

PHILOSOPHY

# THE NOT SO NOBLE NOBEL PRIZE

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Clare Fiala and Eleftherios P. Diamand ask if it is time to abandon the Nobel Prize

Is the Nobel Prize a major influential factor in scientific progress? We believe it is not. Nobel laureates are recognized for work done 10, 20 or even 30 years ago, when the investigator(s) did not know their research would have a Nobel Prize worthy impact. Consequently, the work would have been done anyway. Winning a Nobel Prize is not the same as receiving any other award, and the sole beneficiary is the winner. Nobel laureates become instant celebrities; universally perceived as extremely smart and extraordinarily creative. They become “immortal” (whatever that means), are treated with the utmost respect and offered positions on prestigious boards in industry and government. They also secure a full-page obituary in both *Nature* and *Science* magazines.

well said. And the most important point

A major problem with discoveries leading to Nobel Prizes is we often do not know precisely who made the discovery. In most cases it is not clear as the discoveries are the product of collective effort.

Also Paul Halpern is reconsidering the Nobel Prize in his book review of “*Losing the Nobel Prize A Story of Cosmology, Ambition, and the Perils of Science’s Highest Honor*” by Brian Keating.

Occluding Keating’s account, however, are his personal beefs about “losing” the Nobel Prize. Unlike the Olympics or marathon races, the Nobel Prize is not a competition between vying players who train for a shot at a trophy. These days, physics has so many researchers and subfields that it is not always clear who and which are in contention.

Furthermore the Nobel Prize judges face crisis '[Worse Than One Can Imagine](#)' after resignations of key persons

Peter Englund, the academy's former permanent secretary, and authors Klas Östergren and Kjell Espmark all resigned their technically permanent positions on the 18-member committee in quick succession, citing allegations against a high-profile figure closely associated with the group. Those allegations first surfaced when the #MeToo movement hit Sweden last November, and the Stockholm daily *Dagens Nyheter* reported that the man — whom the newspaper has identified only as "Cultural Profile" — had allegedly sexually assaulted or harassed at least 18 women over the past two decades.