

TWO NEO-ORTHODOX RESPONSES TO SECULARIZATION: PART II

by ELIEZER SCHWEID

II. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

Any comparison of the respective teachings of Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Kook must, first of all, take into account their different backgrounds. Hirsch's teachings grew out of his direct involvement in both the intellectual and social aspects of the surrounding secular culture. He spoke and wrote German as his mother tongue; having studied at a German university, he was familiar with the sources of contemporary German philosophical literature and contemporary science. By contrast, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935)<sup>3</sup> enjoyed no such

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3. [Among the most important of Kook's extensive writings are: *Orot ha-Qodesh* 3 v. (Jerusalem, 1963-64); *Orot* (Jerusalem, 1961<sup>2</sup>); *Iggerot Re'eyah* 3 v. (Jerusalem, 1961-65); *Orot ha-Re'eyah* (Jerusalem, 1970); *Orot ha-Teshuvah* (Merkaz Shapira, 1970); *Siddur Tefillah 'olat ha-Re'eyah* 2 v. (Jerusalem, 1962-63); *Shabbat ha-Aretz* (Jerusalem, 1951<sup>3</sup>) [treatise on the Sabbatical year]; and *Mishpat Kohen* (Jerusalem, 1966) [Respona]. Available in English are: *The Light of Penitence*, tr. B. Z. Bokser (New York, 1978). Major studies and presentations of Kook's thought include: Jacob Agus, *High Priest of Rebirth; the life, time and thought of Abraham Isaac Kook* (New York, 1972<sup>3</sup>); and, especially, Zvi Yaron (Singer), *Mishnato shel ha-Rav Kook* [The Philosophy of Rabbi Kook] (Jerusalem, 1974) [English translation in preparation]; E. Schweid, *ha-Yahadut veba-Tarbut ha-Hilonit* (Tel-Aviv, 1981), 110-142.- Ed.]

direct intellectual and social involvements. He was raised, educated, and worked in homely Jewish surroundings; knew thoroughly, at first-hand, Jewish sources alone; while his active social involvements were likewise confined to Jews and Jewish institutions. Even his secular frame of reference was that of secular, nationalistic Jews: insofar as the question of finding a *modus vivendi* with secular culture arose, it was in the context of the secular culture of Jews. While he was clearly aware of the major scientific and philosophical currents of contemporary secular European civilization of the day, this knowledge was acquired at second hand, through books (mainly Nahman Krochmal's *Moreh Nevukhey ha-Zeman* and Fabius Mieses' *Qorot ha-Filosofyah ha-Hadashah*) and articles on these subjects appearing in such Hebrew periodicals as *ha-Shiloah* and *he-'Atid*, which he avidly read (particularly their articles on general culture) because of his deep interest in contemporary spiritual and cultural developments among his people. His response to these new ideas was also focused upon what was reflected in Hebrew publications, while the public for whom he wrote and whom he hoped to influence was the readership of these same periodicals. Everything that he both absorbed and fought against belonged to this same inner-Jewish realm. This essential fact bears both positive as well as negative aspects: positive, insofar as it reflects the integrity and wholeness of his world-view and his culture; negative, in the amateurish, fragmentary, and often incorrect nature of his interpretation of major movements in secular culture. Kook did not know this civilization on its own terms. He not only translated it from one language to another, but from its own set of concepts into those of the traditional sources in whose spirit he was educated. His genius for empathy is revealed in the fact that, in spite of these limitations (or perhaps because of them), he displayed remarkable creativity in his understanding of secular culture. But the overall picture he painted of contemporary culture simply does not square with reality, but only applies to those Jews who experienced the painful crisis entailed in the transition from traditional religious culture to European enlightenment. In this respect, Rabbi Kook's experience parallels that of such prominent secular Jewish thinkers of the "third generation" of the Hebrew Enlightenment as Ahad HaAm, H.N. Bialik, A.D. Gordon, Berdichevski, and others, and it is in this context that his thought must be understood.

