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Alfredo Borodowski

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Gillman: The Master of the Theology of Disturbance

ALFREDO BORODOWSKI

The praiseworthy wise man is he who makes reality his guiding principle and bases his belief thereon. . . . The reprehensible fool, on the other hand, is he who sets up his personal conviction as his guiding principle, assuming that reality is patterned after his beliefs.

Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*

Gillman's theology is unsettling; daring. It elicits a visceral reaction. A survey of Gillman's work is replete with provocative statements.¹ It challenges the reader.

This process of theologically challenging his audience erupted in 2005 during Professor Gillman's address at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's convention in Boston.² In that address, Gillman dared to propose what for many amounted to an anathema: to abandon the self-definition of being a halakhic movement. As one of his students, I was not surprised by the content and tone of the address; it was Gillman à la Gillman, intellectually honest and direct; a skillful "myth breaker." Reflecting upon the public nature and profile of the event I now wonder why he did it. Wasn't it evident that this statement would cause an enormous uproar? What was the gain in openly defying the core myth of the movement? Beyond speculations on the political and strategic nature of his particular style, I intend to demonstrate that Gillman's theology of discomfort is

ingrained in its very methodology. Inescapably, Gillman's hermeneutics engender challenge and polemic.

Methodological Disturbances

I gaze at my "Gillman shelf." It is strategically located directly behind my desk chair; always within easy reach. By no means have I divided my library according to my professors, however, when I organized my study the books recommended by Gillman throughout the years did not fit in any of the standard categories. They formed an independent unit. Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Cultures*, Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Ian G. Barbour's *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion*, John Hick's *The Existence of God*, Alfred Jules Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic*, John Wisdom's *Gods*, and Paul Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* became an inseparable intellectual family.³ In a systematic and relentless manner, Gillman utilized basic categories from the fields of anthropology, sociology, and theology to scrutinize Judaism. In fact, it is difficult to locate Gillman's scholarship within a particular field. His approach eludes definition. Who is Gillman the scholar? Is he a theologian? A religious anthropologist? A sociologist of religion? A philosopher? It is precisely in the uniqueness of his methodology that the roots of the discomfiting nature of Gillman's scholarship reside.⁴

Let's take the sensitive topic of halakhah as a case study. Two opposite approaches frame the variety of halakhic positions within the movement. Borrowing the nomenclature from general legal theory, we will label one Kelsenian, or positivist, and the other Dworkian, or principled.⁵ The first is represented by Joel Roth and is clearly articulated in his book, *The Halakhic Process: A Systemic Approach*.⁶ Legal positivism asserts that once a legal system is constituted, established, and set in motion it becomes independent from the historical, sociological, political, and cultural factors that gave it origin. The second is represented by such thinkers as Rabbi Gordon Tucker who maintains a Dworkian or principles-based approach to the halakhic system.⁷ Differently from the positivist school, this doctrine holds that norms do not exhaust the legal system.⁸ The moral and just cannot be severed from the formal law. Legal systems contain or reflect principles

such as fairness and justice, which cannot be ignored. In instances in which the law is unclear, or doubtful supra-legal principles inherent, or implicit, in the system fill the legal lacunae.⁹ In fact if a formally valid law trumps basic moral principles, that law can or must be disobeyed.

These opposing schools demarcate the borders of the debate among the halakhists of our movement. But if these are the encompassing parameters of the discussion, where do Gillman's views lie within it? Flagrantly outside! A glimpse at the kind of questions Gillman poses places him beyond the limits of the legal discussion. He dares to ask why Judaism entails a halakhic process in the first place. "Why halakhah? Why is law the distinctively Jewish form of religious expression?" And ultimately, "Why is Judaism the way it is?"¹⁰ Once we dare to raise these questions, all presuppositions vanish.

Gillman's unique methodology has its roots in the critical historical approach of *Wissenschaft*, which distinguished the foundational scholarship of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Through *Wissenschaft*, scholars discovered the cultural and historical processes that gave birth to Judaism. That knowledge served as a platform for understanding the inner dynamics of Judaism. However, armed with that same methodology Gillman is distinguished from his peers by his willingness to pose a different set of questions. He advances beyond descriptive scholarship into an exploration of the existential and programmatic foundations of a culture.

