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# R. ḤASDAI CRESCAS AND THE CONCEPT OF MOTIVATION IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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“Motivation” is a desire to invest time and effort in some activity, even if it is difficult, extracts a high cost, and may not be successful. In recent decades there has been increasing recognition of the key role that motivation plays in individuals’ success in their studies, job, and diverse processes of adaptation. In this article I will look at Ḥasdai Crescas’s concept of motivation and show that although the term is not found in his writings, its premises and conceptual infrastructure are at the core of his ideas about love, happiness, the purpose of the Torah and the precepts, prayer, and even determinism. I will argue that, in his emphasis on the role of pleasure and the imagination in spurring action, he anticipated modern theories of motivation that are current in contemporary philosophy and the psychology of education.

## I. Motivation in Modern Scholarship

### 1. What is motivation and what are its components?

“Motivation” is derived from the Latin *motivus*, “motive force” or propulsion.<sup>1</sup> Here “force” emphasizes the energy involved, while “motive” highlights the movement that is the crux of the action. Like motion in the physical world, motivation appears when some force in individuals’ mental systems leads them to begin to act or to continue on the course already begun until they achieve the goal they set for themselves. Modern theories of motivation study and try to explain the psychological processes that prompt a person to act—processes that are associated with arousal, self-regulation, and the like.<sup>2</sup> These theories hold that motivation is both a cognitive and an emotional process, because thought and feelings determine the path and then mobilize the forces required to turn the desire into action. The emotional and cognitive process can be compared to the power train in a motor vehicle.<sup>3</sup> Emotion is the energy, the fuel; thought is the steering wheel and driver that guide the vehicle to the desired destination, on the basis of advance planning. The combination of the two is what gives motivation power and the potential of reaching the goal that has been defined.

The emotional element already exists when the motivation first appears and is identified with an emotional desire to achieve, experience, or avoid some situation. Like all emotions, the source of motivation is in the limbic system, the most primitive part of the brain, which does not

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<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Pintrich, “A Motivational Science Perspective on the Role of Student Motivation in Learning and Teaching Context,” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 95, no. 4 (2003): 667–686 (esp. 669); Avi Kaplan and Avi Asor, “Motivation to Learning in School: Theory and Practice,” *Hinnukh Hashivah* 20 (2001): 8–33 [Hebrew].

<sup>2</sup> Paul R. Pintrich, and Dale H. Schunk, *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research, and Applications* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996); Gary P. Latham, *Work Motivation: History, Theory, Research, and Practice* (Washington, D.C.: SAGE, 2012), 3–14; Albert Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> This metaphor comes from “Practical Mainstreaming,” *Bulletin for Education Ministry Mainstreaming Mentors* 8 (2016): 1 [Hebrew].

employ cognitive and rational language. It is sensitive and alert to appetites and dangers and responds to them. For example, the motivation to keep one's distance from dangerous and threatening places—to avoid failure or high places—results from messages transmitted by the amygdala after it perceives a danger and responds immediately with the freeze, flight, or fight reaction. Another example: falling in love creates an emotional motivation that does not derive from deliberate thought. The arousal of the motivation is set off when some information is received and stimulates the brain.

The cognitive element intervenes at a later stage of the motivational process and is expressed in thinking and planning, because motivation is built on the ability to foresee some object or situation in the future, to think about and imagine how it will look, to investigate where it will fit in with one's priorities, and to endeavor to achieve it accordingly. For example, students invest in studying for a test, an activity that is not particularly pleasant, because they can picture the future when a good grade on it will produce high self-esteem—and then the investment will have been worth it. Thinking makes it possible to expand the borders of motivation beyond emotion and momentary feeling and to traverse frustrating situations on the road to more distant and complex goals. The combination of emotion and thought endows motivation with the power and potential to achieve the goal that individuals have defined for themselves. When there is only an emotional desire, its object is likely to remain a dream. But thinking alone is apt to be mechanical, with no energy for its realization.

## ***2. The personal incentives behind of motivation***

Many modern studies focus not only on the power of motivation but also on the nature of the action taken and the incentives behind it:<sup>4</sup> towards what goal is some behavior directed? Does the motivation

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<sup>4</sup> Martin L. Maehr, "Meaning and Motivation: Toward a Theory of Personal Investment," in *Research on Motivation in Education*, Vol. 1, eds. Carole Ames and Russell Ames (Boston & London: Academic Press, 1984), 115–144; Martin L. Maehr and Carole Midgley, *Transforming School Cultures* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

produce some meaningful action and does it contribute to the individual's satisfaction, happiness, and sense of personal and social development?<sup>5</sup> The behavioral basis of motivation depends to a large extent on the source: is it internal or from the outside environment? If the latter, the motivation can change as a function of reinforcements and sanctions;<sup>6</sup> so even though external motivation may be powerful, it may be accompanied by the agent's negative emotions. By contrast, when internal needs are the source of the motivation, it may change in accordance with the extent to which the needs are satisfied in various situations and focus on concepts such as self-worth and realization of one's potential.

When the personal incentives are intrinsic, two emotional factors stimulate the brain—novelty and significance. When the brain receives information that activates the limbic system, a search process is launched, creating neural pathways in the brain and leading to the release of a flood of the hormonal neurotransmitter dopamine.<sup>7</sup> In this situation, a person feels highly excited. This feeling has a strong influence on brain activity and produces “hunger” and similar feelings.

Self-determination theory,<sup>8</sup> which has become a keystone of the field of motivation in general and of educational motivation in particular, provides a contemporary theoretical framework that posits that human behavior rests on three basic internal and innate needs: (1) the need for autonomy—our need to feel that our behavior is not imposed on us but

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<sup>5</sup> John M. Keller, “Motivational Design of Instruction,” in C.M. Reigeluth (ed.), *Instructional-design Theories and Models: An Overview of Their Current Status* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Burrhus F. Skinner, *The Technology of Teaching* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Kent C. Berridge and Morten L. Kringelbach, “Neuroscience of Affect: Brain Mechanisms of Pleasure and Displeasure,” *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 23, no. 3 (2013): 294–30; John D. Salamone and Mercè Correa, “The Mysterious Motivational Functions of Mesolimbic Dopamine,” *Neuron* 76, no. 3 (2012): 470–485.

