97. See E. Urbach, "Seeking Truth as a Religious Obligation," in *Ha-Mikra ve-Anahnu* (Tel Aviv: 1979), pp. 13–27; U. Simon, "Seeking Truth as Required by Fearers of Heaven and Lovers of Torah: A Collection of Sources," in ibid., pp. 28–41; Y. Cherlow, "Did the Tanakh Happen?" *Megadim* 33 (2001): 75–121.
98. *Iggerot ha-Reiyyah* I, p. 205. For more on this issue, see *Ve-Erastikh*, p. 189.
99. R. Felix enlightened me regarding this argument. For an application of his point, he wrote: "A difficult question arises in the area of dance that involves movement of the stomach and hips. The classic halakhic understanding sees in this a form of sexual exposure that has no place, not only in a setting populated exclusively by women. But upon further analysis, based on a discussion with participants in a dance class, it became clear that precisely the deepest expression of the soul and of the deepest feelings that are for the sake of heaven is expressed in this bodily action. I was witness to a *pesak* of R. Yaakov Ariel that if this is in fact the case, these artistic activities are permitted."

# 4

# From Every Heresy, Faith, and Holiness from Every Defiled Thing: Towards Rav Kook's Theology of Culture

***Yehudah Mirsky***

> The search for the beautiful and the holy, together in one conjoining, one tie, this was Adi's dream, to pass beyond the bounds of the phenomenon to the essence, to the place where these are no longer two different things but one being, made one in a single point.
>
> —Rav Adin Steinsaltz[1]

This essay seeks to gain some purchase on the evolution and basic outlines of Rav Kook's theology of culture, which is to say, his under-

standing of how God appears in, and may be approached through, the welter of practices and ideas that we think of when we speak of human culture. Here as elsewhere in his thought-world, Rav Kook negotiates a complex set of relationships among ideas, movements, and frames of mind. And here as elsewhere he tries to take it all in through a deeply dialectical reading of the cosmic processes of *tiqun*, restoration and repair, set out in Lurianic Kabbalah and as elaborated by Ramhal; sometimes he succeeds and sometimes the effort seems to defeat him.

His understanding of culture is not only theological, but metaphysical, as he takes the fact of culture and integrates it into his understanding of the greater order of being. Here as elsewhere he is taking the zoharic pronouncement "there is no space that is empty of Him"[2] and thinking it through, all the way up, and all the way down. If there truly is no space empty of Him, above or below, one must make sense of things. This is the kernel of Rav Kook's theology of radical divine immanence, what Samuel Hugo Bergmann lastingly characterized as his panentheism, the contention not that God and the world are one, but that the world is nestled inside Him. And his theology is also a theodicy of culture, taking things that seem to go against God and His providence and explaining them not only as subject to God's will but also as their own form of revelation.

It seems wise at the outset to distinguish between two distinct but related—in this case, very related—meanings of the term "culture," which I will briefly refer to as the anthropological and the communicative-expressive. By anthropological, I mean our use of the word "culture" as a means of designating specific groups, in their times and places, and doing so in a certain way, a distinctively modern way. By communicative-expressive, I mean our use of the word "culture" as a means of designating certain kinds of activities, such as writing, speaking, singing, and playing music, in ways meant to communicate ideas, states, and feelings, often—though not always—in an effort to express oneself, to take some bit of truth, grand or trivial, lodged within me and bring it up and out to others, in the process realizing my own self and taking my place among other selves.[3] The hyphen between "communicative"—perhaps we could say "merely communicative"—"and expressive" will, we shall see, be crucial for Rav Kook as well.



Before entering into our discussion, a note on method is in order. Reading and interpreting Rav Kook's sprawling corpus is best characterized not as exposition, but as mapping.[4] Faced with the extraordinary mass of his writings, some discursive but most written out of his own reveries and ceaseless explorations, the interpreter must of necessity set down lines as on a map and thus conjure a meaningful framework out of a rich, verdant, and varied landscape.[5] My own preference is to try and proceed chronologically through Rav Kook's writings, and try and trace the development, or at least the changing shape, of his ideas over time.[6] This reflects my own preference for historical and biographical development as an analytic lens, my sense that most great thinkers are both working out questions posed by their traditions as well as seeking to understand their times, multiple legacies and tendencies, and ideas; and because, in all honesty, I want to complicate the dogmatic readings of Rav Kook so prevalent in many circles today.[7] As do most all his readers, in one way or another, I read him while keeping some very contemporary questions in mind; he might have recognized some, would likely not have recognized others, but he will help us think them through.

It is safe to say that "culture" is one of those terms which, like "religion" and "society," arises out of the dissolution of traditional society, the disaggregation of different facets of life, the problematization of religion, the search for an adequate term to capture some of religious practice's inheritors as meaning-making efforts.[8] In other words, religion shadows culture; it is that from which culture is in many ways trying to set itself free.

Samuel Fleischacker sees the origins of our notion of culture in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and specifically in Gotthold Lessing's response to the late Enlightenment recognition that the universal religion of reason was neither universal nor, given the variety and diversity of human experience, reasonable.[9] Thus, rather than turning to romanticism, "common sense" philosophy, or the celebration of passion at the expense of reason, Lessing contended that, as Fleischacker puts it, "the reason of an individual must be understood in a wider, social context, and . . . the way individuals learn from society is as important to knowledge and action as what they

learn."[10] It was, of course, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) who took this idea one step further, seeing the basic unit of humankind as the group, and the *Volk* as coherent, self-contained, and autonomous as the individual, while enjoying a degree of historical continuity and intellectual, artistic, and spiritual richness of the sort which neither the individual nor humanity as a collection of mere individuals could ever reach on their own:

> No one lives in his own period only; he builds on what has gone before and lays a foundation for what comes after. . . . History may not manifestly be revealed as the theater of a divine purpose on earth . . . for we may not be able to espy its final end. But it may conceivably offer us glimpses of divine theater through the openings and ruins of individual scenes.[11]

Herder's ideas were wildly influential. Significantly for our purposes, Herder's notion of culture was intimately linked to the nation, ethics, and self-expression, all conceived of as expressions of a divine vibration throughout history, less supernatural than that of traditional religion, far less linear and formally rationalistic than that of Kant and the later Enlightenment.[12] For its part, the anthropological version of culture was introduced into English by E. B. Tylor in his 1871 *Primitive Cultures.* There Tylor defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[13]

An authoritative history of the term "culture" published in 1952 listed more than 160 definitions proposed between 1920 and 1950 alone. Fleischacker points out that most definitions lack an integrating principle for either culture or society. He himself proposes an understanding of culture as the effort in which "by means of shared texts, groups pass down interests and ideas, rules and models."[14]

This in turn brings us to another sense of culture, famously suggested by Matthew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy*, namely, "the best that has been thought and said." This formulation was no mere tissue of elitism. Rather, as Lionel Trilling says in his classic study of Arnold:



> Culture is not merely a method but an attitude of spirit contrived to receive truth. It is a moral orientation, involving will, imagination, faith; all of these avowedly active elements body forth a universe that contains a truth which the intuition can grasp and the analytical reason can scrutinize. Culture is reason involving the whole personality; it is the whole personality in search of the truth. It creates both a cosmology and a philosophy of history to assure its effectiveness. It is the escape, in short, from *Verstand* to *vernunft*, from the mere understanding to the creative reason. Culture may best be described as religion with the critical intellect superadded.[15]

For Arnold, Trilling continues, culture, like religion, affirms that there is truth to be known and we can indeed know it. And, like religion, it believes in—and bids us to achieve—wholeness, in congruence with our inner natures and the natural and social world. It insists that we go beyond ourselves, and develop. In these respects, "culture" becomes the equivalent of *Bildung.* Moreover, the critic is no mere observer of culture; he (at the time, he) is essential to it, since it is the critic who brings culture to self-awareness.

Another term which, like "religion," and "culture," came forward to fill the vacuum left by the demise of traditional religion is "nation." Current debates over whether nationalism is entirely imagined or indeed reflective of genuinely shared cultural, ethnic, and linguistic group characteristics need not detain us here.[16] But nationalism crucially affects the idea of culture, and vice versa. What kinds of texts or practices make a culture? And what if any internal hierarchy is there among them? That itself, Fleischacker reminds us, is a key and contested issue in nationalism, be it, as he elegantly puts it, made or found, which, no matter what, needs "to try to establish a decisive hierarchy of cultural allegiances and to impose its answer on each individual, with the group it selects, by means of a political structure and a body of positive law."[17] Both forms of nationalism, "draw on an analogy between the cultural group and the individual human being . . . [but] what the made nationalist finds fascinating about individual human

beings is not their uniqueness but their indeterminacy and (concomitant) capacity for self-creation."[18]

These multiple senses of culture—as national identity, substitute for religion, handmaiden of nationalism, and vehicle of self-creation—were all very much in play in the revolutionary milieu in which Rav Kook was operating, nowhere more so than in the writings of Ahad Ha-Am, and in the works of his disciples. We need not rehearse the vast literature on Ahad Ha-Am and the great *kulturkampfen* in which he was involved on all sides; we may, though, recall that for Ahad Ha-Am, Jewish national identity was intimately connected to the Judaic spirit, whose chief normative content was ethical and which came in multiple forms: religion, literature, philosophy, folkways—all the creations of the people themselves. Culture harvests and thus transmits the spirit and brings it to self-awareness. [19] Ahad Ha-Am was famously challenged by Berdyczewsky, Rav Kook's classmate at Volozhin and the *enfant terrible* of Hebrew letters, who argued that the need of the hour was not Jewish cultural renaissance, but revolution against Jewish history and religion. As we will see, Rav Kook tried to contend with both positions.

