

# The concept of work in the theological teachings of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook

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This article aims to understand the concept of work in the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook (1865–1935). As the person who had the maximum impact on the religious Zionist sector, with its guiding principle of Torah va'avodah, meaning Torah and work, it is necessary to clarify his attitude towards work. Did he perceive work as a necessity, a part of one's duty to support the members of the household, or perhaps also as an ideological value, part of a worldview that combines religious values with extra-religious values, or then again maybe he perceived work as a religious value? This article shows that R. Kook's positive attitude towards work differs from traditional perspectives on work because of a pantheistic influence. Pantheism made him redefine the boundaries of Torah and include work and materiality.

**Keywords:** religious Zionism; work; pan-Toraism; Rabbi Kook; messianic era; Torah; socialism; Pantheism.

## Introduction

Rabbi (R.) Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook (1865–1935) (Ariel 2004:93–118; Ben Shlomo 1989; Ish Shalom 1990; Mirsky 2014) was an erudite scholar who wrote dozens of books dealing with diverse subjects, for example, halakha, Talmud, kabbalah, Aggadah, philosophy and poetry. Although many of his manuscripts are yet to be published, his work amounts to dozens of volumes.

Beyond his extensive literary occupation, R. Kook was also a social activist during the era of the renewed Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. He established the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and himself served as the Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi communities in the Land of Israel from 1921 to 1935. He also founded the *Merkaz Harav* yeshiva in Jerusalem in 1923, which he headed until his death.

Rabbi Kook immigrated to the Land of Israel in 1904 and served as the rabbi of Jaffa and the *moshavot* [agricultural colonies]. He developed a worldview that comprised general philosophy, Jewish philosophy and Kabbalistic literature. Based on this intricate system of thinking, he had a positive attitude towards the renewed construction of Jewish settlements in the Land of Israel, to which he attached Messianic meaning. His revolutionary theology earned him the title of the primary religious Zionist theologian. To this day, his philosophy has had the greatest impact on Israel's religious Zionist and modern Orthodox sector.

This article seeks to shed light on the concept of labour in the teachings of R. Kook. Surprisingly, this topic has not been studied so far, and thus, in my belief, is a crucial aspect of R. Kook's philosophy. This question is extremely important because R. Kook, as mentioned earlier, is a very prominent figure within religious Zionist circles and is considered one of its most influential thinkers. Because the religious Zionist sector's guiding principle is *Torah va'avodah*, meaning Torah and work, it is necessary to clarify R. Kook's attitude towards work. Did he perceive work as a necessity, part of one's duty to support the members of one's household, or perhaps also as an ideological value, part of a worldview that combines religious values with extra-religious values, or then again maybe he perceived work as a religious value?

The Bible has an ambivalent attitude towards work<sup>1</sup> (Assaf 1985; Arzi 1964; Neuwirth 2015:4–28). On one hand, it states: 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it' (Gn 2:15).

<sup>1</sup>'Labour', 'skilled work' and 'travail' in the present article refer to material work. 'Travail' means physical effort aimed at achieving a goal. I will use the term to refer to manual labour or actively engaging in physical work. There is, in fact, a theurgical approach according to which a person engaged in Torah and the Commandments in this world is thereby taking part in the construction of supernal worlds. Such, for instance, is the position of R. Chaim from Volozhin in his *Nefesh ha-chaim* [Soul of Life]. The present article does not address spiritual constructions of this type; my focus is rather on material work.

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Namely, Adam's job was also to work, and work bears the religious meaning of carrying out a divine commandment. Then again, once Adam sinned, he was punished. 'Cursed is the ground because of you ... by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food' (Gn 3:17–19). Work is a curse that follows from the sin. In rabbinical literature as well, the attitude towards work is ambivalent. Some views accord work religious value, for instance (Avot de Rabbi Nathan):

Great is labor, as just as Israel were commanded to keep the Sabbath, thus they were commanded to perform labor, as it is said: 'Six days you shall do labor and do all your work.' (Version B, 21)

Therefore, just as it is a religious precept to refrain from work on the Sabbath, it is also a religious precept to work on weekdays. Then again, some claim that work has no positive value and is even a punishment for not following God's ways (Bavli, Berachot 35b):

When Israel performs God's will – their work is performed by others ... when Israel does not perform God's will – their work is performed by themselves ... Moreover, others' work will be performed by them. (p. 35)

It was obvious to all that the Jewish scale of ethics is headed by the study of Torah, '[b]ut the study of Torah is equal to them all' (Mishna, Pe'ah 1:1). Over the years, the conception of work as a necessity attained dominance, and in spite of the explicit commandment, 'six days you shall labour', none of the enumerators of the religious precepts listed work as one of the 613 precepts.

