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NEWS

SCIENCE NOBELS: DO THEY ALWAYS GO TO THE BEST?

... "Probably the chief complaint against the science prizes is that Alfred Nobel's will and supporting statutes and traditions exclude some of the world's best scientists. The prizes are limited to the three fields that interested Nobel; namely, Chemistry, Physics and Physiology or Medicine. Although the Swedes in recent years have tried to interpret these fields broadly, vast areas of important work remain explicitly excluded or ignored. John von Neumann, probably the greatest mathematician of the century and creator of the theory of the computers that are revolutionizing the modern world, never received a Nobel Prize because mathematics is explicitly excluded. However, the inventor of a trivial device to regulate lighthouses was duly honoured in 1912. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychiatry, never received a Nobel Prize

because psychiatry and psychology have not thus far been included under the rubric of physiology or medicine. And some of the hottest fields of modern science have thus far been ignored. The key figures in discovering continental drift and the theory of plate tectonics that has revolutionized modern geology have been shunned because geology, for the most part, falls outside the Nobel fields. The leaders of modern evolutionary biology, who synthesized Darwin's theory with later advances in genetics and other fields, have thus far been neglected. And so have the top scientists in such fields as archeology, botany, environmental science, much of astronomy, oceanography, cosmology and most of the behavioural sciences, to name a few." (*New York Times*, 18 Oct. '83)