But first, one more introductory question: What do we mean by "theology of culture"?

Perhaps the best-known modern formulation is that of the major existentialist theologian Paul Tillich, whose essay "Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture" first appeared in 1956 and forms the keystone of his *Theology of Culture*.[20] For Tillich, religion is that which deals with "ultimate concern," and thus, by definition, "cannot be restricted to a special realm [but] refers to every moment of our life, to every space and every realm."[21] Indeed "the religious and the secular are not separated realms. Rather they are within each other."[22] Moreover, "there is no sacred language . . . . Religious language is ordinary language, changed under the power of what it expresses, the ultimate of being and meaning. The expression of it can be narrative (mythological, legendary, historical) or it can be prophetic, poetic, liturgical. It becomes holy for those to whom it expresses their ultimate concern from generation to generation."[23]



For Tillich, cultural expression in all its forms, including the institutions and practices known as "religion," are all human attempts to express the inexpressible, to actualize that which underlies all actuality and is, for precisely that reason, inaccessible in the here-and-now. In a sense, Tillich theologizes culture by erasing the sacred, or at least denying that it can be known in any way other than through culture, to the extent to which it can be known at all. There are here certainly elements of Karl Barth's dialectical theology, in the refusal entirely to fuse the divine with any human institutions, including religious institutions. Yet Tillich was, *inter alia*, expressly trying to get away from what he regarded as Barth's supernaturalism, and to move toward a "correlation" of the divine and the human. [24] Crucially for him, and in a key contrast with Rav Kook, ultimacy lies at the bottom of human concerns, and grounds them. It may have vitality but has no will, certainly not one whose workings can be plotted through the course of history. What is for Tillich an adjective, "ultimacy," is for Rav Kook a noun; Ultimacy is the reflection within us of the Ultimate, who has a name, a personality, and most certainly a will, far removed though it, and He, may be from our own conceptions of personality and will, and of God.

Tillich and Rav Kook, each in his own way, were influenced by the strains of Idealist philosophy, which, though removed from traditional Christianity, in some ways reinscribed the Christian narrative of salvation and re-enchanting the world, not least by seeing art, morals, and religion as different iterations of something larger, the Spirit. Theologians like Tillich take this re-enchantment further and use it to invigorate classic religious concepts, and Rav Kook takes it even further still. That he is able to do so is in part due to the historical connections between Idealism and Kabbalah.[25]

In other words, in looking for Rav Kook's theology of culture, we will try to trace the ways in which for Rav Kook, God is to be found at work in, and grasped from within, "culture" in the two senses described above, the anthropological and the expressive. This perspective certainly complicates, and at times dissolves, familiar distinctions between "religious" and "secular."

Our discussion begins with Rav Kook's early writings, and in particular his aggadic commentary *'Eyn Ayah*, which he began to write in the early 1890s and most of which was written before his move to the Land of Israel in the late spring of 1904.[26] In these writings we find that the word *tarbut* simply indicates what I have called the anthropological sense, which is the sense of the word in classical Hebrew and rabbinic sources,[27] with an admixture of the classic phrase *tarbut ra'*: "As injurious to us as our external enemies were, even more so were the evil cultures, the 'mixed multitude' [of the desert wanderings] and their successors in every generation." [28]

Indeed, in these early writings, *tarbut* functions in what we may call a vertical sense, hierarchically organizing relations between man and nature, various elements of the human person and civilized and noncivilized peoples. As Rav Kook's thought develops, this vertical sense will be joined by a horizontal sense in which culture becomes that which differentiates nations that are ontologically similar.

A little further on he uses the term to designate civilization in its most basic sense of civility, akin to the Meiri's notion of fundamentally civilized peoples,[29] balanced by the suggestion that there may indeed be more to life than civility and reason, but that is no reason to disturb fundamental hierarchies within the soul, or society.

> And so we have found among the wild nations, untutored in culture (*tarbut*) and wisdom, that they have sharper natural abilities than the learned nations, for the learned mind overpowers the natural mind. And this is of God's compassion on His creatures that one fit to use a higher virtue need not depend on a lower one, such that necessity will spur him to attain greater perfection. And so the female, whose telos is such that she does not stand to acquire great understanding through study, and her end in the perfection of the order of the world is "to work with willing hands" (Prov. 31:4), and "there is no women's wisdom but the spindle" (BT Yoma 66a) and so she has greater natural insight *(binah yeteirah)* than the male.[30]



This natural and untutored state is perhaps to be given its due but must firmly be mastered and overcome.[31] It is worth noting that gender plays an interesting role in this passage. Though not a misogynist, at no point in his life did Rav Kook ever write or say anything that could be construed as feminist.[32] His views of women in general have been well characterized as "benign, if paternalistic."[33] Be that as it may, the ways in which he uses gender (or in this case nation and gender) while building a conceptual vocabulary yield a different picture than more obviously traditional and stereotyped categories would allow. Thus the need to make Jewish women more dignified than mere, albeit vital, heathens, here subtly reconfigures the raw state of nature, which has not only *élan vital*, but is also the vehicle for a kind of intuitive and penetrating knowledge that is not immediately available to its epistemic superior, i.e., the intellect.

Much further on in *'Eyn Ayah*, in a passage written not long before his departure for Palestine, Rav Kook sees in this less than entirely civilized form of human society a source of vitality in its own right, and culture as something that can come, negatively, between you and nature. Striking a Rousseauistic note, and reflecting his opinion, stated over and over in *'Eyn Ayah*, that humanity—like nature—is fundamentally good, *qua* handiwork of the divine, he writes that overmuch cultivation, and overbearing society, can, if unbalanced with the other dimensions of personhood, lead to alienation.

> The human soul was created straight by God, rejoicing in life and finding pleasure in its feelings, yet in the strife of human society, man has become distanced from pure feelings of nature, and his understanding sullied too. And so the virtue that will return him to his natural equanimity is the broad shared pleasure which man finds in nature, the divine compassion that fills all the universe . . . those restore his consciousness to naturalness after having been distanced from them by culture and society . . . .[34]

A little further on in *'Eyn Ayah*, in a passage written around the time of his aliyah, Rav Kook recurs, in a penetrating bit of social

criticism, to this idea, such that culture in its civilized sense, by overwhelming a more natural, and private, self, generates its own negation, evil, and disorder. Interpreting the talmudic comment (BT Shabbat 10b) that it is preferable to live in a recently populated city because it is presumably less contaminated by sin, he writes:

> "God made man upright/righteous" (Ecc. 7:29), and man's interiority always tends, by virtue of his divine soul, to return; but his exteriority, by virtue of his matter, tends to evil, and "the scheme of his heart's devising" (Gen. 6:5) turns to evil all the more by virtue of society, which corrupts so long as it looks only to man's exteriority. . . . the lone individual, because he can plumb the depths of his own humanity, is more likely to follow the good path, but the societal current will sweep him with greed, lust, and honor, which dictate bad laws. And so it is good to live in a place where the traces of *private culture* [emphasis added], built on the foundation of man's nature combined with the study of Torah and morals, have not yet been erased by the tumult of *societal culture* [emphasis added] . . .[35]

He concludes that one of the reversals of the eschaton will precisely be that in that time, communal life will be the vehicle for human improvement and even holiness.

One cannot help but note that the word "culture," *tarbut*, appears here, in the same sentence, in both positive and negative connotations. "Inner" culture he views positively, and "outer," negatively. It seems that if up to this point we have been talking largely about the anthropological sense of human culture, we are, in his valorization of individual culture as something reflecting an innate goodness, perhaps moving toward the communicative-expressive dimensions. This is a reflection of both his personal experience and his growing engagement with nationalism, which latter are the micro- and macrocosms of the subjectivity which became for him a central category of being.

It is at this point worth looking at Rav Kook's well-known comments on *Shir Ha-Shirim*, the Song of Songs, which were written



around 1901.[36] What began as a spontaneous conversation with his disciple Binyamin Menashe Levin on a recent essay by Moshe Leib Lilienblum, emerged into a full-blown meditation on artistic expression and national identity. Literature, painting, and sculpture, he writes, seek to express—and in so doing, to realize—the spiritual concepts secreted away in the human soul, and that act of expression is a spiritual imperative.

> Literature, painting and sculpture aim to bring to realization all the spiritual concepts impressed deep in the human soul. And so long as even one etching secreted in the depth of the thinking and feeling soul is missing and unexpressed the work of art has an obligation to bring it forth.[37]

Of course, he says, this applies only to things worthy of expression, and certainly should not be taken as a license for artistic promiscuity, even if the natural wellsprings of love, like nature herself, are good. And of course, we must talk about love. It takes a virtuoso to grasp the rich divine origin of natural human love, as of national/societal love—the affective bonds creating groups and holding them together—and divine love in all its purity.

> Yet, like a drop from the ocean, like a single spark from a tongue of flame that shoots to the sky, like one letter from a broad and vast book, one whose soul is so great will also value individual natural love in its pure worth, and will have pure natural love, and enlightened national love, and sacred divine love, full of splendor, all in array "like the tower of David nobly built" (Cant. 4:4).[38]
>
> The virtuoso can discern the radiant purity of divine love even amid the vicissitudes of time, and such a virtuoso was none other than Rabbi Aqiva.
>
> The luxuriant love elicited by the undoubted future vision will so fill his pure heart that there will be no place for the horrifying present, which he will see as but a light

> cloud passing over the sun, clear in the sky; only from the fount of that one whose soul expired at "One!" could there flow the decision that all the writings are sacred and the Song of Songs is the holy of holies!

