



Erwin Schrödinger

1887 - 1961

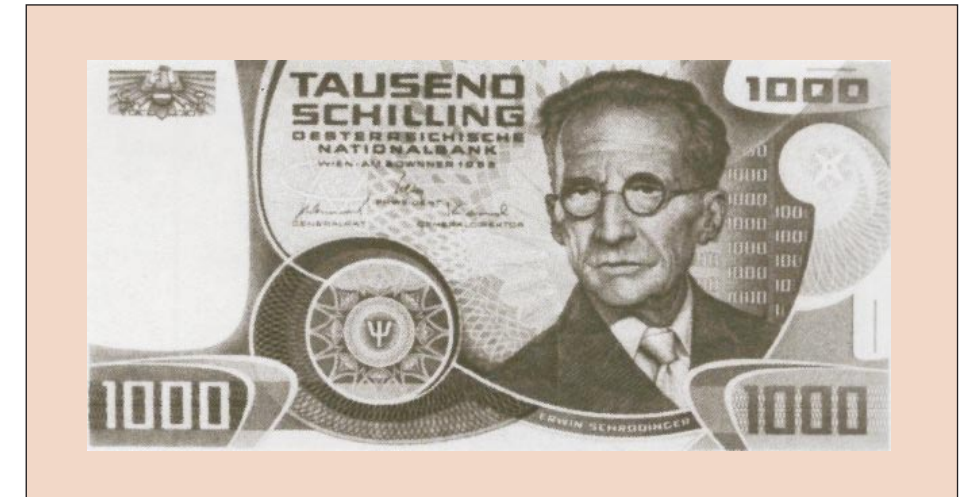
Awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1933

Erwin Schrödinger was a famous Austrian theoretical physicist. He shared the 1933 Nobel Prize for Physics with the British physicist P.A.M. Dirac.

Schrödinger was born in Vienna on August 12th, 1887. His father, Rudolf Schrödinger, had inherited a small, but profitable, linoleum and oilcloth factory and his mother, Georgie, came from an honored family. Erwin's maternal grandmother was English; her ancestry has been traced back to a Norman family, Forestiere, whose stronghold was Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland. Rudolf and Georgie had no other children. Erwin considered his mother to be a woman of delicate constitution all her life. As an only child, he received the full attention of his parents. **From Erwin's own testimony his father was to his growing son a friend, teacher and conversation partner.** He learned from his aunt Minnie the ability to speak English before he ever spoke proper German.

Erwin was not sent to elementary school, but received lessons at home from private tutors. He entered the Akademisches Gymnasium when he was 11. From entry till graduation he was always first in his class.

Erwin entered Vienna University in the autumn of 1906, where he had a reputation as an outstanding student. Erwin's main interest at the university was the course of theoretical physics. His first theoretical paper was presented before the Vienna Academy in 1912 on the Kinetic Theory of Magnetism. When the World War began in August, 1914, Erwin taught at Vienna University. He served throughout the war as a commissioned officer. At the age of 38 he produced his basic paper, that gave the foundation of quantum wave mechanics.

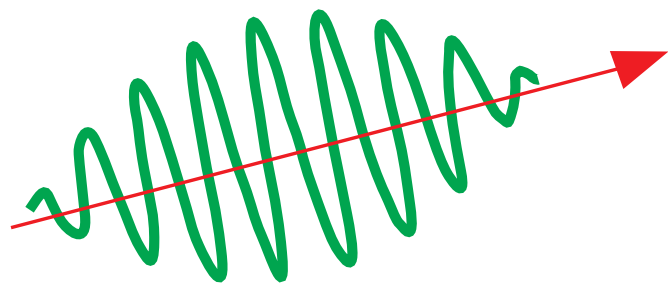


*Austrian banknote for
100th anniversary of
his birth*

Schrödinger introduced the equation which describes the form of the probability waves (or wave functions) that governs the motion of small particles, and which specifies how these waves are altered by external influences.

In 1927 Schrödinger accepted an invitation to go to the University of Berlin. He left there in 1933 and the next 7 years were spent in Austria, Great Britain, Rome and finally in 1940 in Dublin. Schrödinger remained in Ireland for 15 years, doing research both in physics and in the philosophy and the history of science. During this period he wrote '*What is life ?*', an attempt to show how quantum physics can be used to explain the stability of genetic structures. In 1956 Schrödinger retired and returned to Vienna as Emeritus Professor of the University.

Schrödinger was a poetic man, he published a volume of poetry and many short poems. He did not like music, but was fond of the theatre. He claimed to be an atheist, but he used religious symbolism and believed that his scientific work was 'an approach to God'. Erwin was never elected to office in a scientific society and his attitude to administrative work was negative. He was married to Annemarie, a kindhearted woman who relieved him of all everyday concerns. She was unable to have children. Very soon after the marriage she became only his friend. Despite all the trials and temptations they lived together until his death. Erwin had three extramarital daughters. Schrödinger died in 1961, and was buried in a small churchyard near Alpbach, Austria.



*He introduced the idea that
particles have wave-like properties -
an idea that stemmed from a stay at the Villa Herwig*