By necessity, Gillman's scholarship transforms him into the opposition. It presupposes and entails the research of a lonely outsider. However, Gillman's analysis is not insolent or arrogant. It is the outcome of pioneering a discipline ignored by other scholars in the movement; religion. Once religion becomes the subject matter the angle shifts from the components or cultural origins of a religion to religion as such. What unifies the works on my "Gillman shelf" is that they scrutinize the religious phenomenon and cultural shifts in their broadest sense. They discuss the primary building blocks that constitute any culture or religion. Like in a Lego set, Gillman was not just interested in the structure of a specific religion, but in the very building blocks that unify and characterize the community of religions in their multiple shapes. Armed with the lenses of paradigms, metaphors, and myths he opened a field unknown to those focused on the inner debates of specific systems.¹¹

Religious Integration as Disturbance

By standing outside of the system, Gillman was able to introduce a missing component into the movement: religiosity. Assessing the state of the Rabbinical School program in the 1960s, Gillman recognized a very disturbing reality: Although the Seminary was trusted with forming the rabbinic leadership of the movement, “The one thing it [the Seminary] did not do in any kind of systematic way was religious [*italics in the original*] education” or “at the Seminary the nexus between the academic and religious dimensions of rabbinic education was irreparably split.” Strikingly, there was one topic rabbinical students rarely studied: religion.¹²

Two elements constituted the core of rabbinic education: a rigorous academic approach to the classic sources, and traditional halakhic observance. Each of these elements coexisted, belonging to two independent dimensions. The findings of scholarship were not applied to the legal domain, as an iron curtain was erected between the realms of intellect and praxis. This polarity generated a secular scholarship paired with unquestioned observance. It was precisely within and due to this compartmental approach that the movement’s unreflective adoption of the slogan “we are a halakhic movement” was fostered.¹³

This model of separation of scholarship and praxis avoided central questions of phenomenology of religion and theology, precluding inquiries such as: What happened at Sinai? Why are the mitzvot authoritative? What happens when we pray? These inquiries were, using Gillman’s poignant language, “studiously avoided.”¹⁴ Most disturbingly, the dichotomy between the academic study of the sources and praxis prevented ordained rabbis from exploring questions that cut to the core of communal life and individual angst, such as: Does a *mi shebeirakh* work? Why are some observances dropped and others maintained? If God is good why do I suffer?

Faced with this compartmental approach, Gillman realized a process that had devastating consequences for the movement. The separation between the substance and praxis of religion infantilized the community by restricting knowledge and fostering hierarchy.¹⁵ Within the original ideological context of the Seminary, the motto that “we are a halakhic movement” signified that the people should remain exclusively within the domain of praxis and away from the truth of scholarship. An unqualified acceptance of the motto

“we are a halakhic movement” would perpetuate the dichotomy between praxis and the great theological questions of religion.

Gillman recognized this process of infantilization and would not remain silent. He explains that the centralized administration of the Seminary dominated by strong personalities infantilized its faculty; the faculty in turn infantilized its rabbinical students and the rabbis proceeded to infantilize their congregants by designing a behavior-based and hierarchical Judaism.¹⁶ Little was demanded of the congregants who, thirsty for religious experience and meaning, were restricted to two stark choices: blind observance, or apathy.

Gillman had the cure for this religious schizophrenia: theology.¹⁷ Theology as the exploration of the essential questions of religion would bridge the domains of intellect and praxis.¹⁸ From this perspective, Gillman was a pioneering thinker in the Seminary. He understood that the findings of scholarship should programmatically influence the religious life of the movement. Gillman’s scholarship had an agenda: the integration of academics, halakhah, and religious experience.¹⁹ In other words, Gillman’s scholarship in itself was an expression of what it intended to do, to integrate knowledge and praxis. This endeavor was unforeseeable by other Seminary scholars who focused exclusively within a particular discipline. Integration required a thinker who had mastered the very dynamics of religion as a cultural experience.²⁰

Gillman’s theology of integration disturbed everybody. The faculty, mostly a product of European orthodoxy, believed that the average American Jew was unable to simultaneously handle critical knowledge and observance. In addition this model, rooted in an intellectual elitism, assured the authority of the “movement’s sages” as keepers and guardians of tradition.²¹ Formed in the image and likeness of their faculty, the rabbis were ill prepared for integrating a viable Judaism for their constituencies and created a hierarchical ritual, which mimicked their teachers.²² Respectively, congregants, Gillman explains, resisted because with empowerment comes responsibility and it was convenient to remain within the comfortable confines of infancy.²³ It was clear that Gillman’s agenda of integration would be unsettling to just about everybody and was not afraid to connect academics to life.