By the time Rav Kook left Europe for Palestine in the late spring of 1904, he had attained a sense of subjectivity, first personal and increasingly national, which saw both the individual and the group as striving to realize their own essences. The complex situation he would meet in Jaffa and onward would drive him to see this striving operating in ever more complex ways, made all the more complex by his working to integrate that often unpredictable and antistructural striving into the highly structured, and deeply normative world of traditional Judaism and rabbinic tradition.

On arriving in the Land of Israel in 1904, in Jaffa, essentially the capital city of the burgeoning New Yishuv, Rav Kook found himself having to deal with, *inter alia*, a vibrant local cultural scene that included Maskilim, revolutionaries, litterateurs, and artists, all ringing their own changes on the national projects being moved forward by politicians, activists, businessmen, educators, and agricultural pioneers.

He developed profound relationships with a number of the leading writers and artists around Jaffa, such as Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz, Shmuel Yosef Czaczkes (aka Agnon), Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (Reb Binyomin), Yosef Zvi Rimon, and others; he had fraught relations with Yosef Haim Brenner; though the two had virtually no direct contact they were acutely aware of and followed each other's work, as will be discussed below.[39]

In 1906 Rav Kook published a small, powerful book of essays, *'Iqvei Ha-Tazon* ("Traces of the Flock"). The lead essay, "Ha-Dor" ("The Present Generation"), registered the powerful impact on him of his encounters with the younger idealists, whose principled, self-sacrificing revolt against tradition, he suggested, was none other than the impudence that, according to a famously obscure mishnah (Sotah 9:15), would precede the advent of the Messiah.

In the following, rich, essays, he identifies, *inter alia*, human longings for contact and communion with the essence of things as a



longing for the essence of being, whose complex structure and manifestations are the Sefirot. He thus deftly knits the Sefirot together with "idealism" *qua* longing for higher things, and with German philosophical Idealism. More to the point, the ongoing revelation of God in human consciousness through the Sefirot becomes the motive force in all human culture.

"The divine ideals," he writes, "and the inner desire, exalted and self-driven (*atzmit*) towards them, to rise above them, depict them in thought and feeling, and bring their likeness to life in action in the orders of life, those themselves are the fruit of the premier thought, whose exaltation has no end or goal, and it illuminates on and on."[40] This longing for the divine ideals reveals itself in both philosophic thought and religious feeling, the two, ideally (pun intended) complementing each other, the latter tending to overflow, the former to restraint. The divine source of these drives is hidden even to themselves, and unable to come to expression in the life of society as a whole. Bringing them to self-consciousness, and expressing them in practice, is the great vocation of Israel.

A concrete expression of his thinking on the plastic arts is a well-known letter he wrote in 1908 to the Bezalel Academy, expressing support for its project of creating a new Jewish aesthetic, along with hesitation about its coming perilously close to the line—although exactly what line is at first unclear: the Second Commandment? Overweening aestheticism? Sensuality? Perhaps all three?[41] Ringing changes on the ideas he expressed in *'Eyn Ayah*, he avers at length that Israel has elevated humanity from its raw natural state, not only morally and spiritually, but aesthetically too. And yet Israel has refrained from one form of human expression, and that is rendering the human form in portraiture or sculpture. He asks Bezalel to announce that they too will make this renunciation. Naive as it sounds, this was a way of conveying fundamental support for their project while casting it in larger terms, as well as likely what he needed in order to support them while still—even if, as often, just barely—staying within the bounds of the rabbinic fraternity.

It is, of course, in Rav Kook's journals, and in particular *Shemonah Qevatzim*, the eight voluminous notebooks of spiritual diaries

written between the years 1910 and 1919, where he worked hardest to think through these and so many other issues. Rav Kook's practice of what today we would call spiritual journaling began well before those years and continued long after, but these journals are, so to speak, the mother lode of his theological writing during the heroic period of his thought, and it was from them that his editors quarried his canonical works, such as *Orot* and *Orot Ha-Qodesh*, during and after his lifetime.[42] At the time of writing, these jottings and explorations were meant not for an audience but were Rav Kook's means of exploring, recording, expressing, and analyzing his own rich and increasingly complex inner world. His writing, regularly powerful, is not systematic. He does, though, recur to a fairly stable set of questions, while trying to manage often unstable dichotomies, including those between intellect and feeling, heresy and piety, complex belief and simple faith, Israel and the nations.

In the notebooks, we see a number of the themes adumbrated thus far being steadily pitched in a richer and more complex and kabbalistically inflected register and along a wider horizon; central to all Rav Kook's mature theological writing is the conviction and vision that all of existence is pervaded with divine light, and vibrates with restless energy as it seeks to return to its Godly source. Thus culture, like all human activity, is part of the unfolding revelation and restoration of the Divine Will. That will is no mere instance of volition, even volition on a Godly scale. It is, for Rav Kook, following the formulation of Ramhal, the substance of all we know of God, which is to say of Being, including the recesses of our own existence.

Thus, the primal forces which earlier he identified with a lower, if vital, "nature" are now seen as of the very essence of the human person. In pressing through culture—which here seems to mean culture in its expressive sense, and which, as he says, "reveals many sides of good and light in the human self"—against conventional religion and morality, it forces the latter to discover their own inner light, the recognition that the freedom being sought by the wilder self is itself an integral element of religion and morality; this recognition will in turn enable religion and morality to subdue and master those savage elements of the human spirit that need to be disciplined, and give the



divine dimension of the savage elements their proper due.

> Culture reveals many dimensions of good and light in the human soul, which one would have thought were evil and wild. And when she meets obstacles to these points [of goodness] by way of religion and morals, she fights and conquers them. But the aftermath of the battle is the discovery by religion and morals themselves of their own light, to the point where personal freedom and its good natural demands becomes recognized as one of the precincts of religion and morals themselves, and so anyway the ability of religion and morals to rule the wild side of man is fulfilled even more and [that freedom] becomes dignified and loved by virtue of the heavenly and good within it. [43]

Rav Kook is here integrating, as he regularly does, kabbalistic doctrines with the Nietzschean *lebensphilosophie* of his time.[44] The kabbalistic element is the characterization of repentance as a kind of freedom; the association of the sefirah *Binah* with repentance, *teshuvah*, is a staple of zoharic and classic kabbalistic literature.[45] In those contexts *Binah* is freedom in that it designates a realm of being that is free of sin, and of the ordinary causalities that trammel human beings in the sinful lower world of the law. In one of his last journal entries before leaving Europe in 1904, Rav Kook expanded the semantic range of this "freedom" to include the political, existential, and antinomian claims of freedom by contemporary freethinkers, on the basis of their "natures":

> "Repentance preceded the world" (BT Pesahim 54a) because perfected life is precisely natural and nature is blind, and so sin is necessary, since "there is no mortal who does not sin" (Ecc. 7:20) and repentance repairs the damage. But that a man be free of sin because he has undone natural life, that is the greater sin. *"And he shall atone for sinning against his soul"* (Num. 6:11).[46] And so the foundation of

> the world is repentance, the world of freedom *'olam ha-herut*, for whose sake God's Name is called "life."[47]

In terms of the now-classic dichotomy articulated by Isaiah Berlin, Rav Kook is talking here largely of "positive freedom," the freedom to be one's truest self, though there are traces of "negative" freedom involved, both in terms of the desire to be rid of the trammeling strictures of the law, the Jewish people's own stirrings for political freedom, and the socialist revolutionaries' revolt against an unjust and exploitative socioeconomic order.[48] To be sure, Rav Kook was critical of Nietzsche, even as he explored the spiritual possibilities which the Nietzschean revolt could, and did unleash.[49] In Smadar Sherlo's judicious formulation, while Rav Kook and Nietzsche both rebelled against desiccated rationalism and stilted tradition in favor of a life-affirming vitality, Nietzschean protest found its apotheosis in the natural world, where for Rav Kook it is in the divine mind which permeates nature and transcends it.[50]

It is of course worth asking just how the bearers of the human subjects who were the objects of Rav Kook's metaphysical exertions, artists in particular, reacted to his attempts to understand them, and in so doing fold them into the cosmic drama plotted by the Kabbalah. We have the responses of Yosef Haim Brenner, who seems to have fascinated Rav Kook, though the fascination was not quite requited in the manner that the latter had hoped. Brenner was precisely the sort of political and literary radical whom Rav Kook had in mind when he wrote about "the souls of the world of chaos," whose inner struggles prefigure the appearance of higher morality. Brenner for his part was determinedly unwilling to be drawn into Rav Kook's metaphysical and eschatological designs.

Brenner wrote caustically of a number of Rav Kook's literary efforts. He was especially scornful of Rav Kook precisely because the latter was not a straightforward apostle of Orthodox reaction. Rav Kook had tried to read Brenner & Co. against their own grain, and Brenner took up the challenge, with a sting; he pointedly accused Rav Kook of operating in a kind of bad faith, of peddling forced optimism and mystical *schwarmerei* in a desperate attempt to cover up the fact that he



himself identified with the deep senses of rebellion and historical rupture that were the hallmark of Brenner's generation. Indeed, he said, it was precisely the real literary power which regularly broke through Rav Kook's otherwise clotted phantasmagoric prose that showed him to be a true kindred spirit of the Second Aliyah, if only he would have the guts to say so.[51]

There are, in this seemingly peculiar minuet between Rav Kook and Brenner, larger stakes involved. Viewed from a slightly wider angle, Brenner's argument parallels the later—and more abstractly formulated—argument between Yosef Klausner and Baruch Kurzweil over whether modern Hebrew culture represented some sort of continuation of Jewish culture, or a radical, and perhaps irreparable, break with it. Rav Kook is, like his opposite number Ahad Ha-Am, asserting continuity, but of a different kind, deeply dialectical, indeed so deeply dialectical that it is nearly occult, such that the participants are themselves scarcely aware of it.[52]

This kabbalistic way of seeing was for him not a matter of doctrinal teaching, but experiential. This seeing was part of the larger illumination to be had by an internal faculty of vision which, as the next passage says, goes both high and low, ascending to a great height from which one can take in all of existence, including its interiority, *pnimiyut ha-havayah*, and seeing the divine energy coursing through it, in the cosmic cycle of repentance and *tiqun:*

> Every person, the sanctity of whose soul has ascended to the heights of looking into the interiority of being, and draws the holy spirit from the depths of his soul, whatever he may see in the external world . . . will sharpen his spiritual sense all the more, and from every husk (*kelippah*) he will gain light, from every heresy, faith, and holiness from every defiled thing.[53]

We may have here the mystic as an Arnoldian cultural critic, who brings the culture to self-awareness through his own vatic-mystic self-awareness; the culture critic as *Zadiq Ha-Dor.*[54]

Indeed, the whole of human culture, he writes a little further on, is none other than the visible meeting of the divine lights at work in existence and creation, the inner light, which moves outward to return to its divine source (*or hozer*) and the all-encompassing light which enters into our world from without, through the Torah:[55]

> The inner light which the soul pours from its insides must always meet the encompassing light pressing out from the Torah, from the broad higher light appearing in the world. In each and every day one must work on the quality of the beautiful fusion of these lights. All of world culture is the issue of the fusion of this higher light, and its external dimension.[56]

In the notebook following he restates this idea, explicitly linking the anthropological and communicative-expressive senses of "culture—and he argues that all manifestations of culture are fixed in the form of the ecclesia of Israel, *Knesset Yisrael*, and in its image, "the visage of Jacob," which is to say, in Kabbalistic terms, in the recesses of both the Oral and Written Law. Culture *qua* link between the natural and the spiritual world functions here on a horizontal plane in mediating relations between Israel and the nations, as it did in a vertical plane in the *'Eyn Ayah* passages in which the natural world provides the foundation for the human person. And the culture critic is now writ large, as *Knesset Yisrael.*

> All the teachings (*torot)*, laws, ideas, ethics, [forms of] naturalness, [social] orders, mores, wisdoms, lyrics, wills, turbulences of life, its endurance, its grasp of the essence of existence, are none other than treasures full of fulfillment which the will that transcends all, for us, with the strength of its courage and splendor of eternality, its foundational beauty and most desired beauty reveals and makes known in all their splendor.[57] From the lowest movement things flow in order, without let up, to the highest heights . . . to unify all worlds, vanquish death . . . [all] fixed in the soul of the commons, in the form of Ecclesia of Israel, in the visage of Jacob.[58]



Pursuing this line of thought in the next notebook, which was written in early-mid-1914, expressive work is done not only by obviously "cultural" expressions such as art and music. Indeed, the mitzvot themselves, given from above, are meant to facilitate the deepest expressions of the soul, the inner light which seeks to return to its source.

> The inner quest of the soul is to express the representations of its *weltanschauung* outward from its spirit. All moral guidance and all the mitzvot "were not given other than to refine [God's] creatures" (Breishit Rabbah 44:1), that the soul may become so purified that in its spirit there be no dross to deform the purity of the representations. The course of the spiritual life pushes man to arrive at the natural situation of his spirit, that the wellsprings of his soul may flow always, to create new representations, and new and great perspectives, mental and practical, without letup.[59]

This is a far-reaching idea, which he takes far indeed. Culture, like the divine light flowing to and refracted back from this world, runs both ways. The light of Israel is the *tiqun* of the inner life of the world, while the outer life's *tiqun* comes through conscious activity, including culture, in both its social (what we have called anthropological) and its aesthetic and artistic (communicative-expressive) dimensions, which taken together effect the *tiqun* of the sefirotic structure itself:

> The interiority of the worlds is progressively restored by the spiritual influx, whose central foundation is the light of Israel, and their exteriority attains betterment by practical consciousness, and all societal, aesthetic and artistic culture. The human spirit will expand, the light of divine creativity ascend within it to the point of utter union of internal and external betterment of the world . . . [of] *net-*

*zach* and *hod*, the *qedusha* and *tiferet ha-malkhutit* of "the soul entire" (Ps. 150: 9).[60]

He goes on to say that this inner drive will also be manifest in the sociopolitical betterment of the world, leading to "the day when God will bind His people's wounds and heal the blows it has endured" (Is. 30:26).[61]

As by now is clear, Rav Kook's reflections on culture's role in the illumination of creation result very much from his own experience of illumination, as well as from the frankly eschatological framework within which he not only perceives reality, but is able to contain and even engage seemingly contradictory principles in the world at large and in his own mind.

And he sees, in these early days of 1914, the progress of culture and civilization as very much part of an unfolding messianic drama. Even the casting-off of tradition is part of this ultimately beneficent process—but, and this is a large but that will, so to speak, get bigger very soon—it runs the risk of reaching too far before its time: "Culture proceeds, humanity is becoming fragranced, senses its ability to stand on its own spiritual feet, and so desires to detach itself from tradition. But it tries its strength before it has been weaned. . . . And so it will know no peace . . . ."[62]

This theology—or perhaps theodicy—of culture is, again, esoteric, a perspective available only to those who, as he says in the following passage, are, through the Kabbalah, able to achieve a unity of body and spirit. The agonistic relation of the natural world to culture reappears here, but it has been modified. The antagonisms are now—of a piece with his developing historiosophy—placed in a context of dialectical historical development. Early on, civilization was undeveloped, but the realm of spiritual feeling was exalted. As civilization progressed, the spirit weakened. Now, in the gathering eschaton, "the individuals of distinction, who grasp the tree of life of true Torah," are able to join the inner realm of spiritual feeling with advanced civilization.

> When practical (material) culture stood at the low point, sensibility of the soul stood at its height, and afterwards, with each step that practical culture ascended, soul sensibility diminished. Only special individuals, who grasp the tree of life of true Torah, unify within themselves the two . . . and it is they who are fit to draw the light into the world *and be masters of counsel for King Messiah.* (Zohar II: 44a).[63]



The outbreak of World War I caught Rav Kook in Switzerland, to which he had traveled to attend a conference of Agudath Yisrael and seek medical treatment for his wife, and it stranded him in Europe until 1919. He spent a year and a half in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and early January of 1916 found him in London, where he became rabbi of the Machzikei Ha-Dath synagogue at Brick Lane in the East End. As the slaughter went on, he came to see the war in apocalyptic terms, as the suicide of Western civilization and, especially, the Christian morality that underlay it.[64] This sense of catastrophe similarly made itself felt in his reflections on culture.[65]

In seeking the origins of "contemporary culture," he had, in wartime, recourse to a theme he had developed at length decades earlier in *'Eyn Ayah*, and to which he recurred in his notebooks: the relationship between the intellect and its handmaiden, philosophy, and the imaginative faculty and its handmaidens, poetry, literature, drama, and the fine arts. In Maimonides' *Guide* (II:36) the imaginative faculty is the connective tissue between body and mind, and as a result its perfection is a necessary prerequisite to prophecy. In *'Eyn Ayah* and in his later writings, Rav Kook returns again and again to the relations between the imaginative faculty and the intellect; in a crucial move he identifies the imaginative faculty with feeling, and, practically alone among traditional thinkers, sees it as contending with the intellect for primacy in the ideal human soul, and in the metaphysical structure of the world.[66] This is the background to the following characterization of the crisis of Western culture as resulting from the subordination of intellect to the imagination. His anxieties over culture, which he has until now kept in check, are now out in the open.

> All of contemporary culture is built on the imaginative faculty. This is the fate of the idolatrous nations, gripped

> by the imaginative faculty, from which comes the development of corporeal beauty in action and concrete representation. . . . and as the imaginative faculty ascends and takes hold of life, the light of the mind departs, for the whole world thinks that fulfillment depends on developing the imagination. . . . the rhetoricians and story-tellers, dramatists and all those working in fine arts take the lead in culture, philosophy is halt and lame, and has no standing, for the clean mind steadily vanishes. And by the same token as the vanishing of the mind, so *chutzpah will swell, the wisdom of the scribes will go spoiled, the pious be abhorred, and the truth will go missing and the face of the generation be like that of a dog* (after Mishnah Sotah 9:15).[67]

The crisis of the culture is both cause and effect of the displacement of the mind by the imagination, whose utter reign is a reign of terror. Yet, as is made clear by the last line and its allusion to the Mishnah in Sotah, which was throughout Rav Kook's life a hermeneutic key to understanding his times, the current cultural apocalypse bears within it the stirrings of the messianic era. As he continues, "all this is the secret of *a counsel from afar* (after Isa. 25:1), God's counsel, to perfect the imaginative faculty, because it is a healthy basis for the higher spirit that appears upon it."[68]

This is a comparatively serene formulation. Elsewhere, Rav Kook gave vent to his revulsion at the slaughter of the war, and saw in it the self-destruction of ostensibly cultured nations, along with their literature and theater, which will give way to the rise of Israel.

> "The sin stains deep" (Jer. 2:22), the blood-spilling nations, wanton earthly kings "make the earth shudder" (Isa. 14:16), "the land cannot be cleansed of the bloodshed within it, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Num. 35:33) and the atonement must come, a general undoing of all the cultured nations of today, with all their lies and deceit, all their evil contamination and serpentine poison.



