



Jewdayo Grid

The Quantum Field Theoretician

July 16, 2017 [Lawrence Bush](#)

Theoretical physicist Julian Schwinger, who shared the 1965 Nobel Prize in Physics with [Richard Feynman](#) and Sin-Itiro Tomonaga for their work reconciling quantum mechanics with Albert Einstein's [special theory of relativity](#), was born to Polish Jewish émigrés in New York on this date in 1918.

Schwinger received his Ph.D. (at age 21) at Columbia University, under the tutelage of [Isidor Isaac Rabi](#), and did post-graduate work at the University

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of California, Berkeley under [J. Robert Oppenheimer](#). He helped in the development of radar during World War II, then taught at Harvard for nineteen years. His other science prizes included the first Albert Einstein Award (1951), the U.S. National Medal of Science (1964), and the Nature of Light Award of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (1949). "Schwinger was particularly pleased," notes the Nobel Committee, "by an anticipation, early in 1957, of the existence of two different neutrinos associated, respectively, with the electron and the muon. This has been confirmed experimentally only rather recently." Schwinger is universally considered to be a seminal figure in the development of quantum mechanics.

"Is the purpose of theoretical physics to be no more than a cataloging of all the things that can happen when particles interact with each other and separate? Or is it to be an understanding at a deeper level in which there are things that are not directly observable (as the underlying quantized fields are) but in terms of which we shall have a more fundamental understanding?" -- Julian Schwinger

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