It was the socialist Zionists, at the beginning of the 20th century, and especially members of the second and third Aliyah (Bartal 1997), who held that work is essential for both individual and national redemption. Their approach towards physical labour was religious. Some even defined it as a 'religion of labour'. The second Aliyah thinker A.D. Gordon propounded these ideas (Ratzabi 2008:275–320; Schweid 1970:172–185).

According to Gordon, by means of work, primarily agriculture, the individual and the people renew their bond with realistic circumstances and with life (Bergmann & Shochet 1952:216). 'We can create the people only when each one of us creates himself anew by means of work and natural living' (Bergmann & Shochet 1952:128). Only work, he believed, would re-create the Jewish People, who had been isolated from natural life, lived in exile and had become accustomed to idleness (Bergmann & Shochet 1952:194). From this manual labour, Gordon thought, would revival come, along with redemption: 'the revival of the People ... will not be able to come except by means of work' (Schweid 1983:265) although, when Gordon mentioned redemption, he did not refer to it in the traditional Jewish sense (Neuman 2009).

Present-day ultra-Orthodox society sees Torah as of supreme and exclusive value, while work is merely a subsistence need (Brown 2017; Friedman 1991). It was the religious Zionist movements, Hamizrahi (1902) and Hapoel

Hamizrahi (the socialist religious Zionist movement, 1922) (Fishman 1979), which introduced the concept of innovation of work as having religious value (Mashiach 2018a; Mashiach 2017:85–100). Rabbi Kook praises industry as an inherent religious value. As he sees it, the 'inclination to love industry and concrete work ... is cloaked in the spirit of God' and '[t]he light of the holy truly exists in any industry' (Kook 2004:I, para. 887).

Rabbi Kook's attitude towards work differs from traditional perspectives because of the pantheistic influence.<sup>2</sup> Pantheism is a concept, which holds that the universe is identical with divinity, everything is God and God is everything. The Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza is usually identified with this concept (*Deus Sive Natura*), especially in his book *Ethics*. Many Jewish thinkers, mainly Hassidic masters, believed in the more conservative idea of Panentheism, that is, 'all in God'. Panentheism means that divinity is not only revealed in the universe but also extends beyond it.

While both Pantheism and Panentheism describe the relationship (or identity) between God and the creation as immanent, the contrasting idea of transcendence contends that God is completely detached from the creation, with no real attachment to it. A moderate form of the latter is the transcendental concept of a detached yet supervising God. As a result of the pantheist outlook, R. Kook redefined the boundaries of Torah to include work and materiality.<sup>3</sup>

Another principle, which influenced R. Kook and his approach towards work, was the Hegelian dialectic. The Hegelian dialectic deals with three concepts that together create a process outlining the world's progression: thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Wheat 2012). The existing state of affairs is called the thesis.

In time, in order to advance and improve the world, a contra-phenomenon was generated, called the antithesis.

Then, during interaction between the thesis and the antithesis, an anticipated improvement occurred, called the synthesis.

The concept of synthesis does not mean an average, a type of compromise between opposites; rather, it refers to improving and enhancing the current state of affairs to reach a better reality. Over time, the new reality will become the given reality, the synthesis will become the thesis and once again, in order to improve it, an antithesis will be generated, leading to synthesis and so forth. The world is in a constant process of improvement. This dialectic was served by R. Kook in support of the idea of Torah and work. Indeed, the idea of

2. I will not go into the discussion of whether R. Kook was a pantheist or a panentheist, as it is not significant for the purposes of the current discussion. They both identify God with the world, by the panentheist even more so, claiming that God also exists beyond the world. I shall refer to R. Kook as a pantheist, as this is also how he identified himself, see Ish-Shalom (1990). For elucidation of the concepts, see *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>); <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panentheism/>).

3. R. Kook was unique in this respect, as the first religious Zionist thinker who believed in pantheism. Others, until his time, believed in the transcendental concept. Some were even opposed to pantheism, for example, R. Uziel, see: Amir Mashiach (2018b).

'Torah and work' can be found as early as the Rambam (1987:Laws of Talmud Torah, 3, 10–11); however, their concept of work is an existential need rather than a religious value. For R. Kook, this combination of Torah and work is part of ideal religious life. It is not only a pragmatic approach, rather a theology of combining the study of Torah practical work.

As R. Kook saw it, the thesis was that Jews lived in exile and engaged in Torah and spiritual matters without becoming immersed in the world of corporeality and work. The antithesis was that Jews immigrated to the Land of Israel and began to devote themselves solely to work, while turning their backs on and declaredly abandoning the world of Torah and tradition. These were members of the second and third Aliya who advocated a socialist ideology, so much so that it was designated the 'religion of work' (Almog 1992:208–217). According to R. Kook, both the thesis per se and the antithesis per se are not the original Jewish-Torah ideal. Jews are not supposed to engage only in Torah, separated from the practical world, and they are certainly not supposed to manage their life solely in the world of matter and work, separated from the world of Torah spirituality. Only a life that combines Torah and work, only a life of synthesis, is an ideal Jewish life from a religious perspective.

In order to further clarify his position, we shall now explore additional issues mentioned in his teachings.

## Holiness and secularism

We shall begin with R. Kook's attitude towards secular life (Ben Shlomo 1989:61–69, 1996:495–524).

In the phenomenology of religion, whether the Kantian or the Protestant, holiness is 'the completely other' (Otto 1923:25–41). In this definition, a distinction is made between the religious and spiritual domains and the material and physical domains. R. Kook's approach is different. As he sees it, all existence is holy, 'The wisdom of truth [*kabbalah*] teaches us global oneness ... corporeality and spirituality' (Kook 2004:II, para. 187).

Humans must overcome the separation that exists in the manifest reality, which is produced by them, for instance, holiness and secularism, spirit and matter, as this separation is an illusion, and it stems 'from having little faith' and is a 'big mistake'. 'Everything is part of the overall divine work that operates continuously' and this includes, as he sees it, both the 'spiritual' and the 'corporeal' (Kook 2004:II, para. 190).

In contrast to the customary religious outlook, which tends towards exclusive occupation with holy matters, Rabbi Kook's writings include many phrases that support occupation with the secular and the material. Rabbi Kook sees the combination of spirit and matter, holy and secular, as the ideal religious existence. As he sees it, occupation with only one of these categories is a theological error. 'The time has come to publicize in the world that the holy... is nurtured by the secular' (Kook 1984:406). And in general, '[n]ot only

do they not contradict each other, but rather they add strength to each other' (Kook 1984:407), through cooperation and mutual enhancement.

According to R. Kook, holiness exists in everything, both in that which we perceive as holy and in that perceived as secular. There is a 'holiness of the holy' and there is a 'holiness of the secular'. These two categories are part of a supreme category. The 'supreme holiness' exists in the entire creation. 'The supreme holiness is hidden in everything ... the secular is only a mask that conceals' (Kook 1961:III, 35). Rabbi Kook also claims that the 'holiness of the secular' is holier than the 'holiness of the holy' (Kook 1985):

The holiness of the secular, which descends all the way to the completely secular, is more lofty and holy than the holiness of the holy, but it is very hidden. (p. 85)

As he is wont in many places, R. Kook uses a type of dialectical statement (Ben Shlomo 1989:116–117; Ish Shalom 1990:280–281; Rosenak 2006:44–54): the thesis – 'the holiness of the holy' – is the classical religious world; the anti-thesis – 'the holiness of the sacred' – is nature and the secular; the synthesis – is 'the supreme holiness' that includes both the secular and the holy, the perfect divine ideal (Rosenak 2006:78).

Some explain that according to R. Kook, the secular can indeed become holy by means of religious acts, otherwise it remains completely secular. I think that according to R. Kook it is not necessary to transform the secular into holy, as the secular is already holy, although in a disguised form. Humans are not called upon to transform but rather to reveal the holiness within the secular, and they do this when secular acts, such as manual work, are performed for heaven's sake, 'for the supreme purpose'. 'When engaged in secular matters there is need for a proper intention to subjugate them to the supreme purpose ... as then the secular matters too will be holy' (Kook 1985a:1, 273–274).

According to R. Kook's perception, the recognition that identifies the secular and the holy as a supreme wholeness is part of the People of Israel's revival in its land (Kook 1984):

The revival of our nation must be a complete revival, a revival of the body and a revival of the soul, a revival of the secular and a revival of the holy. (p. 336).

He stated decisively (Kook 1984):

[T]hat the redemption of Israel can only grow successfully if it is comprised of a fundamental combination of the two forces, the holy and the secular ... they complete each other and only when joined do they fully perform their function. (p. 257)

Therefore, he was critical of the ultra-orthodox world that rejects the secular, and of the secular world that rejects the holy (Kook 1984):

And every person of Israel should know that so long as he relates only to the secular aspects of the national revival, he is only engaging in his people's work from one aspect, and his

work is not complete work ... and so also every person of Israel who builds the nation's holy values should know that so long as he does not help and support the secular construction of the nation he is detracting from the nature of the mandated national work. And the more this complete recognition shall spread, the quality of our national revival will grow closer to attaining its full nature. (p. 43)

Further to the above, R. Kook referred to the controversy between the Pharisees and the Boethusians in the Second Temple era with regard to the issue of 'the day after the Sabbath'. The Pharisees claimed that the 'Sabbath' means the first day of Passover, while the Boethusians claimed that it means Saturday. According to the Pharisees, what would be the law if the 15th of Nissan falls on a Friday and then 'the day after the Sabbath' is on Friday night? Would the harvesting of the first wheat receive preference over observance of the Sabbath? The Pharisees argued that it would, although harvesting on the Sabbath is prohibited, while the Boethusians strongly objected (Bavli, Menahot 65a).

Although discussing an ancient issue, between the lines it is possible to discern R. Kook's criticism of those who object to work in contemporary times (Kook 1984:177–181). He called for clarification of the authentic Torah way:

We have a double duty to search within our ancient treasures ... to know which stream is inherent and original for us ... and which is an incidental stream, taken from foreign wells ... occasioned by self-weakness. (pp. 177–181)

He explained, following his unitary theology, that among the nations of the world, and among the Boethusians, work in general and agricultural in particular are merely means of subsistence. But, as he sees it, this is not the way of the Pharisees who perceive work and agriculture as part of the sacred worship of God:

Construction of the land, the primary foundation, agriculture, is for all nations only a simple vital economic element. But the people whose entire *raison d'être* is the holy of holies ... then also its entire agriculture is full of holiness.

Work is holy work, and this is the authentic Torah of Israel, before it was joined by elements 'from foreign wells' that rejected work or did not ascribe to it religious value.

Now, his declaration does not sound surprising (Kook 1985):

Any physical work that a Jew performs in the Land of Israel, whether plowing, sowing, planting, building, or working ... is considered preparation for revealing the high rank of spirituality inherent in the redemption of Israel. (p. 247)

He proclaimed: 'Work is always suitable for man, this duty grows when he has before him unprocessed matter that proclaims and says: Come, work, and complete' (Kook 1987:351). Here, he expresses the rabbinical concept that the material world was created in raw form and humans must complete the process of creation through their work: 'Everything created in the six days of Genesis requires work'

(Bereshit Rabba 11:6). In his opinion, man has a religious duty when 'he has before him unprocessed matter', a duty that declares 'come, work, and complete'.

Now, it is clear why R. Kook saw physical work in the Land of Israel as a holy duty (Bar Ilan 1941:246–249). The aspiration for redemption (Bar Ilan 1941):

[M]ust appear specifically through our work, the work of brothers who are settling the land and building it in practice, with the sweat of their brow and the labor of their hands. (p. 248)

And in general, the national revival includes, 'spiritual work and physical work, holy work and secular work, all together' (Kook 1961:III, 283).