> The whole culture reveling in ringing lies must vanish from the world, and in its place, a kingdom of sacred beings arising. The light of Israel will appear to establish a world of new peoples, nations "who will not murmur in vain" (Ps. 2:1). . . . The spiritual and practical fabric that in its contemporary form could not stop, with all its beautiful wisdom, the great, great bloodshed, and the destruction of the world in this dreadful way, has shown itself to be putrid at the root. . . . And so all the contemporary cultures will utterly be destroyed, and on their embers will be established a universal edifice in truth and the knowledge of God. "The mount of God's house will stand firm above the mountains and tower over the hills" (Isa 2:2).[69]

Yet the universalist element of his thought remained, even amid the global catastrophe of the war; indeed in some ways it may have been quickened as his mind tried to take in the extraordinary sweep of events. And in the following notebook, written in 1915, he makes his strongest statement yet about human culture—all human culture, Jewish and non-Jewish, and all religions—as its own revelation.

> The sense of divine faith, in all its great strength, that is life, true life, the life that has no death, the life whose joy is unalloyed with any sorrow, grief or sighing . . . that light of life grows and ascends from every teaching, every wisdom, every compassion, every greatness, every good and pleasant conversation, every great and noble idea, every straight and honest thought, every mitzvah, every good deed, every improvement in culture and the way of the world, every good thing in the world at all times and in all creatures, all languages, all tongues, in all tendencies and in all faiths, in all the worlds, and all the souls.[70]

He is casting a wide and welcoming—though not indiscriminate—net. A bit further in this notebook we read:

> The moral discipline of secular culture which ruled over the nations vexed their hearts, and many vices, illnesses and vexations gathered deep in their souls, and they snap their fetters by the great, bloody, cruel wars, befitting their yet-unpurified natures.[71]

This gentile deficiency also negatively affects the internal development and self-perfection of Israel, the speculum of the world, that which gathers in its light—and thus is in some ways dependent on the lights from outside her. In other words, the World War is a war on culture, a war on the beast-mastering civilizing side of culture.

We read in the paragraph immediately following:

> All nations develop, realize themselves, by their natural motions. Wars deepen the distinct properties of every nation. . . . Israel is the broad speculum of the entire worlds, and so long as there is a nation in the world that has not utterly and fully realized itself, the light absorbed by Israel is correspondingly dimmed. And so in each and every time "that kingdoms war with each other," distinctive forms realize themselves, and thus necessarily a perfecting energy is born in Knesset Yisrael, "await the legs of the Messiah" (after Breishit Rabbah 42:4), who should arrive and appear speedily in our days, amen.[72]

It is of course disconcerting, given what we know of World War I, to read this hope of his that the vast slaughter of the war will somehow bring about the apotheosis of Israel. He was not the only thinker to hope that a better world would emerge from the war, and for him a better world would necessarily entail a better Knesset Yisrael, indeed could only come about through a better Knesset Yisrael, which is the vessel for all the spiritual energies of the world. Unlike thinkers like Martin Buber, Hermann Cohen, or, for that matter, Woodrow Wilson, who hoped for a better world after the war precisely because the war, so they hoped, would diminish the pull of *lebensphilosophie* and its passions, Rav Kook continued to maintain a highly essentialized



and deeply romantic notion of national identity, perhaps because for him, ultimately, there is only one true nation, one true corporate entity which fuses body and soul in all its constituent parts and as an organic whole, and that is Israel.

Even so, his conceptions are tensile and restless. Later on in the same notebook he launches a powerful attack on two mortal enemies of goodness and humanity—"intellectual heresy" and "warped faiths," by which he means Christianity. We hate the former, he says, but it is the lesser evil, since it is, in the end, mere negation. Toward the latter, he writes, "our hatred is deep, with profound inner revulsion." Deathly though these forces are, they have vitality—in the form of culture. In the following passage, Rav Kook seems to be coming apart at the seams as he tries to work through and reconcile this satanic view of general culture with an equally deep-felt sense of fellow-feeling for all of humanity, for even these terrible poisons can be scrubbed and redeemed through the martyrdom of (unnamed) saints who restore the purity of natural reason.

> And this spirit of stain and this spirit of death, rule not only abstractly, but in vital form. . . . The culture[73] and its dimensions and factors, internal and external, are impelled by this deep evil and "a base alien vine" (Jer. 2: 21). . . . And there is no remedy for the world but in their destruction, and the erasure of their name and memory, "he saw the downfall of the wicked and burst into song" (BT Berakhot 10a) "let sinners vanish from the earth, and the evil be no more. Bless, O my being, God. Hallelujah" (Ps. 104:35).[74]

This extraordinary rejoicing in the suicide of civilization is felt, paradoxically enough, by the saint of love, personified by Rabbi Aqiva, who has come a long way since Rav Kook's comments on *Shir HaShirim* which we read earlier.

> And that stain, drawn in diluted form into the bodies founded in truth and the holy, is purged again and again,

> and given to those of great supernal form, in whose company no creature can stand, and they grieve all their days for the verse "with all your being" (Deut. 6:5) "even if He takes it from you" (BT Berakhot 61a), and when it comes to hand they fulfill it joyfully, "from men, by Your hand, O God, from men, whose share of life is fleeting" (Ps. 17:14). Yet this does not reach preventing the mental perspective, and natural moral fraternity, for peoples and individuals together, in every time and place, in every nation and land, as within that general stain, the light of the divine image shines too, to give a future and hope to all.[75]

This dialectic is very hard to maintain, and by the time we read further in the notebook, good and evil as manifested in culture entirely interpenetrate one another.

> Good and evil in its [*sic*] foundation is greater than that which is revealed of it in human life, individual and social . . . at times the evil down below is merely external, and suffused in innate goodness, and the opposite, the good down below is only superficial and external, but suffused in internal, innate, supreme evil. And we find here that faith and holiness are the foundation and root of all, and full of selfhood, and give life and hope, structure and endurance, more than any cultural or moral content that man can designate. But to be fit for this kind of life, founded on this supreme foundation, requires atop a quarry, a special people, and that is the supreme secret of the faith of Israel.[76]

Good and evil, purity and impurity, both draw from supernatural, heavenly sources. Sometimes evil is, in its essence, saturated with good, and sometimes what seems good to us is only superficially so. Faith and sanctity, rather than any obvious moral or cultural content, whatever it might be, are the very substance of selfhood and beyond good and evil. But this is a secret that only Israel can understand.



Culture has by now, in his reflections, come to a vanishing point.

The slaughter of World War I was, for Rav Kook (as presumably for others) redeemed by the Balfour Declaration. As he saw it, the wholesale murder of the trenches did in the end bring about, not only a better world, but a transformed world. In 1904, shortly after his arrival in Jaffa, the sudden death of Theodor Herzl had confirmed his hesitant early speculations that the Zionist movement was playing the historic role assigned by the rabbis to Messiah ben Joseph, the earthly, national advance team for the universal Davidic Messiah. Now, thirteen years later, the Balfour Declaration confirmed for him the truth of his farthest-reaching messianic speculations.

His spiritual reactions to the Declaration are recorded in his Siddur commentary, published as *Olat Reiyah*.[77] In the delirious ecstasies of *devequt* recorded therein, the dialectics of culture seem simply to fall away, and all forms of human activity are vessels of divine goodness—nature on the outside and pure spirit on the inside—illuminated from within by the power of mitzvot diffused through all creation.[78]

In 1919, Rav Kook returned to Palestine, where he assumed the Ashkenazi chief rabbinate of Jerusalem and, in 1921, of the Land of Israel. We do not have nearly as many of his theological texts and notebooks from this period as we do from other times in his life.[79] To make matters more complicated, most of the notebooks from this period that have appeared have been published by latter-day disciples of R. Zvi Yehudah Kook, who make no secret of the very heavy editorial hand with which they redact the texts. Bearing these caveats in mind, one ventures to say that his writings from these years tend to be less intense, and acutely dialectical, perhaps because he was most intensively engaged in institution-building and public life.

Culture, he writes in a notebook between 1920 and 1924, "borne about on every language and tongue in our time, is an important revelation of a significant dimension of the mundane/secular." One must engage with it deeply, he says, "because only with that knowledge will there arise the instruction of how to build the edifice of revelation of the cultural sacred, which soars above secular culture as the heaven soars above the earth."[80]

These relations are not hierarchical, not dialectical – but they are reciprocal. A little later on he writes.

> In every process in life the mundane/secular awakens first, and then the sacred must necessarily follow, to complete the renaissance of the mundane. . . . woe unto the secular . . . that says "there is none beside me" (Isa. 47:8) and woe unto the sacred that goes to war with the secular, which sucks, unconsciously, on the sacred.[81]

Culture is a revelation—but not of divinity; rather, it reveals the values of the mundane, natural world, which is the foundation of the holy and which Israel must harvest if it is to sow and reap its own fields.

In the same notebook we find a letter to an American correspondent, who had asked about the relationship between Torah and world cultures (and, one surmises, was hoping for debating points on the question of Jewish contributions to world civilization). The letter was published as a stand-alone essay in 1933.[82] Written for public consumption, it offers a comprehensive, coherent presentation of Rav Kook's later views. There is, he writes, an ideal culture, and the various human cultures are its reflections. Torah is the soul of culture, the fermenting agent within it.

