

The Hedgehog, the Fox and the Magister's Pox
MENDING AND MINDING THE MISCONCEIVED GAP BETWEEN SCIENCE
AND THE HUMANITIES by Stephen Jay Gould.
Jonathan Cape 2003.

Though there may be one more Gould script in the publishing pipeline, The Hedgehog is the first collection of his matchless essays to be published posthumously and reading them is a further reminder of the massive loss that Gould's death has forced the worlds of science and the humanities to suffer.

Stephen Jay Gould was, to my mind, one of the greatest essayists of the twentieth century, as well as being a communicator of science to the scientifically uneducated par excellence. His essays were suffused with a broad enough swathe of cross-disciplinary references to make even a polymath gape in wonder and were always a joy to read.

The Hedgehog, the Fox and the Magister's Pox is a typical Gouldian title evincing both his sense of humour and his desire to draw in his reader by whetting the appetite. In it, Gould returns to one of his favourite themes, that of the relationship between science and the humanities and how divisions and distance can be healed and closed.

In the essay entitled Reintegration in Triumphant Maturity, Gould sets out his views very clearly, as well as stating his manifesto and raison d'être for writing about science in such a way as to make it stand as a worthy epitaph for an extraordinary literary life.

Stephen Jay Gould will be remembered for many things by many people, though for this reviewer it is his enormous and influential literary legacy that is the most important and will be the most enduring. No one with an enquiring mind, let alone anyone who appreciates superb use of the English language, should fail to read this book.

And yes, the protagonists in the title are explained!

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