Thought

"Thought once awakened does not again slumber."
Thomas Carlyle, Heroes and Hero Worship

Schrödinger's Cat is a thought experiment, a paradox, devised in 1935 by Austrian-Irish physicist, Erwin Schrödinger, in discussions with Albert Einstein. It illustrates what he saw as the problem of some of the original formulations of quantum mechanics applied to everyday objects. The scenario presents a hypothetical cat that may be simultaneously both alive and dead – known as "a quantum superposition" – as determined by a random subatomic event that may or may not occur. Follow me so far? No, I thought not, and I apologise for inflicting this on you. But …

I've just finished a book on Quantum Physics, and, though I was fascinated by it, I hardly understood a word it contained. I don't blame intelligent people like Erwin Schrödinger or Albert Einstein for that, or the writer of the book. So it must be me! But it got me thinking …

When I studied physics in university, I loved experiments. But these tests of theories, formulae and suppositions were all practical. We used *stuff* for our experiments. We tested feasibilities on our science benches. We measured *things* with scales and rulers and thermometers. We could see what was happening, discuss what we observed and compare our findings with similar experiments elsewhere. It was all *practical.* But Schrödinger and others, as *theoretical* physicists, were also engaged in *thought* experiments, theorising about possibilities, working through scenarios before lifting a practical finger. Hence *Schrödinger's Cat* …

The truth is, we need both theorists *and* practical people, those who work with their minds *and* with their hands, people who muse and cogitate while others deal with *stuff.* We need the thinkers as well as the do-ers. Without the thinkers, there would be no new possibilities to explore; without the do-ers, there would be no outworking of the creativity of fertile minds. So let the theorists theorise and let the practical people be practical. But let's respect one another and work together for the good of all. Now, *that's* worth a thought, isn't it?

A prayer for today
Lord, make me a thinker when I do too much;
and make me a doer when my thinking's done. Amen

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