<sup>8</sup> Edward L. Deci, Robert J. Vallerand, Luc. G. Pelletier, and Richard M. Ryan, “Motivation and Education: The Self-Determination Perspective,” *Educational Psychologist* 26 (1991): 325–346.

derives from and expresses our needs, proclivities, and choices; (2) the need for capability—our need to feel that we are capable and can achieve difficult objectives; (3) the need for bonding and belonging—our need to love and be loved and to be deeply and truly connected to the objects of our love. According to self-determination theory, the satisfaction of these needs leads individuals to be engaged with their actions, whereas the repression or prevention of their satisfaction detracts from such involvement and may reduce the intensity of their actions. For example, the theory asserts that when students feel that the teacher is forcing them to study things that have nothing to do with their interests, plans, and authentic values, their motivation is poor.

At the same time, self-determination theory represents intrinsic and extrinsic motivation not as a dichotomy but as the two extremes on a spectrum of the extent to which actions are perceived as autonomous and meaningful. The theory focuses on how individuals perceive the reasons for their behavior: are they internal reasons that are felt to reflect their inclinations and fields of interest (autonomous intrinsic motivation) or their universe of values (intrinsic motivation, which derives from understanding the importance of the action)? Or are they reasons associated with guilt or pride, which individuals see as a source of coercion and pressure residing inside themselves (introjected imposed motivation), or totally external causes that are linked to material rewards or losses (extrinsic imposed motivation).<sup>9</sup>

### ***3. How can motivation be developed or fostered?***

Studies in the field of positive psychology demonstrate that productivity and motivation increase when the positive experiences related to achieving objectives outweigh the negative experiences by a factor of three or more.<sup>10</sup> How, then, can positive experiences of success be

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<sup>9</sup> Kaplan and Asor, "Motivation to Learning," 20.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Z. Zimmerman and Anastasia Kitsantas, "Homework Practice and Academic Achievement: The Mediating Role of Self-efficacy and Perceived Responsibility Beliefs," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 30, no. 4 (2005): 397- 417; Barry J. Zimmerman and Dale

created when the agent is liable to experience failure? The answer depends on how a society defines success and failure. For example, many believe that schools are meant to foster academic learning that serves as the basis for continuing on to higher education and a profession. This idea stresses educational achievements at school and consequently amplifies the role of the grades that students receive in their courses. Traditional pedagogy promotes covering a predefined curriculum within an allotted time frame, and almost always measures educational achievements by means of formal examinations. When children receive their test score, many adults are interested only in the grade; they will ask the children what they got on the test and, if the result is disappointing, interrogate them in a critical tone and investigate whether they prepared for it adequately. In this way they direct attention to the grade and not to the students' interest and investment in the learning process. When the evaluation of success includes the dimension of motivation, students can experience a different form of success, even if the test score was low. They would have the courage to try again, in the belief that a renewed effort could lead them to excel in their grades as well.

In this context we can identify two forms of evaluation: formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is a continuing process in which the teacher directs, guides, and encourages students throughout the learning process. On the basis of the information collected, the teacher knows what must be done so that students will make progress. This approach gives students confidence and conveys the message that the teacher is available to help them, wants them to succeed, and will endeavor to help them progress and realize their capabilities. Formative evaluation is a pragmatic tool that fine-tunes and enhances the learning process and creates the conditions required for students' to be self-directing, to persevere in their studies, and to have a developmental view of the world.

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H. Schunk (eds.), *Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: Theory, Research, and Practice* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989).

Summative evaluation, by contrast, has a different “tone” and goal. It assigns a quantitative score that represents students’ knowledge. This score is the bottom line of their studies and, depending where it stands on the scale of success, gives students a sense of achievement or failure. The grade is considered to be final and immutable. Robert Stake used the metaphor of a chef: formative evaluation is when the chef samples the dish in order to check whether some herb or spice is missing and, if so, adds it; summative evaluation is the diner who eats the soup set before her, which is the final product whatever it tastes like.<sup>11</sup> Many fields of study are measured by means of formative evaluation—football and basketball, swimming, studying a musical instrument, the visual arts. In these realms students work with a teacher who provides constant feedback. Students then drill and practice on the basis of the coach or teacher’s guidance, and they receive encouragement and support, compliments and reinforcements. Most learning is like this. There is no doubt that this method stimulates motivation in the brain. Consequently, educators who want to motivate their students should provide them with feedback—but it is essential that the feedback also focus the students’ effort and implementation of strategies, and not only on their capabilities or intelligence.<sup>12</sup>

## II. Motivation in Medieval Jewish Thought

### 1. *Motivation in Jewish philosophy before Crescas*

Medieval Jewish psychology was based mainly on Aristotle, chiefly *On the Soul*, but also the *Ethics*, *On Sense and Sensibilia*, and others, as well as his Greek and Arab commentators. In that system, the soul is the form of the body; that is, it is the activity of the body for which the latter is intended. Consequently, the soul is inseparably bound to the body and

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<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Stake, “The Countenance of Educational Evaluation,” *Teachers College Record* 68 (1967): 523–540.

<sup>12</sup> C. S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Random House, 2006).



actuates it, has no existence separate from it, and does not precede it.<sup>13</sup> Because it exerts its influence through the heart, that organ is the chief abode of the soul, while the role of the brain is marginal.<sup>14</sup>

Aristotle's Jewish commentators, to no small extent under the influence of Maimonides's preface to his commentary on Tractate Avot<sup>15</sup>—which in turn was influenced not only by De anima but also by what al-Farabi wrote about the soul—divide the soul into five main activities or capacities.<sup>16</sup> The nutritive soul is responsible for physiological processes and consequently for growth and reproduction. The sensitive soul takes in data from the outside, via the five senses. Building on Aristotle, some thinkers add the common sense, which integrates the data from the five senses in order to provide the soul with a full picture of the object they perceive.<sup>17</sup> The imaginative soul is responsible for memory and imagination. The appetitive soul stimulates action. Finally, the rational soul is responsible for all cognitive skills.

Even though Jewish thinkers before Crescas had no word that is parallel to “motivation,” we might be able to identify it with the appetitive soul. This is problematic for two reasons, however. First of all, medieval Jewish philosophers include all internal motivations in the appetitive soul: from individuals' character traits to their emotions and even to what we would refer to today as their instincts, whereas in modern terminology “motivation” refers to a focused desire and willingness to invest time and

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<sup>13</sup> Victor Caston, “Aristotle's Psychology,” in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, eds. Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 316–346.

