

## Study guide

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Gould, Stephen Jay. *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*. Random House, 2002, pp. 3-10, 49-67. A famous biologist argues that science and religion constitute what he calls "non-overlapping magisteria" (NOMA).

1. Is Gould correct that the conflict between science and religion occurs only in people's minds and social practices? Why does he believe this to be true? Do you? What motivation, according to Gould, leads to the conflict between science and religion?
2. What, according to Gould, is the goal of science? Of religion? Do you agree with this sharp demarcation? Why or why not? What is the name of the principle that Gould advocates which formalizes this sharp demarcation?
3. From what religious background does Gould come? How does he describe his current religious stance, and who is one of his role models, regarding religious belief (or unbelief)? How do his beliefs motivate his views on the proper role for religion, secular authority, and morality? Do you agree with his views?
4. According to Gould, our process of reasoning itself arose as a result of evolutionary selection. Are there any problems with this view? In particular, if this is true (so to speak), then can rational statements be trusted to yield truth?
5. How does the idea of a "golden mean" inform Gould's approach?
6. What are a few examples provided by Gould of questions that fall under the purview of "factual" versus "ethical" inquiry?
7. Is it possible for each of the "magisteria" to be treated equally, or will one of them come out ahead if Gould's demarcation is respected? In particular, can moral or ethical questions be answered with the same certainty as scientific questions? That is: are there ethical facts?
8. Consider the extended footnote offered by Gould on pages 55-57. To what extent is Gould's approach challenged by so called "mouse from Michigan" problems? For example, should the "falsifiability" criterion of science be taken as a central definition of science? If so, what are the implications?