

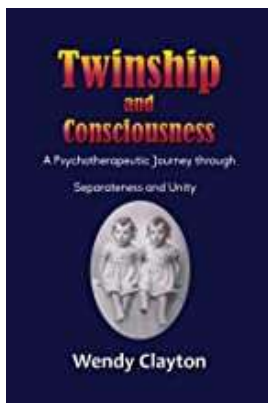
BOOK REVIEW

Wendy Clayton, *Twinship and Consciousness: A Psychotherapeutic Journey through Separateness and Unity*, Austin Macauley, London, 2021, 248pp, ISBN 978-1-3984015-1-8, price (paperback) £10.99.

Reviewed by **Anne Goodhew** and **Lucy Scurfield**

For anyone who has no siblings at all, and has idly wondered what it might be like to have them, and how different a person they may have become as a result, this book is a revelation. Wendy Clayton embarks on a deep exploration of what navigating life and relationships is like for her as an identical twin. It's a personal journey but one to which she makes it easy to relate.

As a singleton and as a recent grand-parent for the first time of twins (though not zygotic twins, as in this case), for one reviewer this book raises many new questions, some of which Wendy Clayton would describe as 'impossible questions'. It would surely be impossible – and inappropriate – to address them all in a short review; but as the author says, it's important just to keep on asking those impossible questions!



The book tackles the age-old debate of what is Self and what is Society, and how, when and where does one become the other, under the very specific circumstance of being a twin. How do we regard collective knowledge, and how does it make us individuals?

Often referring to work by quantum physicist David Bohm and philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti, with more than a hint of Buddhism, the author refreshingly challenges preconceived ideas of whatever kind, wherever they may be, and especially in the field of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. She tells a painful story.

Wendy Clayton is deeply and very directly personally concerned with how much we are 'other' and divided, and/or how much we are united in one state – of being. In this, she draws a parallel between Buddhism and quantum mechanics; both would say that all things are far more interdependent and united than is apparent on the surface. Her expression of her experience of this division/unity is vivid and often poetic, always crystal clear, and presented as a series of endeavours. There is enough background for a reader to grasp what drove this extraordinary pursuit of such a wide and universal topic; but far from being so much that the story becomes the subject. Relationships with parents, a whole other part of this puzzle, get scant mention. Clayton casts a critical eye over her experiences of therapy, questioning it thus:

... analysis focuses solely on the intrapsychic, which is, by definition, narrow. When does specialisation become narrowness and

dismissiveness? This is the island of the psychoanalytic ‘me’, which ignores the continent of forces with which the individual has to grapple.

John Welwood, pioneer of integrating Eastern and Western psychotherapy and religion, is quoted in support: ‘To reify the ego as a necessary, enduring structure of the psyche... only solidifies its central position in our lives and impedes our capacity to move beyond it’.

The process of therapy is the subject, about accepting and affirming individuality to integrate the whole personality – and particularly for twins. Therapy with a holistic approach aims to help people with close relationships, but if it doesn’t do this, then questions need to be asked about what works in therapy and what doesn’t. The author expresses her clear hurt and disappointment that therapy and individuation for her sister seem to have resulted in a distancing, through comparisons being made, rather than integration through acceptance without need for comparison.

A healthy separation should leave each individual with a sense of self-esteem and self-respect as well as with appreciation for the other. ‘And love - “the glance of love”, she says, “is to a person what photosynthesis is to a plant”.’

Each section is quite short, allowing a reader time and space between each one to digest each idea which, on first reading, appears to be separate. But on re-reading it to write a review, the separate pieces seemed to unify as a whole, often because of Clayton’s heart-warming reflections and honest connection with universality and her own identity, rather than any formulaic response to those impossible questions.

About the reviewers

Anne Goodhew is a singleton, a first time grandmother of twins, who helps Lucy Scurfield at Strong Roots. A lifelong library user and worker and an inveterate reader, she has recently stepped down from the administration position at the AHPb.

Lucy Scurfield is chair of AHPb, a psychotherapist and the founder and co-ordinator of Strong Roots, a therapeutic garden project in Norwich, Norfolk. (www.strongroots.org.uk)