<sup>14</sup> According to Aristotle, the brain is a sort of radiator to cool the blood. See Charles G. Gross “Aristotle on the Brain,” *The Neuroscientist* 1, no. 4 (1995): 245–250.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph I. Gorfinkle, *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (Shemonah Perakim): A Psychological and Ethical Treatise* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), chapter 1.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred L. Ivry, “Maimonides' Psychology,” in *Maimonides and His Heritage*, eds. Idit Dobbs Weinstein, Lenn E. Goodman, and James Allen Grady (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), pp. 51–60, esp., pp. 52–54.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred L. Ivry, “Triangulating the Imagination: Avicenna, Maimonides and Averroes,” in *Intellect and Imagination in Medieval Philosophy*, Vol. 1, eds. M.C. Pacheco and J.F. Meirinhos (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 667–676. esp. 668.

energy in some activity despite the difficulties en route. Second, the Jewish thinkers, once again in the wake of Aristotle,<sup>18</sup> detach the will from the other intrinsic faculties of the appetitive soul. On the surface, then, we might be able to identify motivation with the will, but considering the definition of the former it is clear that it is not just the will but also some stronger force that stands behind the will and causes it to emerge from potential to actual. As we all know, many people would like to go on a diet but lack the willpower or motivation to actually do so.

So medieval Jewish philosophers, especially those living in the Muslim world, write about the will but not about the concept of willpower and what causes the will to be strong or weak. They assume that if a person wants something he should be able to achieve it. The question that bothers them, then, is why people do not always achieve what they desire. Here again, following Aristotle, Jewish thinkers refer to the concept of *akrasia* (Greek ἀκρασία, literally “no will”) that Aristotle coined as a part of his critique of the Socratic notion that all knowledge should stir a person to act. Aristotle argued that individuals are liable to surrender to their appetites or passions, despite clear knowledge that this is inadvisable, and thus they weaken the will. Drawing on this, medieval Jewish thinkers adopt a middle ground between *akrasia* and the position that all knowledge should stir a person to act. Following Maimonides, they argue that when the appetites are led on by the imagination’s picture of reality—which may not be reliable and therefore veils the recognition of truth and causes false knowledge—the will surrenders to the appetite.<sup>19</sup> Hence, most medieval Jewish philosophers adhere to the view that there is a conflict between the imagination, which feeds the appetitive faculty imaginary and material passions, and the intellect, which is supposed to control the appetitive faculty. Individuals who succumb to their appetites will act contrary to their true rational judgment. For these thinkers, the way to overcome *akrasia* is to subdue the appetites and thereby release

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<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 414b2.

<sup>19</sup> See Shalom Sadik, *The Essence of Choice in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2017) [Hebrew].

the will from their trap so that it can follow the intellect. Their remedy for akrasia is to subjugate the appetites, so they do not see a need to fortify the will by means of some additional power would help the intellect and reinforce it against the appetites.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. *The role of motivation in Crescas's thought*

Crescas like his predecessors, accepts the Aristotelian structure of the soul. However, several of his emphases change his perspective on human action and represent a significant change in the medieval idea of the nature of the will and ways to strengthen it. In this he anticipates the modern concept of motivation.

There are five such emphases, which in effect derive from one another and are interrelated:

- a. His definition of the soul as a spiritual entity, with the will at its center
- b. His definition of the will as a concurrence of the appetitive faculty and the imagination, and not of the appetitive faculty and reason, as was standard in philosophy before him
- c. His coining of the concept of "the pleasure of the will" and the assumption that the will can have pleasure and enjoyment
- d. His assignment of a higher status to the pleasure that accompanies the process associated with the effort than to the achievement itself
- e. His focus on the "subjugation of the will" and not only "subjugation of the appetites," as was common before him; creating the concept of the "excitement of the will," which means the excitation that is associated with "yearning."

Our discussion of these elements will demonstrate that even though the concept of motivation is not part of Crescas's system, its concrete

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<sup>20</sup> This is how we should understand the dialogue between the intellect and the soul in *Duties of the Heart* V.

application is a key to his treatment of many issues. In this he anticipates fundamental concepts of modern theories of motivation.

*a. The definition of the soul as a spiritual entity, with the will at its center*

As shown by Zev Harvey,<sup>21</sup> Crescas rejects the Aristotelian idea that “the intellect is constituted by the objects of its apprehension,”<sup>22</sup> and he argues that “the soul of man, which is his form, is a substance that is spiritual, that is disposed to intellection, yet that does not intellect in actuality in itself.”<sup>23</sup> According to Crescas, the spiritual nature of the soul is expressed by the fact that the will deploys faculties that do not depend on the senses: “our saying of it that it is ‘spiritual’ – this is evident, since within it are faculties that the will employs without any of the senses, such as the faculties of imagination and memory and intellect.”<sup>24</sup> Crescas’s use of the verb “employs” with regard to the will is surprising: he depicts the will as an autonomous faculty within the soul that uses the other parts of the soul as means for self-realization. Imagination, memory and even the intellect are considered to be instruments and servants of the will. This position departs from the ideas of earlier thinkers, who had seen the will (or the appetitive faculty) as an instrument wielded by the intellect.

So in contrast to the rationalist philosophers of the Middle Ages, for whom the rational faculty was the essence of man and who identified the perfect man with the rational man, Crescas puts the emphasis on the will rather than on the intellect.<sup>25</sup> According to him, the will is what manifests

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<sup>21</sup> Zev Harvey, *R. Ḥasdai Crescas* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1990), 76–81 [Hebrew].

<sup>22</sup> Hasdai Crescas, *Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)*, I.VI.1, translated with introduction and notes by Roslyn Weiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 213.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>25</sup> Shlomo Pines, “Scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and the Teachings of Hasdai Crescas and his Predecessors,” *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 1 (1967): 1–101, 44.

an agent's absolute autonomy,<sup>26</sup> so that one must say about God, for example, that he acts because of his free will and not for any other cause,<sup>27</sup> even though it is clear that his will is associated with his wisdom<sup>28</sup> and his goodness.<sup>29</sup> Human will is evidence of individuals' dispositions and inclinations and reveals what they love. For Crescas, as Zev Harvey has argued, man is defined not by what he knows but by what he loves.<sup>30</sup> Crescas sees the intellect purely as a preparatory means for the acquisition of human perfection, which is manifested in love and especially love of God.<sup>31</sup> But, as we will see below (§c), love itself is manifested by the realization of the will.

*b. The definition of the will as agreeability between the appetitive faculty and the imagination*

Whereas Aristotle, and the Jewish philosophical tradition in the Muslim world based on him, define the will as a concurrence of the appetitive faculty and the intellect, while the passions are defined as a concurrence between the appetitive faculty and the imagination,<sup>32</sup> for Crescas the will is a concurrence of the appetitive faculty and the imagination. Aristotle posits that the will is rational, whereas desire and

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<sup>26</sup> This is on the assumption that a person is truly autonomous and able to act; see the discussion of determinism below.

