

Nature via nurture – Genes, Experience and What makes us Human by Matt Ridley.  
4<sup>th</sup> Estate 2003.

Nature or Nurture? Was a sociological 'buzz-question' in the 1970s and 80s, and in a more desultory way has been so since. Yet the concept and the issue is nowhere near as modern as its cute formulation suggests: Shakespeare appears to be the first to juxtapose the two words in *The Tempest*, though he may have been influenced by the Elizabethan teacher and first headmaster of Merchant Taylors' school who used the phrase four times in his book of 1581 *Positions Concerning the Training of Children*.

Matt Ridley, scientist, journalist and columnist, author of the superb book *Genome*, considers the issue from the perspective of genetics and through an analysis of a range of issues, conditions and human and animal behaviours, perhaps the most fascinating of which – in this reviewer's opinion – is that of schizophrenia, considered in the chapter entitled *The Madness of Causes*.

This is a much more intellectually demanding text than *Genome* – at least for non-scientific readers, but it more than repays perseverance. It also gives much food for thought concerning this fundamental question which also figures high in the scale of religious life and the transmission of religious traditions and attitudes.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh