

Study guide

Stanley, Matthew. *Huxley's Church and Maxwell's Demon*. Chicago And London, The University of Chicago Press, 2015, pp. 1-9. In his Introduction, Stanley gives an overview the rise of atheistic science during the Victorian era in England.

1. In what sense do Michael Ruse and Phillip Johnson agree on the practice of modern science? What is meant by the term *naturalism*?
2. Does the idea that science must be based on what we can “observe, test, replicate and verify” preclude religious considerations? Would this definition of science “prove too much”¹? That is: would it inadvertently preclude other things that we have come to associate with science?
3. When, and in what context, did naturalism arise? Upon what three theories was scientific naturalism based? What is the (in principle) distinction between “methodological”, “metaphysical” and “ontological” naturalism? Have scientists always been naturalists? If not, what was the opposing tradition?
4. What is Stanley’s thesis regarding the practitioners of theistic and naturalistic science during the Victorian era? What were the “valence values” or “shared values” that united both groups? Which two individuals does Stanley take as representative of each of these groups?
5. What concept formed the “bedrock principle” of Victorian science? Why do you think that acceptance of this principle might preclude *miracles*?
6. Is science a democratic enterprise? In other words: given that multiple interpretations of empirical evidence are always possible, do you think that scientists should impose a majority view on other scientists, and even non-scientists? If so, then how should the majority consensus be imposed? Should courts of law accept—and in practice *enforce*— a definition of the term “science”? If not, then how do non-scientists know what “scientists” believe and teach?

¹ To prove too much is a form of the logical fallacy of *reductio ad absurdum*, where the argument, taken to its logical conclusion, would involve an obvious absurdity.