<sup>27</sup> "God's will is His essence; and, just as His essence has no end outside itself to compel His existence, so, too, His will has no end outside itself" (Crescas, *Light*, III.I.4, 263).

<sup>28</sup> "Providence is ordered and defined by God's eternal will, in accordance with His wisdom" (Ibid., II.II.1, 147). Human beings do not have free will; only God does. See below, III.2.

<sup>29</sup> "Intellect requires that a simple one also have a single simple will, this unity of the will is manifest in the phenomenon of benefaction, that is, in the overflow of as much good as is possible, or in the good that God's wisdom decrees" (Ibid., II.IV.4, 238).

<sup>30</sup> Harvey, *Crescas*, 165. See also Crescas, *Light*, II.II.6, 161: "Love...is the height of human perfection."

<sup>31</sup> "[The] theoretical intellect...is the greatest vital force for the acquisition of human perfection" (Crescas, *Light*, II.II.1, 146).

<sup>32</sup> See Pines, "Scholasticism," 41.

passion are irrational: “The wish [i.e., will] is found in the calculative part and desire and passion in the irrational.”<sup>33</sup> Accordingly he argues:

These two at all events appear to be sources of movement: appetite and thought (if one may venture to regard imagination as a kind of thinking; for many men follow their imaginations contrary to knowledge, and in all animals other than man there is no thinking or calculation but only imagination). Both of these then are capable of originating local movement, thought and appetite.<sup>34</sup>

So even though Aristotle believes that imagination can be defined as a kind of thinking, he contrasts the appetitive faculty when it follows the intellect (in which case Aristotle defines it as the will) with the same faculty when it follows the imagination (in which case it is passion). This is clear in Averroes’s presentation of the matter:

Motive power does not appear to the intellect without desire, called [in this context] will and choice, just as motion and motive power do not appear to imagination without desire, properly so called. Thus, the difference between will and desire is that the former moves according to the dictates of the intellect, the latter by those of imagination.<sup>35</sup>

Even though Crescas directs his readers to *On the Soul* for the definition of the will, what he writes diverges from the Aristotelian tradition as found in the Middle Commentary on that work:

Anything that passes from potentiality to actuality requires something external to effect the transition. It is therefore necessary that when the volition to do something newly arises in a man, this volition, which was in potentiality and passed into actuality, was necessarily actualized by

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<sup>33</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 432b5–432b8 p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 433a9–a20, 59.

<sup>35</sup> *Averroes’ Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima: A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text with English Translation, Notes, and Introduction by Alfred L. Ivry* (Provo UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 127.

something external to it that moved the appetitive faculty to join and concur with the imaginative faculty.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, the will is aroused when the appetitive faculty follows the imagination and joins it.

For the will is nothing but the coming-together of and relation between the appetitive and imaginative faculties—that is, their agreement regarding the things that are wanted. And pleasure in the will is in accordance with that relation.<sup>37</sup>

From the last sentence we learn that the closer the relationship between the imagination and appetitive faculty, the greater is the will's pleasure (or perhaps we should say its self-satisfaction).

What is the significance of Crescas's argument that the will is always associated with the imaginative faculty and not with the intellect? Crescas is not a hedonist, and, as we will see below, he believes that the more perfect the ideas and objects with which the will is associated, the greater the pleasure it extracts from them. So how should we understand his statement that the imagination, and not the intellect, shapes or controls the will? One can say that Crescas did not see the imagination as exclusively an object of irrational animal passion, but also as an object of rational human desires. He states explicitly that there is no pleasure in the intellect itself<sup>38</sup> and that "intellection is conception and verification" only.<sup>39</sup> The pleasure is a direct result of the rapprochement of the appetitive faculty and the imagination, and imagination stands behind and leads the

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<sup>36</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.V.2, 191. Cf. Averroes, *Epitome on De Anima*: Hebrew translation by Moses Ibn Tibbon: "If this arousal, if for pleasure is called passion; and if for revenge is called anger; and if for the intellect is called choice and will" (trans. Moses Ibn Tibbon [St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, MS B390/IMHM F 53600]), 342a.

<sup>37</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.VI.1, 219.

<sup>38</sup> "Pleasure is not a matter of intellect" (*Ibid.*, 221).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

intellect. Without imagination, no knowledge can cause passion and will, and certainly not pleasure.<sup>40</sup>

*c. Pleasure of the will*

As we have seen, Crescas holds that the greater the concurrence between the impulse to achieve something and the imagination, the greater the “pleasure” in the will. So far as I can determine, Crescas was the first Jewish thinker to attribute pleasure and enjoyment to the will and to use the term “pleasure in the will.” Thinkers before Crescas used the same Hebrew word, *‘arevut*, with the sense of enjoyment or pleasure, but never the locution “pleasure of the will.”

In medieval terminology, *‘arevut* has other meanings than pleasure, including concurrence, agreeableness, and a similarity between things. The greater the similarity between two objects, the stronger their mutual attraction; they may be said to have a “passion” to draw closer and unite. This principle applies first of all in the physical realm. Averroes puts it this way: “For place is that toward which the bodies move according to a desire, when they are out of it, and, having attained it, rest in according to an agreeableness and likeness.”<sup>41</sup> Crescas applies this physical principle<sup>42</sup> to spiritual entities as well:

It is evident in the case of natural things...that love and mutual attraction are the cause of their perfection and unity, so much so that one of the ancients maintained that the first principle of coming-to-be is love and coming-together, and the first principle of passing-away is strife and breaking-apart. All the more is it the case with spiritual things, that the

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<sup>40</sup> See also Zev W. Harvey, “Crescas vs. Maimonides on Knowledge and Pleasure,” in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture, Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. R. Link-Salinger, J. Hackett, M.S. Hyman, R. J. Long, and C. H. Manekin (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1987), 113–123.

<sup>41</sup> Harry. A. Wolfson, *Crescas’ Critique of Aristotle: Problems of Aristotle’s Physics in Jewish and Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 444.

