

THE MIDDLE GROUND

What Maimonides said about the "middle way," is as relative today as it ever was, both in its original form and in its various other manifestations.

The easiest thing is to go off to one of the extremes. The end of the spectrum, or towards the end of the spectrum, is where "nature" itself causes us to drift. Rarely does such drifting take us to a clearly defined middle of the road; that requires logical and thought-through steering.

While it is true that some people will choose the path of moderation because they are afraid to make a choice -- as between either of the two extremes -- it is more often true that going to the extremes is a case of simple intellectual and existential weariness. It is simply too tiring and too demanding to fashion a way that preserves the basic integrity of ideals and yet is capable of being implemented in the rough and tumble of reality. The extremes offer tidiness at the expense of realism. They pick out one ideal, with all its meretricious appeal, and have little concern for how subsidiary ideals will be accommodated, or even how this ideal will be made to conform with reality or even marginally change that reality to conform to the ideal.