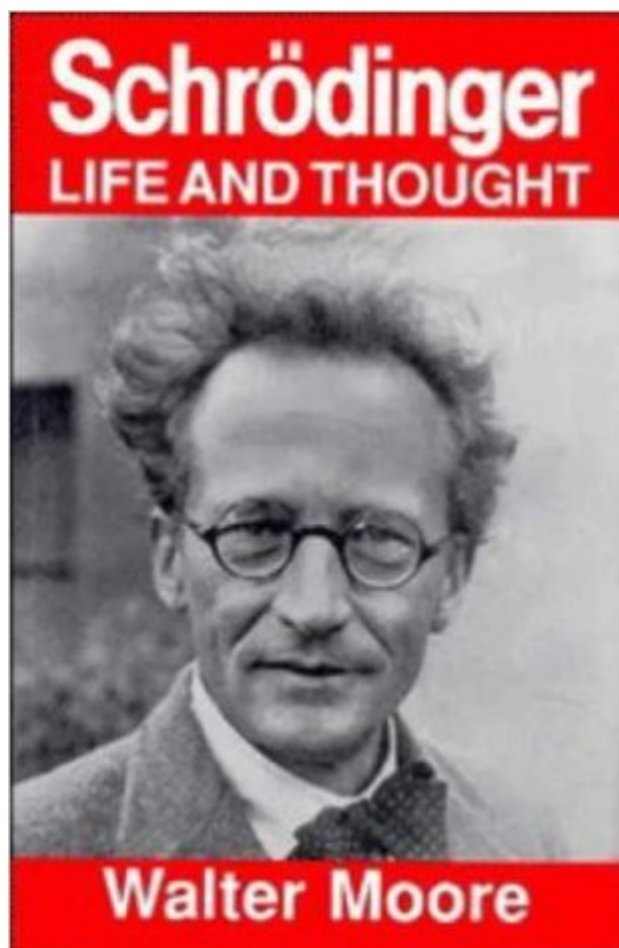


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Schrodinger: Life And Thought



Synopsis

In the first comprehensive biography of Erwin Schrödinger--a brilliant and charming Austrian, a great scientist, and a man with a passionate interest in people and ideas--the author draws upon recollections of Schrödinger's friends, family and colleagues, and on contemporary records, letters and diaries. Schrödinger led a very intense life, both in his research and in the personal realm. This book portrays his life against the backdrop of Europe at a time of change and unrest. His best known scientific work was the discovery of wave mechanics, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1933. In Dublin, he wrote his most famous and influential book *What is Life?*, which attracted some of the brightest minds of his generation into molecular biology. This highly readable biography of a fascinating and complex man will appeal to anyone interested in the history of our times, and in the life and thought of one of the great men of twentieth-century science.

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Customer Reviews

This is a masterful biography, but one need to have a profound knowledge of higher mathematics and a basic one in physics to fully understand it. Walter Moore shows that Schrödinger's life and thought was at least controversial. Life Schrödinger's personal itinerary is exemplary for the 20th century. He was born in a comfortable upper-middle class, but his parents lost their savings in the German inflation after WW I. The result was famine and diseases. It marked the rest of his life. As a young man he was confronted with unemployment and nearly left physics for financial reasons! He found a decent job only at the age of 34. Even after winning the Nobel Prize he was still confronted with 'pension' problems. Science Walter Moore gives us a magisterial and detailed analysis of the

scientific discoveries of ES, from his humble beginnings to the elaboration of the quantum wave function and after. It shows that ES was above all a mathematical genius and a not so brilliant experimenter. ES remained all his life opposed to the complementary (particle/wave) interpretation of quantum mechanics (the 'Kopenhagen oracle' for ES). For him, there were only waves! Sex. Beside science, sex was the principal occupation of his life, with all combinations imaginable. He lived a ménage à trois and sometimes à quatre, but still fell in love with other women, also with very young ones for he had a Lolita complex. He could without doubt have been accused of paedophilia. But his intense love affairs stimulated highly his scientific creativity.

The 20th century has boasted a greater number of top-notch physicists than any prior epoch in history. The 21st century, and any future century beyond it, will be hard-pressed to match the level of scientific genius presented by the 20th. Names such as John Archibald Wheeler, Eugene Wigner, Paul Dirac, Max Planck, Louis de Broglie, Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, Wolfgang Pauli, John von Neumann, Richard Feynman, Roger Penrose, Freeman Dyson and Stephen Hawking have set the standard for scientific and intellectual excellence. Another name which belongs in this esteemed list is that of Erwin Schrödinger. Schrödinger influenced the field of quantum mechanics perhaps more than any other single scientific contributor of modern times. Here, Walter Moore has compiled his unique story so that all may have access to the life and times of this extraordinary man. Moore's writing style is easily up to the task of keeping the interest of the reader. He does an excellent job of tracing Schrödinger's academic career as he obtained posts at the university of Jena, university of Zurich, university of Berlin [he was the hand-picked successor of none other than Max Planck], university of Oxford, university of Graz (Austria), the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and the university of Vienna. Schrödinger was also offered professorships at 2 US universities as well (university of Wisconsin, Madison and Princeton university), but declined both. Moore does an exquisite job in his disinterment of all the facts, personal factors and politics behind S' decisions to transfer (or not to transfer) from post to post.

Walter Moore captures the life of Erwin Schrödinger, one of the most important theoretical physicists of the 20th century, covering his career, science, philosophy and personal life. In this ambitious book Moore tries to shed light on all aspects of Schrödinger's life, and tries to connect them, but no coherent picture evolves. I had the impression, however, that this is not Moore's fault, but that the pieces that made up Erwin Schrödinger did not fit into a coherent whole. A gifted student from an early age on, he took on physics. After initially dwelling in different sub-fields, he

developed wave mechanics at the (for creative work in theoretical physics) late age of 38. His almost unparalleled mathematical skills made this advance possible. Schrödinger never saw mathematics only as a tool, but he greatly appreciated its beauty. Moore does an excellent job in describing the intellectual journey towards this discovery, as well as the giants on whose shoulders Schrödinger was standing. For this work Schrödinger received the Nobel prize in 1933. In his later years, he dedicated a substantial part of his efforts to the search for a unified (quantum mechanics - relativity) theory of physics. Just like Einstein, with whom he had an extensive correspondence about the matter, he failed. Schrödinger's scientific work is explained in quite a bit of detail. Despite being quite familiar with differential equations, but without a background in theoretical physics, I must admit that I had a hard time following Schrödinger's insights as presented by Moore. From his student days on, Erwin Schrödinger was a believer in the Indian teachings of Vedanta, proclaiming a oneness of all minds, which make up reality.

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