He recalls a formulation from his 1912 essay *Talelei Orot* to the effect that humanity is composed of four dimensions—divine spirit, moral spirit, social spirit, and religious spirit—and aesthetics is the human faculty which synthesizes them. He continues that the divine spirit is manifest in two forms, one sacred, i.e., prophecy, and one secular, i.e., philosophy and poetry. The moral spirit is manifest in the orders of life, law, compassion, and justice. The social spirit is manifest in politics and statecraft, and its effects are felt in nationalism and the family. And the religious spirit appears in the various religions. (It is worth noting that it is unclear, here at least, what significance, if any, he attaches to science and technology.)[83]

These four forces, he says, ceaselessly "knock on the strings of the human soul," and Torah elevates them, from their natural, untutored, and raw state toward the perfection of the human spirit. This



seems again to be evoking the early ideas of *'Eyn Ayah*. But he goes on to say that this working of Torah on the natural can happen because the divine is hidden *within* the natural and vice versa.

> And this too is obvious, that within the God-idea, even in its simplest, natural form, there is already hidden the ideas of morality, society and faith, and similarly secreted in the moral idea are the God-ideas, and the social and of faith, and so in the social idea are secreted the God-idea, the moral and the faithful, and so in the idea of faith are secreted the God, moral and societal ideas, and the more developed a culture the more there will be elaborated within her the details of the great riches of these distinct sprits secreted within every part of the human spirit, and each dimension of the spirit will become fuller by virtue of the others' influence.

Sounding themes we have seen before, he writes that the inner dimension of Torah, which is unique to Israel, is the fermenting agent within human culture as a whole, moving it toward "the human culture of the future," which will be built on knowledge, righteousness, and justice, and may entail other, non-Jewish religions, some of which have yet to be born.

> And the religious truths of Israel will continue to benefit humanity into the future. And the final desire of all the spiritual desires, arriving in the form that grounds the living culture and creative betterment of the social and concrete world with all its needs . . . all that is found in Israel and is being revealed in humanity, despite all the obstacles on the long wondrous road . . . .

The last years of Rav Kook's life were marked by sad disappointments. The chief rabbinate was in those years a halting institution, and it, like his yeshiva, fell far short of his dreams. Within the fractious ideological politics of the Yishuv, the hard choices of institution-building,

and the public controversies they regularly generated highlighted the inability of Rav Kook's nonpartisan ecumenism to find a voice and footing amid the rough tides of the time. The final entries in his notebooks, written while he was wracked with fatal cancer, reveal a soul burning down to the most basic essentials of his teachings.

And so, in his last notebook, we find a final reflection on the theme we have been tracing, the divine energy pulsing through the human enterprise in all its works, through the Torah.

> The internal orders within man (that bring man and the world to fulfillment) are all built on the foundation of the inner point of truth in the soul. So long as she grows stronger and extends her writ over the orders of life, energies, feelings, thoughts, and movements, so all rises, all is sealed with seal of the Holy Blessed One, which is the truth . . . the true point, which is the foundation of life, extend into every place, every level and every existence and being . . . all the Torah's exercises come to widen the flow of the truth, without hindrance, with zero contradictions and antinomies, as all the fountains gather from different directions, in the purity of all concepts, the ascent of all to the summit of unity, to that place where there is no contradiction and so separation. Only utter "peace, the vessel that contains blessing for Israel" (Mishnah Uktzin 3:12). And what is the blessing inside the vessel? It is the truth. "And they will love honesty and truth" (Zech. 8:19).[84]

In these later texts, the dialectic is muted, "secular" culture appears as a more static entity with less internal vitality, seems much less a vessel of the divine Will. It seems a more stable structure, less stirring—and more livable.

How to make sense of all that we have read here? We have traced the ways in which culture figured in Rav Kook's ongoing attempts to fashion a comprehensive understanding of the promise and perils of modernity, whose currents he himself felt deeply. Of course, much of what he writes is germane to theories of culture in a number of historical periods, but elements of his ideas seem particularly tied to his times, in particular the valorization of art as a form of expression and the rebelliousness of the revolutionary and artist.



His times figure in another crucial way, and that, of course, is messianism, which functions in his thought as a kind of magnetic field that holds together seeming opposites. That which keeps contradictory principles from flying apart, which necessitates their coming to the surface in all their contradiction, is their coming resolution in the messianic apotheosis. Now, one need not be a temporal mystic, i.e., one who sees the messianic era just over the horizon of his own times, to see the divine Will pulsing through culture in some ultimate way. But it is the full-blown emergence of this inner dialectic onto the historical stage in concrete social, political, literary, and cultural movements that quickens the temporal messianic element here. Which then begs the question, Can one have recourse to Rav Kook's theology-theodicy of culture in the absence of the messianic element? I would say yes, for the individual thinker or mystic, in whose inner life all these contradictions can be resolved as workings of the divine Will, which is beyond all time, including, we should recall, messianic time. As for a community which seeks to maintain its own boundaries, that would be more difficult—unless the cultural assertions which press against those boundaries in the name of powerful and normative values seem to be true.

How crucial is un-self-consciousness to Rav Kook's understanding of culture? It is important to him that those who are artistic or political rebels be motivated by a deep authenticity, and in part be unaware of their own role in the larger divine drama in order fully to express themselves—en route, of course, to the ultimate resolution to be mediated by the mystic/*tzadiq ha-dor*. As we have seen, reflected in Brenner's comments (and we can quote others) this perspective has its limits and easily and understandably breed its own resentments. One other way of thinking about Rav Kook's ideas here is occasioned by an analogous situation: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's attempts to make sense of nonreligious resistance to Hitler. Bonhoeffer, and Karl Rahner after him, spoke of "unconscious Christianity." I, at least, understand this to mean that certain actors, in this case resisters against Hitler, would,

if they thought things through, come to see that the deep structure of their own commitments and most principled actions only makes sense within a framework of Christian ethics. Similarly, one can perhaps—perhaps—think of using Rav Kook's categories to argue that the very structure of certain forms of cultural and sociopolitical life and practice only make sense of themselves ultimately in religious terms, if they don't want to lapse into nihilism.

Another question is how tightly connected the anthropological and communicative-expressive elements of culture are tied in Rav Kook's mind. In his case, very tightly. That which is being expressed has value because it is expressing, in the case of Jews, the truth of Knesset Yisrael, which is the Oral Torah and the *Shekhinah*, and in the case of non-Jews, their own God-given essences (be it as members of individual nations or as members of non-Jewish humanity in the broadest sense). Either way, culture is expressing something deeply, ontologically real.

There are some other, very severe problems with Rav Kook's entire conception of culture, and if they had to be summed up in one word, it would be "idealism." His is an extremely idealistic conception of culture, both in that culture enacts ideas, and in that those who participate in it are assumed to be driven by noble motives. The coercive elements of official culture are perhaps implied in some of his comments, especially the earlier ones about nature being mastered by culture, as well as his civilizational critique during World War I. Yet here as elsewhere, while he astutely grasps the deep tectonics of historical processes, he has little to say about the relationships between the concrete workings of institutions and the moral and spiritual ends they frustrate or serve.

Along these lines, there is almost no sense in his writings that culture is a commercial enterprise, that people do it to make money. Admittedly the worlds of marketing and advertising as we know them were in their infancy in the years when he was writing most intensively on these issues. Yet one can only stand slack-jawed at the gap between his idealistic portrayals of culture and the relentless, colossal, and diabolically brilliant empires of marketing and advertising which in our day increasingly colonize the imaginative and spiritual lives of



the human race. These cultural forms are manipulative to their core, and thus, expressively nonexpressive, if by expression we mean the articulation of some genuine and meaningful truth (hopelessly archaic though those terms sound in this postmodern age). They are also tragically congruent with our current forms of economic life, so much so that it is hard to think past them. One can try to use a doctrine of *ha'alaat nitzotzot*, as does contemporary Habad (again, in frankly messianic terms), and try to harvest, sift, and winnow elements of that colossus; it is much harder to fit it into a sacred historiosophy.

Rav Kook's conceptions of Jews and non-Jews are profoundly essentialized; this has ramifications for how one evaluates virtually any aspect of his corpus. He links the two elements of culture, the anthropological and the communicative-expressive, very tightly, perhaps too tightly. In our connection, it is unclear what room he can make for the intermingling and cross-fertilization of cultures which is of the essence of cultural production. (To take a trivial example, what is *klezmer* if not Hasidic melodies in dialogue with Western tonalities and rhythms? And what are Hasidic melodies if not East European folk songs reworked into minor keys?) It may be that for him this cross-fertilization and synthesis might have traction, to the extent that it derives from, or is vouchsafed by, the truth of expression, which is, at the end of the day, the truth of one's own God-given nature. Yet his thought structures militate against that freer play of culture, and run perilously close to absolutizing, and worse.

Of course, in the end, there is no getting away from culture. In the words of the great and, sadly, recently deceased social theorist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt: "no social order of pattern of social interaction can be constituted without the symbolic dimensions of human activity, especially of some basic cultural and ontological visions. It is such visions that constitute the starting point for articulating the premises and institutional contours of any patterns of social interactions."[85] And following the late Victor Turner, we would say that those visions are, of necessity, both structural and antistructural, seeking to hold the cosmic and social order in place, and seeking to blow it apart, together creating the dynamic equilibrium of social life.[86] Recent decades have seen increasing emphasis on just how complicated and contested (and

coercive) those processes can be. It is perhaps here, in the interaction between structure and antistructure, that Rav Kook is most enduringly helpful, in his encouraging us to see antistructural elements as working toward a wholeness of their own, which is a reflection of the divine wholeness always just over the horizon.[87] And yet, if we are not to descend into the twin traps of nihilism and totalitarianism, that horizon must always be receding, and we must know that we can never allow ourselves to think that we have gotten there, or that we are even close.