## Rabbi Kook's attitude towards the labourer movements

Rabbi Kook's attitude towards the labourers' movements, both secular and religious, shall now be explored, beginning with the secular. On the one hand, it is possible to find favourable statements concerning the secular labourer; however, on the other, it is also easy to discern his criticism of them for abandoning the Torah way.

Rabbi Kook claimed that 'a supreme divine light is present within the general laborers' movement, as well as within the particular Israeli movement'. It is only to be expected that a 'supreme divine light' exists within the labourers' movements, which enhances the material world and also serves as a means for establishing spirituality and holiness as part of the redemption of Israel. Rabbi Kook extolled manual labour and called it 'the holiness of physical work', as it is a rectification of the world and a rectification of the spirit of the Israeli nation (Kook 2004:IV, para. 83).

Indeed, as we know, in the actual circumstances of the Land of Israel, a discrepancy and even a conflict emerged between the people associated with the Torah and the people associated with labour. According to R. Kook, who advocated synthesis, there is no essential conflict between the values of the labourers' movements and the Torah of Israel. He certainly criticised secular settlers for abandoning the way of the Torah, because the Torah and its precepts are the very foundations of the inclination to integrity and justice that they themselves espouse (Kook 1984:354) and 'their main mistake is only that they think that the good things they are sensing are against the Torah, although in reality they themselves are entities of Torah' (Kook 1961:I, no. 50). As he sees it, this is not only a regrettable mistake, but rather an error that can pose an obstacle to the strength of the People of Israel (Kook 1985:152).

Rabbi Kook's attitude towards the religious labourers of Hapoel Hamizrachi was completely different. Schwartz claims that it was mainly the panentheist concept in R. Kook's philosophy that removed the imaginary duality and united spirit and matter as well as the holy and the

secular. As a result, R. Kook saw Hapoel Hamizrachi as realising his theological ideas, and the members of Hapoel Hamizrachi, in return, were influenced by him and recognised him as their spiritual leader (Schwartz 1996:95–101). Rabbi Kook's words above elucidate the statement by Shmuel Chaim Landau (Shachal), a leader of Hapoel Hamizrachi. For Shachal, the concepts of 'Torah' and 'work' are (Landau 1926):

[T]wo revelations of one object – revival ... 'Torah and work' are united in the original thought that generated them ... the Torah cannot be revived without work, and productive work cannot revive a people without Torah – the Torah of revival. (n.p.)

It was for good reason that Shachal, R. Yeshayahu Shapira (The 'Pioneer' Rabbi) and Meir Bar Ilan maintained strong contacts with R. Kook, published some of his statements (Bar Ilan 1941; Shapira 1930) and named one of the settlements established by the movement, *Kfar Haroeh*, after him.

Religious socialism, which in time established Hapoel Hamizrachi, is not identical to general socialism and they differ on several points (Salmon 1990:340–352). It was designated 'Jewish socialism', and it objected, for instance, to the policy of nationalising property and ruled out the war of the classes (Zehavi 1923:6–9); it did not see tangible work as the ultimate value, as did general socialism. Jewish socialism joined the value of work with the Torah commandments and the 'spirit of Judaism'. Jewish socialism does not hold a socialist conception with universal implications, rather one with particularistic implications: 'We wish to change our life to fit the Jewish spirit' (Gardy 1923:30). The aspiration of its proponents was to revive ancient Judaism, as in the days of the Bible or the Second Temple, since following the 2000 years of exile and as a result of them, Judaism was invaded by elements that are mere faults. In their opinion, ancient Judaism was compatible with socialist values. Overall, the Torah itself is socialist, and it preceded the ideology of Marx and Engels by millennia (Engel 1923:12); in contrast to the Marxist outlook, which espouses a dialectics and synthesis, they declared: '[r]eligion and work as we see them are not two separate things that must be synthesized, rather one' (Gardy 1923:30). Hence, they called for 'a life that is purified of all those deficiencies and faults that appeared within us in the course of our lengthy exile' (Gardy 1923:30).