<sup>42</sup> Even though he rejects Aristotle’s definition of space. See *Or Hashem*, I.2.1.



love and the mutual attraction between them engenders attachment and unity.<sup>43</sup>

When two objects are alike, the concurrence between them engenders love, followed by their unity and perfection. Love, too, is defined as the similarity and concurrence of two things. According to Crescas, the will has pleasure when something that the will seeks becomes real and consequently is agreeable to and concurs with the will. Because, according to Crescas, the will is a concurrence of the appetitive and imaginative faculties, one can say that there is concurrence and “love” between those faculties as well. To the extent that this love is realized, the two faculties come together, and the desirable objects are acquired, the will has greater pleasure that causes the soul and the acquired objects to unite. As Crescas puts it referring to God as a desirable object: “When...desire and pleasure is in the soul, there follows an act of the soul through which attachment to or detachment from God occurs.”<sup>44</sup>

This drawing closer actualizes the potential of the will, amplifies pleasure and further increases proximity, love, and perfection. This drawing closer also causes happiness, it too defined by Crescas as “pleasure in the will” and the antithesis of sadness, which is “conflict in the will”: “For joy is nothing but pleasure in the will, whereas sadness is conflict in the will.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, pleasure and joy are linked to the will: “If we are happy...that is because we have souls that have will.”<sup>46</sup>

According to this principle, in a perfect being there must be even greater concurrence between what is good—meaning what is perfect—and the motive force and will to do this good; consequently the pleasure of the perfect being when he does good is even greater. Given that, for Crescas, “everyone yearns for the good”<sup>47</sup>—in other words, all human

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<sup>43</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.VI.1, 220. Cf. Harvey, *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas*, 113.

<sup>44</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.V.5, 202.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, I.III.5, 117.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, II.VI.2, 226.

beings aspire to the good. Then, in proportion, as the realization between the appetitive faculty and the good is more complete, so is the pleasure greater: “It follows necessarily from this that the greater one’s perfection, the greater the love for and the pleasure one takes in the object of desire,”<sup>48</sup> and “the degree of strength or weakness of the love of the good should correspond to the degree of good in that which is loved.”<sup>49</sup>

*d. A preference for the pleasure that accompanies the process associated with the effort over the achievement itself*

As noted by Harvey,<sup>50</sup> when Crescas sets the concepts of pleasure and will at the heart of his system and identifies them with the principle of love that produces unity and attachment, he reaches the conclusion that pleasure is an effect of the process itself, and not only of its outcome. Pleasure is the achievement of the will and derives from the process of the increasing closeness between the imagination and the appetitive faculty. As we have seen, for Crescas, no knowledge can cause passion and certainly not pleasure. In order for a person to enjoy his studies, his intellect must be backed by imagination and his appetitive faculty draw closer to this imagination:

The person is in potentiality with respect to the apprehension of intelligibles and he yearns for them. This yearning is nothing other than the excitement of the will—which has already been shown to be other than intellection—in anticipation of attaining the thing for which it yearns. It follows that when the yearned-for apprehension, which was formerly in potentiality, is in actuality, great pleasure is experienced, for the nature of being something yearned for so dictates....Related to this is what happens when the apprehensions are precious. Insofar as they are profound and subtle, the potentiality for them is more remote than that for the inferior intelligibles, so that when one who has them in potentiality makes the transition to having them in actuality, the pleasure

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, II.VI.1, 218.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Harvey, *Crescas*, 104–105.

experienced will be greater inasmuch as he began farther away and transitioned from one extreme to the other.<sup>51</sup>

For Crescas, two factors lead to pleasure: novelty and significance. The latter was discussed in the previous section, when we saw that all people yearn for the good and that the greater the closeness between the will and the perfect good, the greater the pleasure. With regard to the factor of novelty, according to Crescas, when a person yearns to apprehend something new and actually does so, his pleasure is even greater. The yearning—the passion—“excites the will”; hence, the pleasure of the will’s emergence from potential to real will be greater in proportion to the distance that the appetitive faculty must traverse in order to realize the imagination. For example, the pleasure a student derives from solving a difficult equation is many times greater than that from solving a simple exercise that poses no challenge. Likewise, the pleasure derived from solving a difficult equation the first time is greater than that of the second and third time. In order to solve a difficult equation, the appetitive faculty has to traverse a greater distance in order to reach the yearned for imagined objective the first time, so the pleasure is greater. That is, the pleasure is not detached from the outcome but is a direct cause of the decrease of the distance between the starting point and the result: the greater the distance that the will must traverse from potentiality to actuality in order to be realized, the more will it be satisfied and feel pleasure.

The novelty factor is also expressed in the fact that even when one achieves a goal for which one worked hard, the pleasure decreases after it has been reached, and one needs to find a new source of novelty: “When we attain new knowledge of which we had previously been ignorant, we experience joy, for we have made a sudden transition from ignorance to knowledge. Indeed an indication of this is that the joy is more intense

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, II.VI.1, 221–222.

when the apprehension is fresh, but the pleasure fades following the apprehension."<sup>52</sup>

Crescas replaces the rational philosophic idea of intellectual perfection with the desire to reach it: "The delight that was posited—which is distinct from intellection—is a delight in love and attachment [to God] attained by means of intellection."<sup>53</sup> So intellection is indeed a goal, but only an intermediate goal. The process attached to reaching the goal produces pleasure and attachment, and this leads to love and perfection.

*e. Subjugating the will and exciting the will*

All of the unique elements we have noted in Crescas's system create a cyclical relationship among the concepts of will, pleasure, passion or yearning, love, and attachment to the good and its achievement. On the one hand, realization of the will leads to pleasure, which leads to attachment to the object of the will; but on the other hand, the attachment produces pleasure and this in turn excites the will. Thus the two directions create a cyclical process: the object of the imagination stimulates the will to achieve it, and the pleasure felt when it is achieved reinforces the desire to achieve it: "According to our view, which is that the soul is a substance that has an intellective faculty, the pleasure it takes even in the intelligible is both possible and necessary from the point of view of the excitement of attachment [to God] that we experience in our apprehension. It is this that is the essential cause of pleasure."<sup>54</sup> Crescas argues that the attachment is a link between the appetitive faculty and the imagination (in this case, the intelligible that the imagination yearns for), so its achievement intensifies and stimulates pleasure.

Crescas advances a similar argument about the love of God:

For since it is established of the soul that it is a spiritual substance it is evident with respect to it that it will attain the ultimate joy and delight when it is attached to the spirituality for which it yearns by its nature.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, I.III.5, 117.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, III.I.3, 292.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, II.VI.1, 222.

Through its attachment to the Divine Presence—which is the most wondrous spirituality possible—what will follow necessarily is immeasurable joy and delight to the Divine Presence—which is the most wondrous spirituality possible—what will follow necessarily is immeasurable joy and delight.<sup>55</sup>

The attachment to God causes a person to experience pleasure because he wants to be attached to the good. God is the greatest good, so whenever this potential will is realized, a person is happy and pleased.

The idea that the element of pleasure stimulates attachment to God, and that attachment creates pleasure, is unique to Crescas. He returns to the idea, mentioned above in Section B, that the will is defined as the concurrence of the appetitive faculty and the imagination—which contrasts with the idea that the will is a concurrence of the appetitive faculty and the intellect. Philosophers before Crescas considered the imagination to be the root of evil,<sup>56</sup> whereas Crescas believes that imagination is an important and necessary element both for the will and in the pleasure of achieving the will.