Finally, and notwithstanding all the above criticisms, Rav Kook's theology of culture is compelling, and even healing, in two crucial ways. First, here as elsewhere, he reshapes the meaning of sacred and secular; in his eyes, that dichotomy is less a fixity, and more an angle of vision.

Second, from that angle of vision we can look differently, not only at others but at ourselves, and can understand our own endless efforts to make sense of ourselves and our world—through art, science, society, literature, and more—to be not only unopposed to our religious lives, but sharing in their very essence. This radical divine immanence is one of Rav Kook's great gifts to us, even if we cannot tie its motions to historical processes and movements with anything like his certainty.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Hanan Yovel, *Siddur Ishi* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009), p. 14. The quotation is taken from remarks made at a memorial service for a young artist named Adi Dermer.
2. *Tiqunei Zohar* § 57.
3. My conception of expressiveness is deeply indebted to the writings of Charles Taylor and in particular his *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
4. I discuss this at length, and try to provide a survey of the voluminous academic literature on Rav Kook, in the introduction to "An Intellectual and Spiritual Biography of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaq Ha-Cohen Kook from 1865 to 1904" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2007; hereinafter cited as *Dissertation*). A marvelous brief introduction to Rav Kook is Yosef Ben-Shlomo, *The Poetry of Being: Lectures on the Philosophy of Rabbi Kook* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1990). For purposes of this essay, the more salient academic studies, aside from those appearing in various notes below, are Yosef Avivi, "Historiyah Tzorekh Gevohah," in *Sefer Ha-Yovel la-Rav Mordekhai Breuer*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher (Jerusalem: Academon, 1992), pp. 709–771; Yosef Ben-Shlomo, "Shelmut ve-Histhalmut be-Torat Ha-Elohut shel Ha-Rav Kook," *Iyun* 33, nos.1–2 (1984): 289–309; Tamar Ross, "Musag Ha-Elohut shel Ha-Rav Kook," *Da`at* 8 (1982): 109–128, ibid. 9 (1983): 39–70; Natan Rotenstreich, *Ha-Machsavah ha-Yehudit bi-`et Ha-Hadashah* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, vol. 1, 1945, vol. 2, 1950). See also my *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).
5. The last decade and a half has seen the publication of the many spiritual diaries from which Rav Kook's canonical works were edited by his disciples in (usually) their original form. As a result, the associative and deeply personal nature of his writing has been made unmistakably clear. I will have more to say on this below.
6. Readers in search of an excellent summary of Rav Kook's various pronouncements, statements, and public stances on art and culture should consult the chapter devoted to the subject in Zvi Yaron, *The Philosophy of Rabbi Kook*, trans. Avner Tomaschoff (Jerusalem: Eliner Library, 1992).
7. In this respect I try to follow the general direction of *mori ve-rabbi* Rav Yehudah Amital *zt"l*, who encouraged his students passionately to engage Rav Kook while maintaining the ability to think critically about him and recognize the shortcomings of his teachings.
8. The historical novelty and regularly problematic nature of the term "religion" as we use it today is by now a commonplace notion in the academic study of religion. For an early and still influential discussion, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1963). I have discussed the ways in which this and similar rethinking of "religion" can shape our understanding of Orthodox Judaism in "Modernizing Orthodoxies: The Case of Feminism," in *To Be a Jewish Woman / Lihiyot Ishah Yehudiyah*, ed. Tova Cohen, Kolech Proceedings, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Kolech: Religious Women's Forum, 2007), English sec., pp. 37–51. See also my 2008 paper "Three Questions: Orthodoxy's Power and After," at www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=5241.
9. Samuel C. Fleischacker, *The Ethics of Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994). He also sees its ur-origin in Leibniz's monad and that model of individuality, which is then widened by Lessing and projected onto the collectivity by Herder.
10. Ibid., p. 119.
11. Cited ibid., p. 121.
12. For these dimensions of Herder's thought, see Frank E. Manuel, *The Changing of the Gods* (Hanover: University Press of New England/ Brown University Press, 1983), pp. 135–168; and Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth, 1976), pp. 153–173. Through some of his later expositors, Herder shaped the thinking of the great anthropologist Franz Boas, who crucially formulated "culture" in its contemporary sense.

13. Cited in Fleischacker, p. 127.
14. Ibid. p. 130.
15. Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold* (1939; reprint ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1954), pp. 265–266.
16. For a very helpful summary, see Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge/Malden: Polity/Blackwell, 2001).
17. Fleischacker, p. 132.
18. Ibid. p. 135.
19. For a helpful summary, see Rina Hevlin, *Mehuyavut Kefulah: Zehut Yehudiy beyn Masoret le-Hilum be-Haguto shel Ahad Ha-Am* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 2001), esp. chap. 6.
20. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (1959; reprint ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
21. Ibid. p. 43.
22. Ibid., p. 44.
23. Ibid., pp. 47–48.
24. On this, see briefly James C. Livingston and Francis Schussler Fiorenza, eds., *Modern Christian Thought*, vol. 2 (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000), p. 140. In some respects, Rav Kook's views seem closer to those of H. Richard Niebuhr, who, in his *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951), offers a five-fold typology: Christ against culture, in culture, above culture, in paradox with culture (i.e., dialectical theology), and transforming culture. The last seems closest to Rav Kook's views discussed below.
25. This is a fascinating subject deserving of further exploration. See for now Paul W. Franks, "Inner Anti-Semitism or Kabbalistic Legacy? German Idealism's Relationship to Judaism," in *Yearbook of German Idealism*, vol. 7 (2009), pp. 254–279
26. For substantive discussion of the dating, and substance, of this work, see *Dissertation*, chap. 4.
27. See the brief listing of talmudic and medieval sources in *Milon Even-Shushan*, 2003 ed., vol. 6, p. 2037.
28. *'Eyn Ayah*, Berakhot 1:82 (citations refer to the chapter and paragraph number in the edition edited by Ya'aqov Filber and published by Makhon Ha-Ratzyah in Jerusalem in four volumes between 1987 and 2000).
29. My understanding of Meiri here follows that put forward by Moshe Halbertal, *Beyn Torah le-Hokhmah: Rabbi Menahem Ha-Meiri u-Va`alei Ha-Halakhah Ha-Maimonit bi-Provence* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 80–108.
30. *'Eyn Ayah*, Berakhot 1:147.
31. See further in the work, his comments at *`Eyn Ayah*, Berakhot 7:41, to the talmudic stricture at Berakhot 50b against placing raw meat on top of bread, where he quite literally puts the "culture" back into agriculture.
32. For a catalogue of Rav Kook's deeply essentialized views of women, see Chana Kehat, "Nashim—Mahutan, Yi'udan ve-Derekh Chinukhan be-Mishnat Ha-Rav Kook," *Aqdamot* 22 (2009): 39–60. Kehat develops a distinction between the views of Rav Kook and those of Rav Soloveitchik in her "Zugiyut ve-Shivyon," *Masekhet* 4 (2006): 35–48. Rav Kook's ruling against women's suffrage in the 1920s has, in particular, generated extensive discussion; for a helpful summary, see David Ellenson, *After Emancipation: Jewish Religious Responses to Modernity* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 2004), pp. 344–366.
33. Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2004), p. 36. Ross interestingly notes there that Rav Kook's son Zvi Yehudah "takes pains to deny that any inferiority is implied by role stratification."
34. *`Eyn Ayah*, Berakhot 9:111.
35. *`Eyn Ayah*, Shabbat 1:21.
36. For detailed discussion of the substantive and bibliographic issues around this celebrated passage, which was substantially altered by R. Zvi Yehudah Kook, see *Dissertation*, pp. 373–376.
37. Pinkas 14 ("Acharon be-Boisk"), § 11, in *Kevatzim mi-Ktav-Yad Kodsho*, pp. 40–41.
38. Ibid., p. 41.
39. I discuss this fascinating set of interactions in chapter 2 of my *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution.*
40. *Eder Ha-Yaqar ve-Iqvei Ha-Tzon* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1967), p. 132. "The premier thought" is probably the first sefirah, *Hokhmah.*
41. The letter appears in *Igrot Ha-Reiyah*, vol. 1, no. 158, pp. 203–206. Another interesting, related, letter appears therein at pp. 161–163. In it Rav Kook takes Judah David Eisenstein, editor of the *Otzar Yisrael* encyclopedia series and legendary book collector and anthologizer, to task for having included an illustration in the entry on Adam Qadmon, the primal, divine anthropos of the Kabbalah. (As an aside, Eisenstein was a fascinating character, and a study of him remains a desideratum. See for now his richly informative memoirs, *Otzar Zikhronotai* [New York: self-published, 1930], available online at http://chabadlibrarybooks.com/6655 and made known to me by Menachem Butler.)
42. Much has been written on the *Qevatzim* and their significance since their initial publication in 1999. For an extraordinarily rich bibliographic history of the editing of Rav Kook's writings generally, see Jonatan Meir, "Orot ve-Kelim: Behinah Mehudeshet shel 'Hug' Ha-Reiyah Kook ve-'Orkhei Ketavav," *Qabbalah* 13 (2005): 163–247. For a good discussion of the significance of the publication of the *Qevatzim* for Rav Kook studies, see Avinoam Rozenak, "Hidden Diaries and New Discoveries: The Life and Thought of Rabbi A. I. Kook," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 25, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 111–147. Meir Munitz has written a discerning study of R. Zvi Yehudah Kook's editorial technique; see his " 'Arikhat *Ha-Sefer Orot le-Reayah* Kook," *`Alei Sefer* 20 (2008): 125–170. A great deal of helpful primary material on this, as on other important issues, including some of those I am discussing here, is to be found in the second

volume of Yehoshua Beeri's massive 1968 doctoral dissertation at Yeshiva University, eventually published in five volumes as *Ohev Yisrael bi-Qedushah* (Tel Aviv: H.Y.KH., 1989).

43. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 1:281.
44. On *lebensphilosophie* and Zionist thought of the time, see Yotam Chotam, *Gnosis Moderni ve-Tziyonut: Mashber Ha-Tarbut, Philosophiyat Ha-Chaim veHagut Leumit Yehudit* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes Press, 2007).
45. In Moshe Cordovero's *Pardes Rimonim* we read: "Liberty is in *Binah* because from thence emerges freedom and liberty," and indeed, elsewhere he says that another name for *Binah* is *Yovel*. Moshe Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim* 23:8; see also therein at 23:22; see as well Yosef Gikatilla, *Sefer Sha`arei Orah* (Warsaw 1883 ed.), p. 170.
46. He presumably has in mind the talmudic comment (BT Nedarim 10a) that this refers to the Nazirite who has assumed a supererogatory vow of asceticism.
47. Pinkas 14, Acharon be-Boisk, Ofan ed., § 55, pp. 67–68. R. Zvi Yehudah Kook reprinted this text in *Orot Ha-Teshuvah* 5:6, with substantial changes.
48. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in his *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118–172.
49. Indeed, see his extraordinary comment in that same last European notebook:

    ש"צ שר"י הי' דמותו של ניצ'א בערך דת היהדות לאנושיות, וכשם שזה נטרפה דעתו, כן זה יצא מדתו. קליפה אחת מתיחסת לעקבא דמשיחא. (פנקס יד, אהרון בבויסק, מהד' אופן, פיסקא מ ע' 56)

    I unpack this line at length in *Dissertation*, pp. 390–394.

    On Nietzsche's place in Jewish discourse of the time, see *Dissertation*, pp. 363–365 for substance, as well as the various primary and secondary sources in the footnotes.
50. Smadar Sherlo (Cherlow), "Ha-'Oz ve-Ha-Anavah: Shitat Ha-Mussar shel Ha-Rav Kook mul Mussar Ha-Otzmah shel Nietzsche," in *Nietzsche be-Tarbut Ha-`Ivrit*, ed. Ya'acov Golomb (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes Press, 2002), pp. 347–374, 357.
51. See on this the great amount of fascinating material in Jonatan Meir, "'Teshuqatan shel Neshamot el Ha-Shekhinah': Beirur Masekhet Ha-Qesharim beyn Ha-Reayah Kook le-Hillel Zeitlin ve-Yosef Haim Brenner," in *Derekh Ha-Ruah: Sever Ha-Yovel le-Eliezer Schweid*, ed. Yehoyada' 'Amir (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Van Leer Institute, 2005), vol. 2, pp. 771–818, and in particular pp. 806–811. It is worth recalling the comment of none other than Berl Katznelson, that "two great Jews live among us in the Land of Israel, Rav Kook and Yosef Haim Brenner." For the source, see Meir, p. 800, n. 126.
52. Indeed, one cannot help thinking of Trotsky's famous quip that while the masses may be uninterested in the dialectic, the dialectic is certainly interested in them.
53. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 1:591.
54. On Rav Kook's self-understanding as *tzadiq ha-dor*, see Smadar Sherlo (Cherlow), "Zaddiq Yesod `Olam: Ha-Shelihut Ha-Sodit ve-Ha-Havayah Ha-Mistit shel Ha-Rav Kook" (Ph.D. diss, Bar-Ilan University, 2003), and idem. "Zaddiq Yesod 'Olam—Shelihuto Ha-Mistit shel Ha-Rav Kook," *Da'at* 49 (2002): 99–135.



55. The essentials of the distinction are set out by Ramhal, *Kalah Pithei Hokhmah*, no. 28
56. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 1: 855a.
57. The language of this passage is, in the original, explicitly kabbalistic and a rehearsal of the sefirotic structure: "*bi-gevurat uzo u-ve-hod nitzcho, bi-yesod tifarto u-ve-room cheshek tiferet malkhuto . . .*"
58. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 2:6. His reference to the image of Jacob alludes to the line in the Talmud (BT Sotah 36) about Jacob's image appearing before Joseph at the moment of his greatest temptation in Egypt, which, interestingly in this context, was the frontispiece quotation for a different meditation on Judaism and culture, Rav Soloveitchik's *Halakhic Man*.
59. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 3: 61.
60. Ibid. 3:64.
61. Ibid,
62. Ibid. 3:91.
63. Ibid. 3:148.
64. I have discussed his wartime critique of Christian morality in two unpublished papers, " 'A Halfway Despair': Rav Kook's Critique of Christianity in World War I," delivered at the Association for Jewish Studies in December 2005, and "Ha-Hoq she-le-ahar Ha-Ahavah: Meqomo shel Ha-Mussar bi-'Arikhat *Orot Ha-Qodesh*," delivered at the August 2009 World Congress of Jewish Studies, and viewable at jewish-studies.org/imgs/uploads/proceedings/MIRSKY.doc. It is also the subject of Chapter 4 of my upcoming book.
65. An especially powerful study of the cultural crisis which World War I both reflected and deepened is Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).
66. I discuss this crux in his thought at length in *Dissertation*, chap. 4, and in "Ha-Rambam ve-Ha-Reayah Kook: Behinah Mehudeshet," *Igud* 1 (2008): 397–405. The two other thinkers I know of who entertain the possibility of serious rivalry between the intellect and the imagination are Menahem Mendel of Shklov and Nahman of Bratslav.
67. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 5: 189.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid. 5:267.
70. Ibid. 6:49.
71. Ibid. 6:151.
72. Ibid. 6:152.
73. The Hebrew reads "*ha-hitrabut*," which I read as "*ha-tarbut*" even though, in the words of Rav Kook's *havruta* in later years, Professor Saul Lieberman, "one cannot emend a text against all witnesses!" and this is also way the word appears in

*Orot Ha-Emunah*, p. 27. The editors of the second edition of the *Qevatzim* also noted the difficulty here; see therein, vol. 2, p. 512, though they do not suggest the emendation that I propose.

74. *Shemonah Qevatzim* 6: 209.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.6: 237.
77. R. Zvi Yehudah Kook wrote that his father "laid the foundation for the *Halakhah Berurah* and the *Siddur Olat Reiyah*" in Kislev 5678, i.e., November 1917. See *Li-Sheloshah bi-Elul*, 2003 ed., pp. 56–57.
78. See, e.g, *Olat Reiyah*, vol. 1, p. 8, s.v. "Melekh Ha-'Olam," vol. 2, p. 64, s.v. "Ta'amu u-Reu." I am, in this admitted generalization, referring to the passages he wrote *qua* Siddur commentary, which extend to p. 223 of vol. 1 (i.e., psuqei de-zimrah up to Ashrei), and p. 88 of vol. 2 (i.e., a comparable point in psuqei de-zimrah of Shabbat) and not to the bulk of the volumes, which R. Zvi Yehudah filled with unsourced passages from elsewhere in the corpus, mainly taken, on inspection, from the then as yet unpublished *`Eyn Ayah*.
79. There are certainly manuscripts yet to be published from this period, and one hopes they will be made available before long.
80. *Pinqasei Ha-Reayah*, vol.1 (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-Ratzyah, 2008), 7:26.
81. Ibid., vol. 1, 7:86.
82. It appears as "Ha-Torah ve-Ha-Tarbut Ha-Enoshit" in *Maamarei Ha-Reiyah*, pt 1, pp. 101–104, and first appeared in print in 1933 in *Netivah*, a journal published jointly by Tze'iri Ha-Mizrachi and He-Chalutz Ha-Mizrachi in Europe, and Ha-Po'el Ha-Mizrachi in Palestine. It was not republished in the volume of *Pinqasim*, whose editors note its first having been written there. The letter stands in striking contrast to his remarks not long after at the opening of the Hebrew University, which were shot through with ambivalence about the project of a secular university untethered to religious auspices.
83. This writer cannot help thinking that one fruitful point of entry into comparisons between Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik would be their respective stances toward the exercise of intellect and reason and their material extensions, namely science and technology.
84. *Pinqasei Ha-Reayah* 12:1.
85. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "The Order-Maintaining and Order-Transforming Dimensions of Culture," in *Theory of Culture*, ed. Richard Munch and Neil J. Smelser (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 64–87, 83.
86. See Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).
87. And his formulation from the 1920s cited above, if less dramatic than the earlier ones, may indeed be the most livable.

# 5

# Agnon's Shaking Bridge and the Theology of Culture

*Jeffrey Saks*

Rabbeinu HaGadol, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaKohen Kook *z"l* . . . How close he drew me in! In his humility he was kind enough to read my story "Va-Hayah HeAkov LeMishor," which was then still in manuscript. When he returned it to me, he said in these exact words: "This is a true Hebrew/Jewish story, flowing through the divine channels without any barrier" [זהו סיפור עברי באמת נובע מן הצינורות בלא שום מחיצה].[1]

"Today's reader is no longer content with reading for pleasure. He expects to find a new message in every work." Hemdat replied: I didn't come to answer the question "Where are you going?" though I do sometimes answer the question "Where did you come from?" [2]

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# *Developing a Jewish Perspective on Culture*

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