But while Kook's world-view was rooted in traditional Jewish religious philosophy, one must not infer from this that he was dogmatic in any simple, orthodox sense. His world is a rich and abundant one, drawing both upon all genres of traditional Jewish literature — Bible, rabbinic literature, medieval philosophy and ethics, but above all the Kabbalah, particularly that of the 16th century school of Isaac Luria — as well as upon positive elements of general culture. His reservations concerning ultra-Orthodoxy stemmed first and foremost from the same desire for latitude and creativity which characterised enlightened Eastern-European Jews, with whom he shared the ideal of the pursuit of a full, open Jewish life. Hence, his agreement in principle with the notion of "negation of the Exile" and his affirmation of the Zionist ideal of an integrated Jewish way of life. We find in him an empathetic understanding of a number of aspects of the secular "sense of reality," particularly

the sense of the uniqueness of each individual and of self-realization in accordance with one's own abilities and talents as a significant goal. His "negation of the Exile" stemmed from the feeling that the fate and way of life of the Jewish people in the Diaspora suppress and limit the individual Jew's independence. In this respect, Zionism is a cry for latitude for individual creativity. Without abandoning his primary and overriding religious commitment, Kook adopts a positive stance towards this dimension of secularization.

Let us examine more closely the philosophical principles guiding Kook in his search for the comprehensive synthesis required to escape the torn and fragmented world of modernity confronting the Jewish people. In a sense, the solution offered is inherent in the principle itself: its formulation is a synthesis of traditional philosophy and mysticism, on the one hand, and modern thought, on the other; between Kabbalistic and Hegelian dialectics. Reality is perceived as an infinite, all-embracing unity, and the multitude of separate, seemingly contradictory elements which comprise it are seen within this dynamic unity, and have their source in the flux emanating from the hidden source, to which it seeks to return and reunite. Within this dynamic unity, which is hierarchically ordered, each individual finds its proper place. This view assumes as axiomatic that no object, deed, emotion or opinion is entirely evil or wrong; each one has its own place, and constitutes a part of the eternal truth. An authentic confrontation cannot be conducted with what seems as evil, wrong or contradictory without discovering its roots in the truth. From whence, then, derive evil, distortion, wrong and contradiction? From the desire of each existing being for its own separate, independent existence as an individual entity of *absolute* value; the aspiration of all things *to be* – a longing which in itself has its roots in the inner drive for unity. But this same dialectical movement tends towards divergence and the presentation of individual entities as themselves absolute and integral truth. This is the ultimate source of all evil, of negation and contradiction, as only by negating the value of the deeds, emotions and opinions of others can individuals claim their own absolute value. An opinion is thus not erroneous as the result of its own objective elements, but because of its general tendency leading to negation of the truth of other opinions. Consequently, a seemingly erroneous opinion can not be corrected by refutation, but by assigning to it its proper place and by pointing out its limitations. This approach is not one of compromise, for the comprehensive, all-inclusive truth is not simply the sum of all the specific individual opinions; to discern the element of truth of an individual opinion, it must be perceived from a more encompassing, higher viewpoint. This process of assigning an opinion its proper place in fact implies its reinterpretation, which leads to a different evaluation than accepting it as an integral truth. But this in turn creates another problem – namely, that the individual holding a given opinion cannot readily accept its interpretation from a more objective viewpoint unless he is capable of transcending his own standpoint. Kook's harmonistic and unifying approach is thus in sharp conflict with the specific trends of thought which he seeks to understand by means of reinterpretation which transcends their specificity. A few examples of this dialectic confrontation with secular reality will serve to clarify this point.