So Crescas does not speak only of the excitation of the will associated with the pleasure derived from its activity, but also the subjugation of the will. The implicit assumption in his principle—namely, that the magnitude of the pleasure experienced by the will is directly proportional to the magnitude of the distance it must traverse in order to move from potential to actual—is that what creates the pleasure is the difficulty and challenge. Consequently, as a person sets more difficult goals, he will indeed have to subjugate his will—but the pleasure is guaranteed and serves as his reward. As Harvey has shown,<sup>57</sup> this is how Crescas explains

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, III.1, 286.

<sup>56</sup> In practice, the philosophers understand the positive force of the imagination as a faculty that serves the reason as the substrate of intellection, but they were also aware of its dangers. One can say that, according to Maimonides, when the imagination is controlled by reason, it is positive and even leads to prophecy; but when imagination rules a person's actions, this is the ultimate form of sin, as he proposes in his interpretation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Cf. Alfred L. Ivry, "Triangulating the Imagination."

<sup>57</sup> Harvey, *Crescas*, 140–141.

the talmudic dictum that “in the place where penitents stand the consummately righteous may not stand.”<sup>58</sup> He argues that, on the one hand, those who have become inured to sinning need greater mental force to subjugate the will. But on the other hand, they achieve a greater attachment to the Lord:

The force that works to subjugate the will to service [to God] must be much stronger in the case of someone who conquers himself and returns to the service [of God] than in that of someone who does not need to conquer himself and is simply inclined to service. The one in whom the force effecting the submission is stronger deserves to be more attached [to God] and more favored. For the attachment and love that exert the stronger force would have to be stronger [in the case of the penitent than in the case of the righteous].<sup>59</sup>

The force acting on the will generates attachment and love of the object sought by the will. So a person who activates his will more intensely will have more love and attachment. Love, pleasure, and attachment are a worshiper’s natural reward, and this “concur with speculation.”<sup>60</sup>

### **III. Crescas and the Modern Concept of Motivation: Interim Summary**

As we have seen, modern science identifies two essential elements for the operation of motivation in general and of powerful intrinsic motivation in particular: the emotion associated especially with the hormone dopamine, which creates pleasure, augments the appetite, and spurs motivation; and the cognitive element, the imagination, which conjures up the final situation and helps a person both overcome difficulties and plan his steps. These two elements are clearly present in Crescas. The element of pleasure is very significant in his thought; for Crescas, it produces the attachment to the goal (or, in his language, the concurrence between the appetitive faculty and the imaginative faculty).

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<sup>58</sup> B. Berakhot 34b.

<sup>59</sup> Crescas, *Light*, III.B.II.1, 325.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, III.A.I, 286.

As for imagination, according to Crescas, knowledge itself and the intellect do not have sufficient attractive force without the cooperation of with the imagination. One can say that in order to feel pleasure and satisfaction there must first be a dream. Perhaps Crescas also believes that only if a person is able to imagine the pleasure that the knowledge will produce—which is a direct result of the process of acquiring it and not of the finish line—can he be a person who wishes and yearns for knowledge and human success.

Pleasure and imagination, the two components of Crescas's system which deviate from rational Aristotelianism, anticipate the conclusions of modern research about motivation. As an educator, Crescas places effort and motivation at the center, and not the achievements. Study is not static but dynamic, so his idea encourages people to exert themselves in the belief that the effort is worthwhile because the person will achieve both the goal and the attachment, delight, and love that come along with it. Crescas's innovation here influences his position on religion, which we will see below. But before we do so I would like to insert a brief note about the parallel between Crescas's notion of the motive force in nature and the motive force in human beings.

### ***1. Motive forces in nature and motive forces in human beings***

We have seen that Crescas applies the concept of love both to the propulsive forces in nature and to those that motivate human beings, and that he defines love as a coming closer that stems from the resemblance between two objects, whether physical or mental. We can say similarly that Crescas's understanding of the concept of "motive force" applies both to nature and to human beings; consequently, motivation as a propulsive force is not just a metaphor but also a physical force that operates in the human mind.

As Miriam Stolovitz demonstrates,<sup>61</sup> Crescas understands force in a different way than Aristotle.<sup>62</sup> Aristotle is committed to two principles that do not always fit easily together: on the one hand, he believes that the upward motion of light bodies and the downward motion of heavy bodies are inherent in nature, so the motive force could not be external to and imposed on the body. On the other hand, he thinks that no object could move itself. Consequently, he distinguishes the matter and form of terrestrial bodies and asserts that the return of bodies to their natural place is associated with their form and not their matter—that is, the form of water/air/fire/earth in a body causes the movement of bodies composed of those elements. However, because he sees matter as a potential that cannot exist by its own without form, he cannot separate the matter of the body from its form and claim that the form moves the matter. Consequently, he explains that what moves the body, aside from its form, are two additional external forces: (1) the force that removes the factor that caused a situation in which the body is outside its natural place, and making it possible for it to return to its natural place; and (2) the nature of the matter of the medium through which the object moves. The first is the force that triggers the start of the motion and the second is what causes it to continue at a particular velocity.

Thus, in the Aristotelian tradition, a body in motion is propelled by two forces: the form that operates on it as a final cause and creates movement aspiring to reach the natural place; and the medium, which serves as the efficient force and causes the motion to take place in time. For Aristotle, were it not for the medium, the movement would take place in zero time. Form would not resist motion, inasmuch as matter cannot resist because it does not exist independently. Were it not for the medium, the form would operate immediately and propel the body in zero time. Because the definition of motion requires that time exist, one must posit

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<sup>61</sup> Miriam Stolovitz, "The Concept of Power in R. Hasdai Crescas's Thought," M.A. seminar research paper, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005 [Hebrew].

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 67–68.



that it is the medium, and not the body itself, that produces the duration of the motion.<sup>63</sup>

Crescas objects to the Aristotelian idea about the potentiality of matter and asserts the independent status of matter in the sublunar realm,<sup>64</sup> but he also rejects the idea that in the absence of a medium motion would have no velocity.<sup>65</sup> He argues that the body's movement is internal and that it has an independent "root time" that results from the body (perhaps from matter) itself. In sum, for Crescas, in contradiction to the Aristotelian tradition, matter and the body have an independent status that produces the motive force to reach their natural place, and they create time with no need for a medium. The medium only decelerates the "root time" of the movement.

