

Rosalind Heywood

Rosalind Heywood (1895–1980), an Englishwoman married to a soldier-diplomat, wrote a memoir describing her personal experiences of telepathy and precognition, often in relation to healing and family matters.

Life and Career

Rosalind Heywood was born on 2 February 1895 in Gibraltar. Her father was [Walter Coote Hedley](#), a map surveyor, army intelligence officer and gifted cricketer. On the outbreak of war in 1914 she volunteered as a nurse, trained at Barts Hospital and was sent to work in a hospital in Salonika, Macedonia. After the war she took a London University course in social work.¹

In 1921, she married Frank Heywood, a diplomat whose postings included a spell in Washington in the 1930s. They had two sons.

In her teens, Heywood rebelled against her mother's hell-fearing Christianity, influenced by reading Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe*. By her later account, she experienced seemingly psychic incidents throughout her life. She joined the [Society for Psychical Research](#) in 1938, serving on its governing council from 1945. She wrote two books: *The Sixth Sense* (1959), describing scientific research on ESP, and *The Infinite Hive* (1964), about her own experiences, the title based on a line in a sermon by John Donne ('but this infinite hive of honey, this insatiable whirlpool of the covetous mind, no anatomy, no dissection hath discovered to us').² Her commentaries in these books, and in numerous articles in SPR publications, exhibit an inquiring, sceptical approach.

Psychic Experiences

The Infinite Hive gives a detailed description of psychic experiences throughout her life, notably telepathic interactions with her husband (who independently had similar experiences), and what she called 'Orders' – strong impulses that appeared to originate outside herself – 'out of the blue, sometimes "as if" from another person and always as a surprise to the conscious mind'.³ Early examples related to her work as a nurse, in which she felt prompted to actions that puzzled her, but which turned out to be appropriate to the needs of her patients.⁴

Some appeared to contradict common sense, and she was reluctant to act on them. In one example, keen to take advantage of an unexpected vacancy at a boarding school that she wished to send her son to, 'Orders' told her not to, but instead to write to a particular individual, whom she had known slightly in childhood. She reluctantly did so and learned from him that she was wise to decline the opportunity, as the vacancy had arisen because problems at the school had obliged him to remove his son from its care.

In another instance, her son's school telephoned to advise an urgent operation for appendicitis, as he had developed nausea, a fever and other symptoms. She was

about to agree, when 'Orders' told her he had not got appendicitis, and that she should go to the school and measure his legs. Having done so, she discovered that one leg was nearly an inch longer than the other. She consulted other medical experts, who diagnosed a badly twisted back and food poisoning.[5](#)

Heywood's experiences led her to two conclusions: that humans are (unknowingly) constantly psychic scanning their environment, and that, far from being individual entities, they are beneath the surface in constant telepathic communication with one another, 'proportionately perhaps to the mental or emotional affinity between particular individuals.'[6](#)

Survival

Heywood claimed to be sceptical about survival of death but described two experiences that seemed to confirm it. In Washington she and her husband were acquainted with a young socialite, who died in a plane crash. In the following days, Heywood strongly felt the deceased woman's presence, and having written a formal note of condolence to the woman's mother, heard her voice in her head telling her to scrap the 'silly letter' and instead go to her mother at once and tell her to 'stop all that ridiculous mourning'. She hesitated, but eventually visited the mother, who gratefully accepted the message.[7](#)

In another instance, she encountered the apparition of a friend who had recently died, and who seemed to her to be 'most joyfully and most vividly alive', attempting to communicate telepathically the sensation of freedom that he found in his new state.[8](#)

Works

Books

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Melvyn Willin

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Endnotes

Footnotes

- [1.](#) Heywood (1964/1978), 101.
- [2.](#) [Donne, sermon lxx.](#)
- [3.](#) Heywood (1964/1978), 132.
- [4.](#) Heywood (1964-1978), 86-97.
- [5.](#) Heywood (1964/1978), 135-6.
- [6.](#) Heywood (1964/1978), 139.
- [7.](#) Heywood (1964/1978), 163-7.
- [8.](#) Heywood (1964/1978), 168-9.