One of the major secular ideals to which many pro-Emancipation Jews were attracted was socialism. Kook sees socialism as a clearly secular ideal – so much so that no higher ideal can be envisioned – aspiring to a perfected worldly society, which it believes capable of realization by human effort, based upon certain socio-economic laws. It is thus inevitably atheistic and opposed to religion, as religion not only requires devotion to a higher, spiritual ideal, but is seen as distracting man's thoughts from his true, practical, worldly concerns. It is nevertheless not difficult to see the positive values underlying socialism: revolt against injustice and exploitation and the yearning for social justice and ethical human relations. Socialism incorporates a measure of true idealism, which cannot be outside of religion; the socialists only err in regarding the relative as absolute. This error leads them to inner contradictions and to acts which contradict their own ideals. Socialism by itself does not, and cannot, lead to justice and freedom, but to their opposite – injustice and oppression. This is obvious from the contradiction within the socialist movement between idealism and materialism. Socialism is thus a self-negating form of idealism, unable to realize its own aspirations, because it becomes oblivious of its own essence by its materialism; by their adherence to a materialist philosophy and the pursuit of clearly materialist goals, the socialists lose sight of the idealist roots of their own philosophy – hence, the materialistic nature of their demands. The original ethical roots of their aspirations can only be perceived through a higher point-of-view, giving the socialist ideal an entirely different significance. If the pursuit of a perfect society is understood as man's highest goal, the criterion for assessing good and evil must be of a materialistic and worldly nature, so that justice is understood merely as the equal distribution of society's material resources. Kook does not deny that justice presupposes the essential equality of all men, but sees the interpretation of this principle as referring only to the equal distribution of material assets as a superficial and distorted one. Reality discloses that men are equal neither in abilities and character, nor with regard to their needs and their actual contribution to society. The true equality of men lies in their valuation as individuals, each one possessing his own unique spiritual qualities. A just society is one which respects this uniqueness within a hierarchy of interdependent and interrelated tasks. This is the Torah's justice. Any attempt to impose justice upon people in the materialistic, egalitarian sense is doomed to failure because of the natural inequality of man, and in the course of such an attempt will necessarily result in oppression, slavery and other forms of injustice even worse than those wrongs committed by the *ancien regime*. The Torah's understanding of justice, on the other hand, agrees with human nature and leads to peace and mutual responsibility. It understands that social justice is not the highest goal, and that the criteria for assessing good and evil must be sought, not in the material, but in the spiritual realm which transcends economy, society and state. In this sense, the Torah contains the authentic, positive core of secular socialism, but gives it an entirely different interpretation, seeking its realization in ways totally unlike those of the socialists themselves. Kook nevertheless acknowledges the positive historical contribution of the socialist movement, despite its erroneous self-understanding, understandable in light of

historical circumstances. Injustice, exploitation and oppression are real facts, which bring about distortion of all aspects of human life, including the spiritual. It is therefore not surprising that idealistically inclined people should be obsessed by the misery in the world, without any awareness on their part of the ultimate, hidden roots of their idealism. So long as concrete, visible wrongs are not corrected, they are unable to see their error, but at the first sign of amelioration they will realize that their idealism was inspired by a higher sphere of life. Thus, their world-view is not one of absolute error, but includes an element of truth. As a specific stage within a dialectical historical process, it fulfills a positive function by drawing attention to a crucial problem and urging its solution.