And, to everybody's credit, they had legitimate reasons to be disturbed! Gillman's scholarship exposed one of the most potentially dangerous and zealously kept secrets of the scholarly world. He openly exposed beyond the boundaries of the academic fraternity that the unavoidable conclusion of Wissenschaft is that the Torah is a cultural document.²⁴ And once we accept that religion is an expression of a culture we are compelled to redefine our traditional preconceptions about revelation, authority, and God.

You may notice that I have placed revelation and authority before God. This is not accidental. This sequence is aimed at encapsulating the essence of Gillman's thought. While most theological works begin with God, Gillman in his typical discomfiting mode, opens *Sacred Fragments* with revelation. He knows that this arrangement is unusual, counter-intuitive.²⁵ God is the central character of the theological endeavor. However, Gillman explains that the reason for the primacy of revelation is that it is revelation that creates Judaism as a religion.²⁶ The encounter with the Divine in a specific historical and cultural setting as understood by a community will develop into an intimate and unique relationship between them. The nature and circumstances of the revelatory event will also distinguish religious communities from each other. But even more importantly, the content of revelation will determine the nature of authority. The more infused with content a revelatory message is, the more circumscribed human authority will be. Alternatively, if revelation is understood more as an encounter than transmission of content, the authority of the individual or the community will increase.

This reversal of the customary thematic theological arrangement determines the particular approach of Gillman's theology. Theologies that begin with God render the community passive. They presuppose a God who unilaterally reveals himself to the community and imposes His will upon them. Contrarily, by placing revelation as the initial theological concept Gillman is transforming the community into an active partner in revelation. In this model, the halakhic system is not unilaterally promulgated and imposed by God over Israel. It is a product of a Divine-human partnership. Even more, if revelation is bound to its historical circumstances, halakhah does not reflect a pre-existent supernatural ideal domain within which life must conform. Law, and furthermore, the very existence and adoption of a sacred legal system, is the result and expression of a particular culture bound by history.

This brings us to another fundamental and usually ignored foundation of Gillman's thought: an optimistic view of community. If religion is good and as Wissenschaft reveals an expression of a community, communities must *a priori* be considered to be responsible and trustworthy.²⁷ Contrary to the infantilism that typified the original culture of the Seminary, once communities are trusted, law cannot be used as a tool to coerce or protect the community. Halakhah must be intertwined or, using a concept Gillman favors, "integrated" and must be reflective of the life of a community.

A Disturbing Reality

I remember the excitement during that day at graduate school when it was announced that once a week during lunch a different professor would share his or her personal theology. The first courageous faculty member was a Talmud professor. For an hour she spoke about the text with no reference to God. Following a similar presentation the following week, I began suspecting that for some of the faculty the text had become their God. Furiously I climbed up the stairs to Gillman's office. But before I could knock on the door something stopped me: jokes and cartoons. Gillman's office door was replete with them: a collage of cartoon strips with theological content mixed with short current articles on science and religion, and all kinds of theological narratives from newspapers and magazines. That door manifested the essence of Gillman's teaching: the gate to theology is culture as reflected in its daily and most mundane forms. Once a student went through that door, no escape from reality by immersing into obscure discussions in the sacred text was possible. Culture itself became the starting point of inquiry. For Gillman the text did not exhaust reality; it represented it. Scriptures, and their study, did not replace religious experience. Life should not be coerced into a parchment. Religiosity was not to be canonized in the pages of the Talmud or substituted by the halakhic system.

The different status and placement respectively ascribed to reality and text in a theological system will generate opposite doctrines and conceptions of the nature of halakhah. Proponents of the positivist school are generally suspicious and reticent to recognize or allow cultural developments to influence the legal system. In the interplay between *nomos* and narrative, the first is endowed with supremacy.²⁸ Ingrained within this doctrine lies

the view that as religious communities chronologically distance themselves from the initial revelatory event the original truth is weakened and distorted. Authority is diminished with each and every elapsing generation. The force of the system is preserved in the wisdom of the ancestors and the immutability of the halakhic system that serves as a paradigm, corrective, and refuge from the changing reality.²⁹

Contrarily, adherents to the Dworkian doctrine consider the legal system to be part of the historical unfolding of a culture. In religious terms the original revelatory event is not finite. The will of God unfolds through and within history.³⁰ Religion is an expression of reality. Torah and law are rooted in the experience of the community and are not immune or autonomous to cultural shifts. Halakhah in this case does not correct or perfect a depressed reality but traces its authority and is shaped by life reflecting and carrying the aspirations of the community.