Similarly, one can say that the Maimonidean philosophical tradition and Crescas's ideas are opposed with regard to the force that moves human beings to act. According to the philosophical tradition until Maimonides, the will is an internal and not autonomous force, which is influenced by the imagination and passions on the one hand and by the intellect on the other. These competing forces influence the will from the outside and cause it to emerge from potential to actual, or not. Pleasure (material or spiritual-intellectual) is external to the will and is caused by the final product. By contrast, for Crescas, the will is an internal and autonomous faculty, with an independent ability to produce pleasure merely by the achievement of its desire and its feeling of satisfaction. The will is indeed influenced by the imagination, but the imagination is inherent to the will and its definition and is not external to it.

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<sup>63</sup> Esti Eisenman, *R. Moshe Ben Yehudah's Ahabah ba-Ta'anugim* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2014), 78–79 [Hebrew].

<sup>64</sup> See Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique*, 598–559.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–61; 87–90.

## 2. *Stimulating motivation: formative evaluation versus summative evaluation and the role of religion*

The conceptual system of religion includes the ideas of precepts, providence, and reward and punishment. Because one can see these religious principles as a sort of evaluation of and feedback for human action, they can be linked to the modern terms of formative and summative evaluation and as stimulants of motivation. For example, for a thinker who holds that the goal of the precepts is to produce a perfect human being, and that reward and punishment are determined by the degree of distance from or closeness to the ideal, the system of reward and punishment functions as a sort of summative evaluation. By contrast, if a thinker emphasizes the processes that a person experiences and holds that the system of reward and punishment encourages personal development as a means to reinforce the process, one can say that he views the system of reward and punishment as a sort of formative evaluation.

As we will see, Crescas's system stresses the processes that a person experiences and consequently encourages motivation. This is exemplified in several key and interrelated points in his thought: free choice and determinism, the goal of the precepts in general and of prayer in particular, and the system of reward and punishment. We will address these one by one.

### *a. Free choice*

There is no room here for an extensive discussion of Crescas's unique position on free will, a subject on which much has been written.<sup>66</sup> I will summarize it in general terms. According to Crescas, will per se is eternal and free, but it is constrained with regard to its causes.<sup>67</sup> He holds that the definition of the will as the antithesis of coercion requires that choice and

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<sup>66</sup> See Aviezer Ravitzky, *R. Hasdai Crescas's Passover Sermon* (Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2009), 34–68; Harvey, *Crescas*, 120–126; Sadik, *The Essence of Choice*, 240–276.

<sup>67</sup> Crescas, *Light* II.V.3.

decision operate in a certain way out of many alternatives.<sup>68</sup> If a person does not choose to act in a certain way, then by definition he has not acted voluntarily, but was coerced; he will feel “necessity accompanied by a feeling of compulsion and constraint.”<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, the will is not detached from the system of natural causes; consequently, a person’s will and choice are shaped by the variable causes that at any given moment require a person to make a choice and decide to act in one way and not another.<sup>70</sup> When evaluating a person’s actions, Crescas places the greatest weight on that individual’s inner feeling and whether he feels that the action was or was not imposed upon him.<sup>71</sup> Even though a person may be “compelled” to act in some situation in a particular way, we must distinguish internal compulsion that is the result of circumstances, so the agent does not have “a feeling of compulsion and constraint” but attributes his action to his own choice and will, from a situation in which he does have “a feeling of compulsion and constraint.”

*b. Reward and punishment*

According to Crescas, the system of reward and punishment depends on the idea of choice; no legal system punishes a person for actions that were imposed on him.<sup>72</sup> It is in this context that he explains the talmudic principle that “thoughts of transgression are worse than transgression.”<sup>73</sup> For Crescas, a thought is an act of volition; if the thought is accompanied by the deed, a person will receive his due reward or punishment. A thought without a deed requires atonement, but an action without

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., II.V.5, 201. On “a feeling of compulsion and constraint,” a frequent phrase in Crescas, see Zev Harvey, “Notes on ‘A Feeling of Compulsion and Constraint’ in Hasdai Crescas,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 4 (1985): 275–280 [Hebrew].

<sup>70</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.V.1.

<sup>71</sup> See Harvey, “Notes,” 278.

<sup>72</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.V.1.

<sup>73</sup> B. Yoma 29a.

thought (choice) is considered to be coerced, and God exempts the coerced from punishment.<sup>74</sup> On the surface it seems that internal coercion is still a form of coercion, but Crescas believes that there is a difference between the two situations and focuses on the feeling of compulsion or constraint. A person who does not feel coerced is punished, whereas one who feels coerced to act is exempt.

When Crescas makes the system of reward and punishment depend on the feeling of choice and not on the outcome, he is judging human beings according to their intentions and inclinations and not necessarily according to their deeds. We have seen that for modern motivation theory in general, and especially that of self-determination, two inner needs are essential for action with intrinsic motivation: the need for autonomy and the need for capacity. The need for autonomy is individuals' need to feel that their behavior is not coerced but stems from themselves and expresses their own authentic needs and inclinations. The need for capacity is individuals' need to feel that they have the capacity and ability to achieve objectives. When Crescas states that reward and punishment are meted out according to the feeling of coercion and constraint, and that actions depend on this feeling, he is expressing these two basic needs and building a system whose foundation encourages intrinsic motivation. Both sinner and saint are responsible for their deeds because of the intention that attests to the will.

That the system of reward and punishment depends on the feeling of compulsion or the will is even more prominent in Crescas's discussion of whether there is a reward for beliefs. Harvey has written about this at length.<sup>75</sup> We can summarize that for Crescas, individuals' belief systems are imposed on them, and, consequently, one must say that "reward and punishment with respect to beliefs applies to the pleasure and joy we take in them, and to the industriousness with which we exert effort to understand them."<sup>76</sup> Here Crescas stresses not only the satisfaction of the

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<sup>74</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.V.5, 203. See Harvey, *Crescas*, 116.

<sup>75</sup> Harvey, *Crescas*, 107–119.

<sup>76</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.V.5, 203–204.

will that is manifested in “the pleasure and joy we take in them,” but also in the effort made to achieve it (“the industriousness with which we exert effort to understand them”). We can infer that he views reward and punishment as a type of formative rather than summative evaluation.