A similar process of reinterpretation is applied by Kook to secular Jewish nationalism, i.e., secular Zionism. Zionism is a healthy reaction to the distortions of Jewish life in the Diaspora, particularly striking in the material sphere. The Jews' dispersion, their lack of political independence and of a sound economic infrastructure, and their severance from the soil, badly affected their material existence and their physical health. The efforts to put an end to these distortions deserve esteem and are approved by the Torah. Furthermore, this physical damage brought in its wake spiritual damage, impairing the spiritual stature and creativity of Diaspora Jewry by forcing Jews to hold on to what was most important to them, thereby neglecting such other areas as science, philosophy and aesthetics. This in turn affected religious life, which became increasingly narrow. The secular Zionist's criticism of traditional Diaspora religious life is therefore justified, at least to a certain extent. Secular Zionism was quite naturally concerned almost exclusively with creative activities in the worldly sphere. Its secularism - i.e., its emphasis on life in the temporal world - while the result of its sensitivity to worldly problems, is at the same time also its error, which at a certain stage was bound to create discrepancies within the national enterprise, even on the material level. As in the case of socialism, the root of this error lay in the negation of its own true, ideal roots, and the idealization of material achievements alone. On the other hand, the Torah's interpretation of nationalism sees the worldly foundations of national life not only as an end or as a way of becoming "like all the nations," but as a means by which the specific spiritual and religious character of the Jewish people may be brought to light. The Torah obviously endeavors to transform these foundations in accordance with the halakhah, rather than with political theories and economic laws. Nevertheless, what has been said about socialism is true as well of the Zionist movement. Jews sensitive to the material misery of their people naturally regarded its amelioration as their most important and urgent task, and their involvement with this task is indeed a vital stage in the dialectical historical process. At the present stage of history, Jews indeed ought to concentrate upon this national task, and secular Jews are better equipped than their religious counterparts to carry out this task. This task is understandably all-important to them, and their political ideal becomes an end in its own right. Their error is instrumental, rooted in the relative progress of history towards its ultimate goal - which is the origin of Pioneering Zionism's historical achievements. But once it begins to reach the first stages of

realization of its goals, it will become aware of its errors in a very concrete manner. So long as they are pursued, material goals may serve as an ideal, but once achieved they disappoint. What was sought was clearly not the goals themselves, but something beyond that of which they are merely symbols. When the realization of the Jewish state will come within reach, the secular Zionists will understand that they did not only yearn and fight for this goal alone – and at that point Zionism shall return to the Torah.

One could cite additional examples of this principle of dialectical calibration in the realm of secular culture. Kook even goes so far as to declare the ultimately spiritual roots of atheism, insofar as it signifies man's idealistic pursuit of truth. However, the examples we have already given should suffice to demonstrate his approach, and also indicate a basic problematic which we shall now discuss. Kook understood both Israel's place among the nations and the position of the Torah itself within Israel in terms of a Kabbalistic principle of hierarchy. Israel is not only a nation among other nations, but the highest emanation, transcending all other peoples, and embodying in itself the entire range of all lower totalities. Likewise, if the Torah is Israel's true law of life, it must comprise, in correct and proper order, everything that is valuable in the cultures of the nations. But these valuable assets are seen in a different light under the Torah's ideal spiritual rule. The Torah does not allow the perception of the partial as an entity in itself - this is the root of the nations' idolatry – but rather regards the parts as components of a totality, assigning to each one its proper place. The Torah is thus essentially a compilation of all totalities, such that there is no sphere of cultural creativity without hidden roots in the Torah. Why, then, do Jews turn away from the Torah and seek their wholeness in the creative wealth of others? Why do they see Judaism as poor, narrow and somber, turning elsewhere in search of creative scope and integrity? In view of what has been said thus far, the answer to these questions is a simple one: all this is the fruit of life in the Exile. It is only natural that Jews, whose innate creative faculties have been crippled by the conditions of life in Exile, should seek outside of Judaism what they do not find at home, and in the process even violate those necessary limitations which the Torah imposes upon their creativity. But, in fact, no positive achievement exists which is not rooted in authentic Judaism, and there is no creative accomplishment not rooted in the spiritual abundance of the Torah contained in Israel. This truth will be revealed to mankind at the time of the Redemption, when Jewish life will again reveal its splendor and Judaism will once more unite all spheres of creativity in a harmonious spirit of mutual fructification. The abandonment of the Torah is necessary in order to return to it, to discover it anew, and to fully realize its original meaning. In his search for the true solution to the problems of national creativity, including those of education, Kook is guided by the basic assumption that the Torah alone is the immanent criterion for an earthly-national Jewish culture, whose fulness must be acquired from within.

