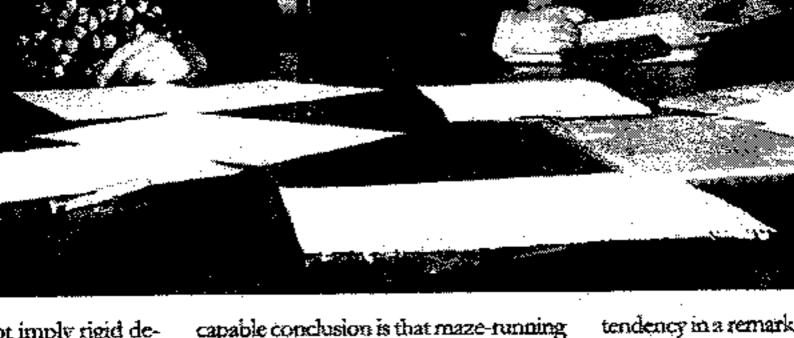
ing with, but as or these fundamental assumptions. rironment) in deter-Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) espublicly criticised aits has been proon our side again: poused a different notion. In his books, acrimonious. Great an esteemed Brit and particularly in the famous Leviathan ed in it over the last he proposed that mechanical processes the emotional str gphilosophers John than in your typic control human actions, which are in-. Hobbes, and scien-A solution to nately fearful and violent. Consequently, l, Richard Lewontin, problem has been the only hope for humans is to submit on. The problem is ginning of the 20 entirely to an organised state (and relibate has proceeded troduction in eve gious authority), so to be forced to live ther a simplistically the concept of 'n in a reasonable way. This is not a far cry of the question, or from the right-wing politics implicitly put, a reaction n evant empitical evipossible morpho or explicitly adopted by some social sciersy has in fact largely entists involved in the modern debate, that a living organ it comes to plants such as Arthur Jensen, R J Herrnstein, can exhibit when animals. Unfortuety of environmen ophers are not aware and C Murray. gists have quickly Of course, modern philosophers and hich has taken place one changes either scientists readily acknowledge that hudiscipline of evoluronment, the resu man traits are in fact the result of both In the other hand, nature and nurture, but they are usually dramatically diffe ep focusing on the not in partitionin also quick to add that one of these two nans which – while ture and nurrure, components takes precedence. For exst interesting - has cally known as 'g the most recalcitrant ample, Gould, Lewontin and others interactions', the think that the environment is the major s and the most open ronments interac determinant of human nature. Their quiry. ate an organism's position could hardly be summarised to say that humans iour. This dialec more concisely than by the title of one igated their own naof Lewontin's books, Not in Our Genes. duces different o nly done so since the If the causes of intelligence, aggression, or environments hilosophy, modern or whatever other aspect of our behavcise shape of a re ssue of nature/nurbe found empiric iour are not in our genes, they must ss clearly be traced to surely be found in the environment. On The concept of o English philosodealt a fatal blow the other side of the divide, Jensen, cke and Thomas nurture discussio 1632-1704) was the Herrnstein, Murray, Wilson (albeit in a century: the much hool known as emcategory of his own) and many others are convinced that genetics and natural depending on th rat knowledge can be heritability of a selection have shaped the physical as well agh the use of the as mental characteristics of all living beread in newspape d to rationalism, acings, including humans. When Murray technical papers) the mind can derive suggests (in the title of one of his artion logical grounds. say, intelligence i fuce eved teder olac) that TLD will ture war in ware there? of homes same



ot imply rigid dereaction norms sms have shown the limits of what at that within such

plasticity' of the o respond to difchallenges -- can

best examples of between nature in classic expericoper and Zubek

compared intelby the ability to noing through a bediction lines of

ly distinct lines of a selected for high aze ('bright' rats),

arly low performan reared under a at, comparable to

selection process s showed a highly a their abilities (i.e., the trait). Cooper

, also reared indines in two other idon in which the capable conclusion is that maze-running ability in rats is very plastic, and that different genes may lead to similar behaviours depending on environmental conditions.

So, why is there still such an acrimo-

nious debate among philosophers and

scientists about nature and nurture in humans? Because for both technical and ethical reasons we simply cannot perform on ourselves the sort of clear-cut experiments that Cooper and Zubek carried out on rats. Not only do humans have a very long life span and encounter very complex environments during their typical lifetime, but it is obviously unacceptable to experimentally breed human beings and control their environment for the sole purpose of scientific or philosophical investigation (or for any

purpose, most would argue).

Unfortunately, this means that we are left with no sensible answer to a crucial question. Our educational policies, for example, may be more or less fruitful depending on the precise shape of human reaction norms. The same can be said for policies concerned with curbing

crime, or for a host of other fundamen-

ion. The fact remainst there are — and always questions that science ther at the moment. Richard Lewontin I similar context: "I makeson our readers can the childish notion of is interesting about derstood. ... It might

Learning to live wa actually empowers the by not pretending to can enjoy the fruits tive tool humans has understand the work

know how cognition

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cally, this leaves amp phers in crucial areas and its ethical consec science must be siler matter we are oblige how the world oug

Massimo Pigliuo

on how it currently