It is now quite easy to understand the words of R. Kook in an essay in honour of Hapoel Hamizrachi. Indeed, 'the national thought with all its branches ... wore secular garments at times', but this is only a revelation of the 'supreme spirit' (Kook 1984:69). He also said: 'As Chief Rabbi I must be above all political parties. Indeed, I see in Hapoel Hamizrachi the completeness of ultra-Orthodox Jewry' (Avneri 2003:70).

Where the secular world focusses only on the material and on work and the ultra-Orthodox world focusses only on spirituality and Torah, R. Kook believed in a synthesis of the holy and the secular, of spirituality and corporeality, and the members of Hapoel Hamizrachi were the ideal combination

inherent in this theology. Indeed, the banner of their youth movement, Bnei Akiva, bears the slogan *Torah va'avoda*, that is, Torah and work.

## Rabbi Kook's attitude towards socialism

When addressing R. Kook's approach to work, it is necessary to examine the context of his words. Rabbi Kook lived and operated in times when many people in the New Yishuv who had arrived in the second (Bartal, Kaniel & Tzahor 1997a) and third Aliya (Ben Avram & Henry 1995) were pioneers who believed in physical work and espoused socialist and atheist worldviews (Diament, Shatz & Waxman 1997; Mishkinsky 2004). His attitude towards socialism shall now be examined, consequently reaching an understanding of his attitude towards the socialists, members of the working settlement movement (Aviner 1983:II, 91–98; Ariel 2004; Londin 2015:189–230).

Rabbi Kook mentioned socialism in several places, where he referred to both its virtues and its shortcomings.

Shlomo Zalman Shragai testified to a response that R. Kook gave to representatives of Hapoel Hamizrachi, alluding to his reserved attitude towards private property and capitalism (Shragai 1956):

Without determining the social governance that guides the Torah, it is to be assumed with certainty that consistent observance of all the Torah's laws in the social and economic spheres, with no compromises – would be impossible in a property-centered type of governance. Because the Torah's commandments regarding charity reduce ownership and rights to property to such an extent that its existence becomes impossible and unprofitable. (p. 194)

In contrast to his reserved attitude towards capitalism, R. Kook related to socialism favourably and even defined it as 'the light of the practical Torah in all its purity', in spite of its immature stage of development in his opinion: '[t]he method itself [socialism] is still in a process of development and is not yet aware of its basic essence'. However, he continues, 'the time will come when it will be an institution that is a true reflection of the strength of the Torah and the commandments' (Kook 1984: I, para. 89).

The discrepancy between the supreme ideal and the underdeveloped reality caused R. Kook to strictly criticise socialism (Kook 1984):

Any thought that has no connection with the exalted, with eternity, and that is only occupied with the physical arrangements of life and their organization, even if it encompasses moral contents and just and true courses of action, will eventually become tainted. (para. 688)

As he sees things as an advocate of synthesis, exclusive occupation with the corporeal is one-dimensional, and this is insufficient. In another reference to those who occupy themselves with the corporeal separately from the spiritual,

he wrote sharply that 'there is no real human life there, rather it is a place of beastly life' (Kook 1984:403).

Apart from his statements in either criticism or praise of socialism, R. Kook objected to some of the basic socialist tenets. First of all, he was adamantly opposed to any harm to private property; secondly, R. Kook recognised the different social classes. He objected to class war and to the elimination of all social classes and even warned (Kook 1987 II):

We must beware of the error that the lightheaded of the world might make, that general love is possible only when removing the value of popular ranks ... taking care to avoid equalizing the small and the great and the differentiation between ranks, is essential in a situation of increased spirituality. (p. 414)

In summary, R. Kook's attitude towards socialism is divided into two aspects: ideological and theological. From an ideological standpoint, R. Kook objected to some of the socialist foundations, such as elimination of the classes and of the right to property, while supporting the economic concept of the 'hidden hand'. He seems to have been inclined towards the economic right, while setting restrictions to the free-market policy (Londin 2015:196–216). From a theological standpoint, on one hand, he called socialism 'the light of Torah', but then again, because of its separation from Torah, he strongly criticised it. In his opinion, socialism contains positive elements but is not yet fully developed and is capable of harm; ideally, there is room for socialism only if it rectifies its shortcomings and adheres to the spirit of Torah, which he believed would indeed happen eventually (Kook 1984:22). Further on, he wrote, with an explicitly positive attitude towards socialism, that it is capable of solving all the problems of the corporeal human world (for another explanation, see Schwartz 2000:169–181).