At this point, the differences between Rav Kook and Hirsch respecting the nature of the desired synthesis between a Jewish way of life in the spirit of Torah and

commandments, on the one hand, and the positive values of a secular, creative society, on the other, become apparent. Hirsch knew secular, humanist culture from within, in its full historical context and in its manifestation outside the world of Torah. He sought out the points of contact and proximity making possible good neighborly relations. Kook, on the other hand, achieved a surprisingly empathetic understanding of this culture without really understanding its own inner context, attempting to see it as so-to-speak within Judaism, as a fruit which had become separated from its source and falsified through its attachment to the lower sphere of existence of the nations. In other words, he did not seek out points of contact or proximity between two different cultures acknowledged as such, but the revival and renewal of Judaism from within its own sources, its immanent development towards its ultimate integrity. This inevitably led to a certain tension between his ideal of a future integrated Jewish existence and the requirements of a practical cultural and educational program of action. While his ideal is itself an infinite, universal one, in its programmatic expression it maintains Judaism's isolation from its cultural environment. While Kook's vision pulls down the walls of Orthodoxy, his program leaves them standing, allowing only for inner spiritual and religious development alone.

If we look only to the vision, Kook's was one which could captivate even the most extreme secularist, nationalist individuals. He goes beyond the limitations of "religion," which he regards as a product of exile, to uncover the "Divine idea" which permeates Jewish living in the Land of Israel. His ideal is that of a Jewish national life in a Jewish state whose citizens till the land, care for the physical health of their children and engage in sports, work for the furtherance of science, and engage in artistic and musical activities. Throughout all this, the study of Torah will flourish to embrace everything in a unity drawn, not from formalistic halakhic dialectics, as in the Diaspora, but from prophetic vision and Kabbalistic wisdom – that is, from the sphere of spiritual meaning. In the context of national life guided by this spirit, the reasons for the commandments will be clear to all. Even the material and spiritual achievements of the other nations are seen, in this vision, as part of authentic Jewish culture. The spiritual strength of Israel will then be revealed, and leave its impression on all mankind. Kook's numerous utterances in this vein earned him the reputation of being open-minded and open-hearted towards the nationalist movement. It was indeed a surprising and daring gesture on his part when he hailed the founding of the Maccabee sports movement and of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and, especially, his warm words of blessing at the dedication of the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus. But these utterances were interpreted by the non-religious public in a somewhat misleading way. Kook meant something other than what his listeners thought he meant – or perhaps it may be more accurately characterized as a case of mutual misunderstanding. Just as Kook believed that he understood the ideals of the secular Zionists better than they themselves did, many of the latter were convinced that their understanding of his words in the spirit of their own secular concepts reflected his own true intention. There was a certain degree of empathy on both sides, but in the final analysis this

was an illusion concealing their mutual estrangement. Indeed, today the alienation between Kook's followers and secular Zionists is far deeper than their mutual understanding.

### III. Rabbi Kook's Thought and the Contemporary Situation

Kook correctly interpreted neither the historical movement towards secularization nor secular mentality and thought, nor did he properly understand the history and basic characteristics of this culture, even though he understood the experiences which had induced Jews raised in a religious milieu to embrace a secular world-view. In other words, he was deeply sensitive to the spiritual crisis undergone in the transition from Jewish religiosity to secular culture, without properly understanding that culture itself.

