

Superpositions in Life

Quantum reality operates at the microscopic level, and our daily interaction with the world (physical) and with ourselves (psychological) operates at the macroscopic level. Physicists tell us the two levels are incompatible, that while the macro world seems logical, the quantum world does not.

A famous thought experiment by physicist Erwin Schrödinger involved the simultaneous life and death states of a cat. Released radiation caused by a random subatomic event would kill a cat in an enclosed opaque chamber. If a different random event occurred, no radiation would be released and the cat would be alive. Prior to human action like an observation, the cat would be simultaneously dead and alive, called superposition. During observation though, the cat would be either dead or alive. The observation collapses the superposition of the cat's states. The observer affects the observed.

In the macro-world, there seem to be examples of superpositions, or at least pseudo-superpositions. For example, when you flip a coin, the odds are clearly 50/50 for either outcome. But if you flip again, it seems there is a paradox introduced when the two flips are considered together. By flipping a coin twice, the odds are for one of each outcome. Or, are the odds on the second flip still 50/50? Which is it? The two odds appear to exist in a kind of superposition, both existing simultaneously. Only the action of flipping determines one outcome or the other.

There's also an example of superposition from the macro psychological world. Consider that for every negative circumstance we experience, the possibility for an eventually positive outcome is equally great. Cliches like "no pain, no gain" or "suffering purifies" capture the idea. It's like the number line in mathematics. Negative situations are balanced by positive potential situations. They can be seen to have identical absolute values since both are the same distance from metaphorical zero. They are in a kind of superposition where both are of equal strength. Remember though, "pride cometh before the fall." The positive could be actual and the negative the potential, but they are still superpositioned. Only human action can determine outcomes.

It seems that Schrödinger's metaphorical cat is dead, until it isn't, AND alive until it isn't. What decides is human action: a measurement, a second coin flip, or a an act of perseverance which strengthens or arrogance which humiliates or destroys.

