin injuries). In 1978 they each fell in love and in each case with a young woman called Monica. Remus and his Monica marry but the relationship is a

tumultuous one of fights, yelling and screaming with Monica becoming a very accomplished screamer. By contrast, Romulus and his Monica are not married, but live together in a rented flat in apparently contented harmony. One evening a rather drunk Remus, driven beyond control by Monica's screaming abuse, grabs her by the throat and tries to strangle her. Monica grabs a knife and tries to murder him but he wrestles the knife away, stabbing her some twelve times and killing her. He then goes to the police station to confess to her murder. Next day the police telephone their mother who, in turn, tries to telephone Romulus, only to be informed by a very puzzled landlady that something must have happened to him as two policemen had called that morning and taken him away. During that same previous evening Romulus and Monica had gone to see a film before deciding to take a stroll in a local park and sit on a park bench. Suddenly, without any apparent prevarication, Romulus grabs Monica by the throat and strangles her. No motive was ever found and Romulus says to the police that 'I don't know why I committed this monstrous crime. I felt impelled by an invisible force and I couldn't resist it'.

There are dozens more such personal stories, not all, of course, so dramatic. Twins sitting exams who write identical answers and make the same mistakes, even when in separate rooms. But what of the experimental data? When twins, who have been previously screened and chosen for their apparent telepathic affinity, have agreed to take part in a polygraph test they have repeatedly demonstrated a telepathic relationship. During these tests one twin, as receiver, sits relaxed in a distant



soundproof room in the company of a polygraph expert while wired up to a polygraph unit that measures blood pressure, pulse rate, respiratory rate and respiratory depth. The other twin, acting as sender in another room, is lulled into a false sense of conversational security and then exposed to a sudden sound, electric shock, something jumping out of a container or plunging an arm into ice cold water. Their involuntary gasp of shock is mirrored in the quiet twin whose polygraph pens show sudden, simultaneous, wild, fluctuations. Interestingly, this autonomic nervous system response does not reach conscious awareness in the quiet twin.

Playfair places his account of twin telepathy within a much wider context with examples drawn from laboratory studies indicating telepathic communication between twin couples as well as between non related couples who are in a state of in emotional rapport. Sender/receiver ganzfeld studies have demonstrated an overall positive effect. EEG recordings of sender and receiver brainwaves where the sender receives a shock, say a flash of light, have demonstrated that the quiet receiver's brain registers a simultaneous frequency change as well. He refers to the astonishing series of thrice weekly telepathic hits that Harold Sherman, in New York, scored with the Arctic explorer Hubert Wilkins, flying thousands of miles over Arctic ice in a prolonged search for missing Russian aircrew over a 5 month period (Wilkins and Sherman 2004), and Upton Sinclair's wife Mary Craig and her high scoring series of direct mental impressions of Upton's drawings that even impressed Einstein (Sinclair 2001). Then there is Rupert Sheldrake's research on pet telepathy with their owners including, of course, the dog Jaytee, who seemed to know when his owner *decided* to come home and went to wait at the lounge window (Sheldrake 2000).

Also included is this truly intriguing animal study. In a Russian laboratory mice, living together in cages and well used to each other, were separated into two groups. One group remained in their cage on the ground floor and the other group was rehoused on the 4th floor. After weighing what each group ate normally over random five hour periods to obtain a baseline of consumption the 4th floor mice were starved for random, five hour periods, to see whether, through mouse telepathy (renamed here as biocommunication), the upstairs mice communicated their hungry distress to the ground floor group. Apparently they did. Over a run of thirty trials the ground floor group ate significantly more during periods of 4th floor starvation. This experiment was successfully replicated by another investigator.

Telepathic communication is most likely to occur between those who have strong personal bonds – identical twins, mothers with babies and small children, non identical twins, siblings, couples, close friends and work colleagues. This also includes close clinical relationships as in psychoanalysis and counselling. Anecdotal evidence and research studies agree that telepathic communication is most likely to occur when the sender experiences a sudden shock, or is in a state of acute crisis with adrenaline flowing and the receiver is in a state of receptive calm. Sometimes, such is the urgency, the message breaks through everyday concerns anyway. ESP/Psi theory is still in the realm of analogies taken from other areas of scientific knowledge, but in this it is not alone. Since René Descartes (1596-1650) and his speculations about the role of the pineal gland, all theories of mind and the mind-brain relationship have been based upon analogies taken from the latest science. Psychology still has no idea how the psyche relates to neurophysiology. Playfair suggests that the concept of 'fields', as in physics, offers a clue, proposing the idea of empathy fields existing between people. From quantum physics, as opposed to classical, Newtonian physics of time and space, comes the now well proven concept of 'non-locality' and 'entanglement' where separation by distance is not a factor in the relationship.

Maybe the clue lies here. 'One mind, two bodies' is a chapter subtitle, conveying the concept that identical twins who share telepathic experiences share one mind. Physically, like

everyone else, they live in separate worlds as experienced by their everyday minds, but mentally, they share a mental entanglement analogous to non locality. This is usually at variable non conscious level, but can burst into mutual consciousness when one experiences acute emotional distress. This provisional hypothesis could provide an explanation as to why the uninjured twin sometimes experiences the mental distress, pain, and symptoms of bodily injury or illness experienced by the other twin. If mind and brain can each affect the other then the emotional area of the brain, known as the limbic system, now in a state of high activity in the distressed twin (upward causation of bodily damage), can be mentally activated by the mirrored distress in the unaffected twin (downward causation). The limbic system is closely related to the autonomic nervous system (ANS) which controls our bodily functions together with the vasomotor system controlling blood flow. The latter is particularly susceptible to emotional body imagery. It can, for example, respond to a particular body image by increasing local capillary bed permeability and fluid leakage into the tissues resulting in a blister, as in hypnotic 'this iron bar is red hot' suggestion. In Nita's case it created extensive bruising. This might also explain simultaneous injuries. When one twin falls and breaks a leg or twists an ankle, this unbalances the body image in the other twin, causing him, or her, to lose their balance and fall.

Taking this tentative hypothesis further, the same no-local relationship may be temporarily created between close friends at moments of emergency. In 1955, Jack Sullivan, a welder, was working alone in a deep trench in a Boston, USA, street when it caved in, burying him out of sight and causing burns from the red-hot pipe he was welding. He yelled for help, but no one came. He then had a sudden vivid picture of Tommy Whitaker, his workmate working at another site. Tommy felt a strong, nagging, compulsion to finish early, saying to his mate that he'd check on Jack as 'there might be something wrong'. On arrival he saw the collapsed trench, saw that the generator was still running and the cable had disappeared underground and then saw Jack's hand emerge from the soil. Jack was rescued and lived to tell the tale.

Orthodox science, including the neurosciences and the advocates of Anomalistic Psychology, reject telepathy as impossible in principle, so impossible in practice, but has no answer to the anecdotal and laboratory evidence so carefully checked by Playfair. Instead of the hubris of assuming absolute knowledge of what can and cannot happen maybe St Augustine should be our guide here. Some 1600 years ago he said that while 'there are no miracles that violate the laws of nature' there really are events that violate our 'limited knowledge of the laws of nature'. As then, so now. The implications of the subject matter explored in this book cannot be ignored as it is central to any theory of mind.

References

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