Obviously, it is easy to say this now, as his expectations have not been realized. At this point in history, a general return to the Torah and the commandments, even in the sense of a "renewal of the sacred and a sanctification of the new," seems highly improbable, in the absence of a new synthesis involving far-reaching adaptation to cultural realities imposed from without, and without *a-priori* commitment to traditional patterns. In this sense, his belief that secularism can be better understood from the religious point of view than from the secular view-point itself, and that it is firmly rooted in Judaism, proves to be an illusion – from the secular perspective, a ludicrous one. This fact has left its impact on the rather peculiar relationship between the secular and religious wings of the Zionist movement. Many persistent misunderstandings stem from the ideology of "closed openness," which is willing to encounter secularism half-way without really entering into its own self-understanding. Such an openness is, by its very nature, coercive and inherently offensive to those towards whom it is directed. Those who adopt this attitude are themselves unaware of this, and are unable to see their behavior through the eyes of their secular fellow-Jews. Kook's contemporary followers always appear rather surprised when told that they are being patronizing and attempting to impose their views on others. They seem incapable of comprehending the political, social, moral or aesthetic ideals of secular Jews. Even if they convince themselves, they convince no one else. If secular Jews do not see that they, Kook's followers, are right, it is merely because they do not understand themselves.

A similar disparity between vision and program is also manifested in the attitude of national-religious Jews towards their own way of life and educational systems. Kook frequently acknowledged *a posteriori* the vital contributions of secular Jews, arguing that Zionism cannot achieve its goals without the knowledge and political, economic, technological and administrative skills of the secularists. In view of this acknowledgment, it might have been expected that a synthesis would be sought of traditional and general education, at least in the Hirschian sense of *Torah im derekh-eretz*. While Rav Kook's educational program does occasionally seem to turn



in that direction, a closer scrutiny reveals that this is only seemingly the case. Notwithstanding his willingness to include some elements of general education in the primary school curriculum – foreign languages and a few basic secular subjects – he rejects the academic study of secular disciplines on the part of the spiritual elite, and advocates a renaissance of traditional religious study. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between the program of study of the traditional *yeshivah* and his own proposed program. While the traditional *yeshivah* curriculum was generally restricted to the Oral Law alone, a tendency which became strengthened over the course of time until, in 19th century Lithuania, Talmud alone was studied, Kook's program provided for the systematic study of all Jewish sources: Bible Rabbinic literature, philosophy and mysticism, ethics, liturgical poetry and prayers. These – particularly the Kabbalistic sources – constituted for him the infinite and all-embracing fulness of Judaism, in which the Jewish scholar could find everything sought by the secular student in general culture.

Kook is not unaware of the tension between these two alternatives, and his decision is unambiguous: the study of science in the academic sense must be rejected; the only discipline allowed is the study of Torah. Jewish scholars ought nevertheless to acquaint themselves with modern literature in order to uncover the light of Torah which penetrates the hearts of modern Jews in this guise. This educational ideal is obviously a reflection of Kook's own education and standards. But how can a national culture, which is to incorporate the best achievements of science, philosophy, political science, economic theory, technology, and sociology, develop along such lines? This question can only be answered in the affirmative by taking into account Kook's belief in divine inspiration and enlightenment, that cannot be attained by human effort but only through the prophetic spirit which is to be renewed in the end of days. Hence, we can understand neither the basic tenets of Kook's teachings nor their impact so long as we ignore his ardent belief that we are living in messianic times, transcending the ordinary historical sphere in which miracles are possible. Distress, alienation, confusion, persecutions and humiliations are all agonies which precede the coming of the Messiah. The Diaspora has reached its nadir, which is simultaneously its termination, and the settlement of Eretz Yisrael signifies the beginnings of Redemption. While this miraculous, supernatural dimension is not yet fully tangible, its harbingers are already visible, like the light of dawn before the sunrise. Kook envisions this supra-historical dimension, but his program of action remains adapted to an historical reality which still runs its normal course and where, consequently, only minor deviations from the Orthodox pattern are permitted. The discrepancy between vision and program reflects the gap between the historical and the supra-historical dimensions, and it is not the task of the program to bridge the gap. The vision will be realized through Divine intervention; the program can only prepare the hearts for this future. This is the root of the unfathomable gap between Kook's vision of future unity and the concrete expectations of the secular Zionists; between the self-image of Kook and his followers and their image in the eyes of their secular fellow-Jews. The former see themselves as the forebearers of an integrated Jewish culture, encompassing all

that is true and human; the latter regard them as partisans of a narrow Orthodox program alien to universal human culture, crossing the lines of Orthodoxy only insofar as they join the Zionists in political and settlement efforts directed towards the realization of the Zionist goals, and in their messianic vision of the ultimate realization of what they are themselves unable or unwilling to bring about – the creation of one, all-embracing Jewish culture.