*c. The goal of the precepts*

According to Crescas, “the prescriptions and proscriptions...are the causes that move things.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, they are what motivate human beings: the precepts shape individuals’ behavior throughout life, educate them, test them, and provide them with new opportunities every day. The goal of the precepts is to instill individuals with a love for and attachment to God.<sup>78</sup> As we have seen, love and attachment are the product of the desire of two similar things to draw closer to each other. Because, according to Crescas, the soul is a spiritual and intellectual object, it has a desire to draw closer to the spiritual deity. The closer they are, the greater the pleasure in the will, and consequently, attachment, love, union, and perfection are achieved.<sup>79</sup> Individuals can draw closer to God only through actions in this world; in his wisdom the Torah provides human beings with many precepts so as to increase their attachment to God.<sup>80</sup>

This is how Crescas explains the statement by R. Jacob: “Better is one hour of repentance and good works in this world than the whole life of the world to come; and better is one hour of bliss in the world to come than the whole life of this world.”<sup>81</sup> According to Crescas, this “bliss” is the result of attachment to God that exists in the world to come for those who served God. By contrast, “repentance and good works” are the

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, II.V.3, 194.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, II.VI.1, 214–215.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* III.A.III.1.

<sup>80</sup> “Since the nature of service requires steadfastness in attachment [to God] and a connection that is not severed, the Torah was therefore clever with a wondrous cleverness, in the proliferation of its commandments” (*Ibid.*, II.VI.2, 226).

<sup>81</sup> M. Avot 4:17, trans. Danby.

actions that lead to attachment to God.<sup>82</sup> On the surface, here we have a goal (attachment to God) and a means to achieve it (the service that leads to attachment). According to this logic, the goal of attachment should be greater than the means for achieving it. According to Crescas, this is true, but only with regard to the giver of the precepts, God: that was indeed his goal in giving the Torah. But with regard to the human recipients, the means—the service of God—is the goal. Or, as Crescas puts it:

For the one who serves God and loves Him truly, the end of his passionate love is service, and that is the whole of his purpose; he considers nothing else. This was the intent of the master of the prophets when he said: “Let me go over,” as our Rabbis of blessed memory interpreted this plea: “Many commandments can be fulfilled [only] in the land of Israel.” For even though he was assured of eternal life and of delighting in the radiance of the Divine Presence, it was fitting that he should yearn to serve, despite the advantage that would accrue to him through having his soul separate [from his body]. Moreover, the more he would serve, the more his attachment to God would increase and grow. Be that as it may, one who serves yearns only to serve, and it is this that is, for the one commanded, the final end.<sup>83</sup>

The effort of service is of greater value than its outcome of love because in a certain sense one cannot achieve love without service.

#### *d. Prayer*

As Avraham Stav demonstrated in his master’s thesis, Crescas, faithful to his general concept that the precepts are motivational, believed that the goal of prayer is to stir human beings to trust in the Lord.<sup>84</sup>

The belief tied to this commandment is that we believe that God responds to the person who prays and places his trust in God in his heart in the right way. ... Even if the person without prayer, would be unworthy and

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<sup>82</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.VI.2, 225.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Avraham Stav, “The Role of Prayer and its Mode of Influence in the Thought of R. Hasdai Crescas and R. Joseph Albo,” M.A. thesis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2017, 40–69 [Hebrew].

unfit to receive that which he seeks, nevertheless prayer renders likely his attaining it—in addition to the reward [he receives] for the fulfillment of a commandment—if he places his trust in God in the right way.<sup>85</sup>

According to Crescas, even individuals' objective rank does not entitle them to have their prayers accepted by the Lord; if they place their trust in the Lord and exert themselves to appeal to him, it is possible that the Lord will respond to them.<sup>86</sup> Note that, according to Stav, even though the divine response to prayer is part of the deterministic system of causes of which God has foreknowledge, he stipulated by his primeval will that prayer would be one of those causes, in order to stimulate human beings to seek attachment to him. Thus the goal of prayer is to inspire trust in the Lord, which will lead to attachment to him, and the attachment depends not only on a person's ultimate rank but also on the process and internal feeling that accompany the prayer.

#### IV. Conclusion

Crescas is considered to be a critic of Aristotelian philosophy and thus one of the forerunners of modern science. We can say that in his understanding of the human soul, too, he anticipated our own time and understood the human psyche and the forces that operate on it in a premodern fashion. We can see him also as one of the pioneers of modern psychology and educational theory. In contrast to the rational Aristotelian view, whose most outstanding representative in Judaism is Maimonides, Crescas understands that what stirs a person into action is feeling and the search for meaning, in which pleasure, joy, and love are latent. For him, the intellect steers a person but cannot serve as a motive force for a person who is in search of a meaningful action. The intellect can be an important value, but it is not a force that produces involvement and inner identification with one's actions.

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<sup>85</sup> Crescas, *Light*, III.B.I.1, 321–322.

<sup>86</sup> Stav, "The Role of Prayer," 66–69.

A comparison of Crescas's comment on the dictum by Antigonus of Socho (m. Avot 1:3)—“be like slaves that minister to the master not for the sake of receiving a bounty”—with Maimonides' explanation in the introduction to his commentary on the tenth chapter of Mishnah *Sanhedrin* (“*Pereq Heleq*”), shows which of them was closer to the modern understanding of how human beings act and of the supreme motivation for compliance with the precepts.<sup>87</sup> As we have seen, according to this modern understanding, the satisfaction of individuals' needs leads them to be engaged with their actions; people are more strongly motivated when they act out of internal reasons that reflect their inclinations and fields of interest, rather than out of their values.<sup>88</sup>

Maimonides presents the allegory of a young child brought to a teacher who stimulates him to learning by means of things in which his youth delights. According to Maimonides, those who observe the Torah like a child, with the goal of receiving material rewards, are not on the level of those who serve out of love. Maimonides expects the young child and the Torah observers to mature and understand the inherent importance of wisdom and the Torah. Hence Maimonides, like Crescas, expects individuals to act out of autonomous motivation. But while Maimonides expects them to act out of intellectual motivation—that is, out of their *understanding* of the importance of the Torah for achieving one's purpose, Crescas expects individuals to act from an internal *emotional* motivation, as a result of pleasure and joy and “the true love and service.”<sup>89</sup>

If so, Crescas sees the goal of religion not to create a perfect being but to produce individuals who are in a perpetual process of perfecting themselves on the road to an emotional-spiritual perfection. This perfection includes the feelings of pleasure and joy that lead to attachment with the deity and to a love that fills their heart. All these elements of

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<sup>87</sup> J. Abelson, “Maimonides on the Jewish Creed,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 19, no.1 (1906): 24–58, 31.

<sup>88</sup> See above, end of I.2.

<sup>89</sup> Crescas, *Light*, II.VI.1.



Crescas's thought reflect his novel understanding of the human psyche and his ability to identify the forces that motivate individuals to act out of the "excitation of the will" in order to achieve their purpose.