The merger is complete within twelve hours, at which time the egg—which may have "waited" as many as forty years for this moment—is fertilized and becomes known technically as the "zygote," containing the full set of forty-six chromosomes required to create new human life. Conception has occurred. The genotype—the inherited characteristics of a unique human being—is established in the conception process and will remain in force for the entire life of that individual. No other event in biological life is so decisive as this one; no other set of circumstances can even remotely rival genotype in "making you what you are."

Conception confers life and makes that life one of a kind. Unless you have an identical twin, there is virtually no chance, in the natural course of things, that there will ever be "another you"—not even if mankind were to persist for billions of years. Indeed, given the vast number of combinations possible among chromosomes, genes, and their smaller subparts, there is virtually no chance that even your own parents could ever come up with another "copy" of you, not even if by some magic they could produce millions of offspring.

The power of genotype can scarcely be overestimated. Your genetic makeup—established the moment fertilization is completed and conception occurs—determines not only your physical characteristics, but also—more powerfully than anything else that can be demonstrated—how you will process information, how you will think, what you will *be* in what we call "mind." Studies of identical twins separated at or near birth and then reunited through happenstance later in life have proved how powerfully genotype shapes not only one's physical characteristics but also one's mental outlook, tastes, opinions, habits, and psychological predispositions. Environment is by no means the only or even the most important shaper of behavior.

Many who have studied the data regarding twins have declared themselves awed and astounded by the evident, sometimes overwhelming power of heredity. Even twins who have grown up in radically different home environments have exhibited, upon observation in later life, astonishing behavioral similarities. A significant number are found to have