The complex dialogue that R. Kook conducted with the socialists of the second and third Aliya (Strassberg-Dayan 1995), who on one hand received his support and on the other his criticism, further stressed his warm attitude towards Hapoel Hamizrachi, which he saw as complementing the shortcomings of secular socialism and adhering to spirituality, Torah and work.

## Discussion

Rabbi Kook sees work as having religious value, rather than only as a practical means of subsistence. From a perception of unitarian sanctity and of the Hegelian dialectic, he joined together the holy and the secular, the spiritual and the material, although these are contradictory categories for many, both ultra-orthodox and secular. Rabbi Kook criticised both the secular pioneers alienated from the spirit of Torah who engage only in matter and work, and the ultra-orthodox community that engages only in the study of Torah, spirituality and holiness, while remaining alienated from the secular and work. As R. Kook saw things, these conceptions are foreign to authentic Judaism and originate from the conceptions of other nations that pervaded the Jewish people in times of weakness when in exile. Spirit and matter, and

thus Torah and work, are parts of a synthetic wholeness of the 'divine appearance' and the 'supreme holiness', manifested both in the 'spiritual' and in the 'corporeal'. His dual criticism of the secular and ultra-orthodox public is only to be expected. This approach joins the concept of redemption, which is evident in his teachings. As he sees it, understanding and implementing a life of integration is part of the redemption of Israel, and anyone who denies these obstructs and harms the redemption.

It may be assumed that his approach was affected by Hassidic theology in general and by its principle of *avoda begashmiyut* ('earthly activities') in particular (Kauffman 2009), as understood by Martin Buber (1945:12–14). Buber claimed that according to the Hassidic outlook, there is a constant divine presence in the world that enables human beings to encounter God in any way and in any place, including in the secular world. 'The separation between the holy ... and the secular ... is a transient separation... God desired that everything should be sanctified' (Buber 1945 37–38, 40–41, 56, 89–90, 2005: 13–15, para. 2). The sanctification of reality will result from contact with the actual existence, when accompanied by proper intentions.

Buber claimed that Hassidism revived pan-sacramentalism. The entire world is a sacrament, and hence the world with all its contents can serve as a platform for an encounter between God and man. Hassidism's concept of *avoda begashmiyut* is, to begin with, a religious instruction. Hence, physical work has religious value (Elior 1985:3, 107–114; Kauffman 2009:226–248).

The similarity between this method and that of R. Kook is evident. Nevertheless, there is a difference: Buber defined the world as a sacrament, a 'conduit of supreme abundance' from God to man, which will sanctify physical reality through intention. In R. Kook's teachings as well, intention is significant, 'when engaging in secular matters there is need for a proper attitude in order to subjugate them to the supreme aim' (Kook 1985:I, 273–274), but there is a significant difference. For Buber, the aspiration is to sanctify the world, as 'God desires that everything shall be sanctified', while for R. Kook, everything is already sacred and now we must act accordingly.

Rabbi Kook's unitarian sanctity stemmed from pantheism – everything is Godly; however, he expanded the theology of pan-sacramentalism – everything is a conduit of supreme abundance, to the theology of pan-Toraism – everything is Torah. Let us explain. The rationalist philosophy and Kabbalah identified God with his wisdom-knowledge – Torah.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, there is a congruence between the world and the Torah and God – if everything is godly – pan-theism, hence everything is Torah – pan-Toraism. Everything

4.The Rambam wrote, '[h]e [God] and his knowledge are one' (Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah 2:10), and the Kabbalists perceived that '[t]he Holy One Blessed be He and the Torah – are one', for instance: R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi 1860: Chapter 5; R. Yitzchak Isaac Chaver 1880: letter 8. The source is the *Zohar*, vol. 3, 56a. The statement is often cited as originating from the *Zohar*, but the book contains no such explicit statement.

including everything is godly-Torah. 'Our Torah of life is a divine revelation ... from all existence' (Kook 2006:II, File 1, para. 20, p. 72). No longer a duality of matter and spirit, holy and secular, Torah and work, rather an overall unity, also 'from our perspective (side)' (Kook 2004:II, para 6, IV, para. 58). No longer a definition of Torah as academic study, rather life with all its activities, both spiritual and corporeal, is Torah.