#### IV. Comparisons and Conclusions

To summarize: these two different approaches, that of Hirsch and that of Kook, help us to understand the spiritual situation of the Jewish people in a secular world. Both describe the self-understanding and self-image of large elements of the Jewish people in their confrontation with a new reality. One cannot overestimate their contribution towards an understanding in depth of the dilemma of adapting a traditional way of life to secular humanism, nor their great spiritual influence, reflected in their intense activity.

However, a comparison of the two reveals that Hirsch's approach is far more realistic, at least from the point-of-view of the exponents and builders of secular culture. Hirsch knew the context and concepts of this culture from within, and his teaching is bereft of messianic, miraculous overtones. His program coincides with his objectives; it is impressively practical and persistent. While one cannot deny the tremendous influence of Kook's teachings, one must distinguish between a doctrine which moulds people's ideology, self-understanding and motivations, and one which influences actual daily behavior, and whose ends and means are mutually consistent. Interestingly enough, even the national-religious neo-Orthodox, who see themselves as followers of Kook, seem to have adopted Kirsch's practical solutions, at least in the educational realm.<sup>4</sup> Only by means of these compromises are they able to meet secular culture halfway while adhering strictly to halakhah. So long as the Final Redemption has not come, their national-religious convictions require a certain adaptation. Neo-Orthodoxy, in the form it has taken in Israel, is thus a merger of a social and educational program in the spirit of Hirsch, and the visionary ideology of Rav Kook. The ideology is extremely important: it creates the image of self and the call for unconditional devotion to the Zionist ideal in all its political dimensions. But with regard to (relations with) secular society and its values, the

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4. [This remark must be qualified somewhat in light of recent developments. One must now distinguish two groups within Religious Zionism: the broader circle of the national-religious public, which essentially lives the synthesis of Kookian ideals and Hirschian praxis as described above; and an elite, would-be vanguard group of fervent adherents of the ideology of Rav Kook, generally identified with the circle of Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav Kook, the *yeshivah* founded by Rav Kook and largely shaped under the leadership of his late son, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook (1891–1981), and with major elements within Gush Emunim, the West Bank settlement movement. This community has developed a life-style and a network of educational institutions based upon Rabbi Kook's program for the elite as described above, focused upon Jewish thought and culture to the virtual exclusion of all secular involvements.- Ed.]

above-mentioned Hirschian pattern, recognizing the existence of two separate cultural spheres – one based upon imperative values and one that is value-neutral – is widely accepted. The two spheres can coexist peaceably, but can never become one.

It is, of course, questionable whether the Hirschian neo-Orthodox solution is satisfactory either from the individual or from the national-cultural point of view. Does not Neo-Orthodoxy pay the price for its practical solution by severing the relationship between its lofty ideal and the every-day secular reality within which it moves and, even more, of becoming increasingly alienated from the majority of the population? Allow me to conclude this discussion of the two approaches towards secularization with the following critical remarks. In my modest opinion, the time has come to reexamine both neo-Orthodox solutions, and to search for a new approach to the renewal of Judaism, not only by reinterpreting the reasons for the commandments (as done by Hirsch), but also by renewing the process of the halakhic decisions themselves, in order to facilitate the actual integration of the vital elements of Jewish culture into our national existence. Moreover, it seems to me that the present synthesis of Hirsch's practical and effective solution with Kook's unrealistic, messianic, wholistic ideology is, in fact, an antithesis between national-religious consciousness and idealism and the social reality shaped by religious Zionism in fact, which widens even further the gap between the religious and secular community, postponing the process of revival of an integral, unique Jewish culture envisaged by Zionism.

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