



# Science as Autobiography: The Troubled Life of Niels Jern

By Thomas Soderqvist

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**Science as Autobiography: The Troubled Life of Niels Jern** By Thomas Soderqvist

This biography probes the unusual mind, the dramatic life, and the outstanding scientific work of Danish-born immunologist Niels Jerne (1911–1994). Jerne's Nobel Prize-winning achievements in the field of immunology place him in the pantheon of great twentieth-century biomedical theorists, yet his life is perhaps even more interesting than his science. *Science as Autobiography* tells Jerne's story, weaving together a narrative of his life experiences, emotional life, and extraordinarily creative scientific work.

A legendary figure who preferred an afternoon of conversation in a Paris wine bar to work in the laboratory, Jerne was renowned for his unparalleled powers of concentration and analytical keenness as well as his dissonant personal life. The book explores Jerne the man and scientist, making the fascinating argument that his life experience and view of himself became a metaphorical resource for the construction of his theories. The book also probes the moral issues that surrounded Jerne's choice to sacrifice his family in favor of scientific goals and the pursuit of excellence.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

"This is indeed a highly original book, not only as the first biography of so important a modern scientist as Jerne but also for the approach it takes in presenting his psychological and philosophical makeup."

#### **Language Notes**

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Danish

#### **About the Author**

**Thomas Söderqvist** is professor of history of medicine and chair of the Department of History of Medicine at the University of Copenhagen.

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