As one who identifies God with the world and with the Torah, R. Kook wrote: 'God is revealed from within everything, within the holy and within the secular' (Kook 2006:II, Notebook 1, para. 20, p. 72). Based on this conception, he called for innovations in matter and work, just as innovations should be proposed in the study of Torah (Kook 1985):

One who innovates as is the way of Torah is to be praised ... and it is also necessary to properly expand and innovate in all the world's innovations, in natural things and in industry. (pp. 26–27)

Rabbi Kook explained that concentrating on spirituality while neglecting corporeality was the practice at the time of the second Temple's destruction and the exile. Kook (2004):

In the time of the destruction and in its vicinity, when the Israelite troops were displaced from their land and were then forced to recognize their designation in their abstract spiritual status, individuals were guided to become secluded from worldly life [*engaging in spirituality perceived as eternal – 'world'*] for the purpose of temporal life [*engaging in corporeality, perceived as transient – 'current'*], and this too generated a Divine protest. (III, para. 366)

He was referring to R. Shimon bar Yochai, of the 2nd century, who spent 12 years in a cave with his son (Bavli, Shabbat 33b).

When they left the cave and saw people working, sowing and reaping, they were surprised: '[*these people*] abandon eternal life and engage in temporal life?!' They responded with fury: '[e]very place that they directed their eyes was immediately burned'. And then, 'there was a Divine protest' and as narrated in the Talmud, 'a Divine voice emerged and said to them: [*Did*] you emerge [*from the cave in order*] to destroy My world? Return to your cave!' But in spite of the protest, according to R. Kook, the identification of Judaism as solely spiritual became the exilic-Jewish ethos, while neglecting corporeality.

According to R. Kook, this conception has reached its conclusion, now that the Israelites have returned to their land. The Torah of Israel must be returned to its original glory, both spiritual and practical (Kook 2004):

But once it was time to build the nation in its land, and the practical need of the political and social arrangements became part of the general plan, these are actual entities of Torah. (III, para. 366)

Notably, the organisation of society and of the state was defined by R. Kook as 'entities of Torah'. Work is Torah – pan-Toraism.

Now R. Kook's 'great aspiration' is clear. He wishes to return the Torah to its original all-inclusiveness, encompassing spirit and matter, as he believes was the case in the days of the Bible when the Israelites were living on their land, and as was gradually occurring before his very eyes in his own time. Rabbi Kook defined the study of Torah as 'spiritual Torah' and corporeal work as 'practical Torah', and called for the unification of these Torahs (Kook 2004):

My great aspiration is to connect the spiritual Torah with the practical Torah. In the early days, in the days of the prophets, the two Torahs were undoubtedly completely connected ... Indeed, the compilation of the Talmud Bavli was intended to enable the light of the Torah to illuminate even in the dark, but the current times now demand that its appearance resume its full strength. (I, para. 834)

Notably both areas, spirit and matter, are defined by R. Kook as Torah. Pan-Toraism sees everything as a divine revelation, and therefore everything is Torah – the holy and the secular, spirit and matter, Torah and work. It was clear to him that in biblical times 'the two Torahs were undoubtedly completely connected'. The rabbinical change of values at the time of the 'compilation of the Talmud Bavli' was, as he sees it, only a transient necessity, aimed at illuminating and surviving the darkness of the exile, but 'the current times now demand that its appearance resume its full strength' (Ish Shalom 1990: 316; Kook 2004: XIII, para. 248), resuming its existence as a full, multi-dimensional Judaism.

In conclusion, work in the teachings of R. Kook is not merely a means or a subsistence need, rather it is part of an entire theological conception that stems from his pantheist-pan-Toraist conception, which expands the Torah's boundaries and includes in it everything: holy and secular, spirit and matter, Torah and work.

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### Author's contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

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