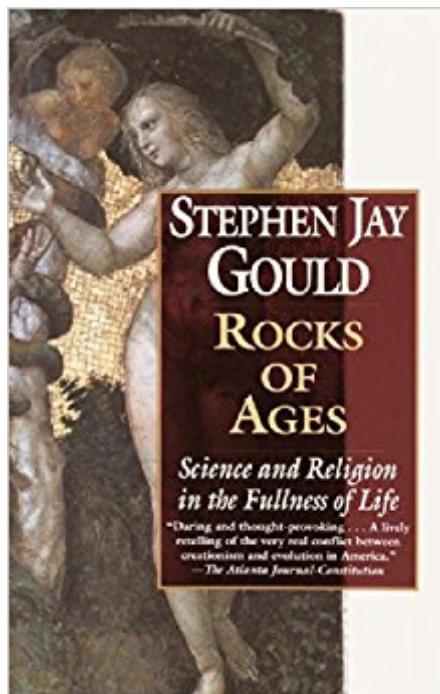


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Rocks Of Ages: Science And Religion In The Fullness Of Life



Synopsis

Writing with bracing intelligence and clarity, internationally renowned evolutionist and bestselling author Stephen Jay Gould sheds new light on a dilemma that has plagued thinking people since the Renaissance: the rift between science and religion. Instead of choosing them, Gould asks, why not opt for a golden mean that accords dignity and distinction to each realm? In his distinctively elegant style, Gould offers a lucid, contemporary principle that allows science and religion to coexist peacefully in a position of respectful noninterference. Science defines the natural world; religion our moral world in recognition of their separate spheres of influence. In exploring this thought-provoking concept, Gould delves into the history of science, sketching affecting portraits of scientists and moral leaders wrestling with matters of faith and reason. Stories of seminal figures such as Galileo, Darwin, and Thomas Henry Huxley make vivid his argument that individuals and cultures must cultivate both a life of the spirit and a life of rational inquiry in order to experience the fullness of being human. In *Rocks of Ages*, Gould's passionate humanism, ethical discernment, and erudition are fused to create a dazzling gem of contemporary cultural philosophy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gould (I admit) is probably my favorite writer of science. His breadth and scope and odd comparisons combined with a witty, erudite literary style make for excellent reads. But here we are tackling the great Bugaboo - science and religion. Considering all that could have been said and has been said about the subject, SJG admirably rises to the occasion. Gould points out that despite his own theological doubts, Darwin never used evolution to crusade for atheism or the

non-existence of God or, I should add, a political agenda. He, like Gould, was a liberal who thought coexistence was possible between the two spheres. Gould defines something called Non-Overlapping Magisteria (NOMA) - that provides for separate arenas of activity. As long as they do not venture into each others fields they can not only exist but flourish. His own views tended toward the agnostic/atheist but he shows a wise appreciation for not only the strength but role of religion in society. This idea is naturally rejected by what Gould calls the Fundamentalist Darwinians - Dawkins, Dennet, Smith, et al, who see no need for any kind of spiritual sphere in human existence. Indeed Dawkins calls on readers not to respect religious ideas - the very opposite of the tolerance Gould (and Darwin) preach. The "Fundamentalists" view morality, emotions and psychology in deterministic terms, as nothing more than mechanical outcomes of the interaction of genes guided by natural selection. The fact that Gould is a non-believer and frequently uses religious terms and imagery is all the more galling to this group. Inside, we have the usual essays wherein he dispenses with creationists, literalists and fundamentalists.

Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002) wrote many other important books, such as *Ever Since Darwin*, *The Panda's Thumb*, *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes*, *The Flamingo's Smile*, *Bully for Brontosaurus*, *Eight Little Piggies*, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, *Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms*, *The Lying Stones Of Marrakech*, etc.

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