Gillman understands that the statement “we are a halakhic movement” resonates as a positivist slogan. Halakhah is seen as the pre-existent starting point of religion, which predetermines what the movement should be.³¹ However, if *Wissenschaft* reveals culture as the cradle of religion, how can we maintain a heavenly reality that pre-exists and determines community? Moreover, the simultaneous affirmation of being a “halakhic movement,” while our constituency is negligent at fulfilling the law, would reaffirm that halakhah is autonomous from reality. In other words, if our self-definition of being halakhic misrepresents reality we would be once again trapped in the old paradigm of intellect and praxis as two discontinued spheres.

Dislocation and Disturbance

It is not that a movement cannot be defined by halakhah, however, that decision demands responsibility and commitment. And here emerges another necessary conclusion of Gillman’s thought. If halakhah as part of religion is a cultural expression and a movement decides to define itself by those norms, an abyss between calling itself a halakhic movement and failing to live by halakhah can’t be tolerated. Paradoxically, ideologies that consider the halakhic system to be the model under which a community is molded instead of an expression of the community have more resilience in perpetuating themselves regardless of the community’s behavior. For those doc-

trines, the halakhic system is autonomous, immune to reality. It is precisely the dichotomy between the halakhic system and the community that allows for both to exist independently.

Gillman's theology does not permit that kind of dislocation. There must be a significant continuity between how a community defines itself and its behavior. "We are a halakhic movement" cannot merely exist in the expression of a wish. Ultimately, as Gillman explains using a term coined by the British analytic philosopher Anthony Flew, if the norms are regularly violated the statement will suffer "the death by a thousand qualifications."³² Based upon Thomas Kuhn's explanation of how paradigms function, once anomalies surpass the norm, a new paradigm must emerge.³³ Looking at the low level of halakhic observance among Conservative Jews, Gillman is right to ask whether the paradigm "we are a halakhic movement" remains valid or has suffered "the death by a thousand qualifications." Gillman does not criticize the right to be a halakhic movement. He states: "Again, my critique of the claim that we are a halakhic movement is directed not at how we function but how we identify ourselves."³⁴ In other words, if the community is the source of authority it reserves the right to forge its own destiny and identity. What is dishonest for the community is to pretend to be what it is not. And what is intolerable is for others to impose upon it their own definitions.³⁵

Personal Disturbance

I encountered Gillman for the first time while a rabbinical student at the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires. The meeting took place through the Spanish translation of one of his articles on religion and myth. I was instantly fascinated by his approach and promised myself to one day come to America to study with him. That journey proved to be long and filled with challenges, such as learning the English language. But I was determined. I can still feel my heart palpitating as I waited for my first class with Professor Gillman. I had struggled through Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, and could almost recite *Sacred Fragments* by heart. The class was over and somebody should have taken a picture of my face when he announced that the assignment was to write one page about our personal theology. I was disappointed and disturbed. I was there to

learn from the master; not to write about myself. For two days I sat in front of a blank paper. Ultimately, I found the courage to begin exploring my beliefs; to this very moment though, I'm still writing and rewriting that first disturbing assignment.

Gillman holds the movement's trademark for personal theology. His journey resembles one of those itinerant solitary masters who travels from town to town in search of stories, in this case, theological stories. Emerging from a culture that severed scholarship from community I'm not certain if the movement has yet fully appreciated the dedication, respect, and revolutionary approach that entailed leaving the confines of texts and academic circles in pursuit of human wisdom. Gillman's interest in personal theology was in harmony with his scholarship. If religion is gestated in community the source of knowledge and creativity must be encountered there. If we want to understand what religion should be we must scrutinize the aspirations of the community. The greatest gift Gillman has given us is that his sacred text is none other than our lives. It is crucial to understand that pursuits that begin their inquiry in sacred text, the wisdom of the past, or ideologies, always culminate in the same manner: the community betrays the model, the system, the ideal, and ultimately, God. Gillman understood that theology would return religiosity to the movement by no other way than the movement. In Gillman's universe, the life of the individual and the community *are* the sacred text. Those personal theologies interlace, giving birth to a national sacred narrative. His goal was not to collect data about what individuals believe. The personal theological assignment entailed a self-reflection that would push people from the infantilism in which they had been trapped into maturity. It compelled them to ask the basic questions of belief, which will not tolerate the imposition of a behavioral code at the expense of their intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

It is not a secret that for the audacity of moving from text to life Gillman paid a high price. His pursuit of theology and personal narratives was seen by the Wissenschaft classic establishment as second-class academia. Gillman was frequently seen by some of his peers as more suited for the lesser intellectual arena of "adult education." What they did not understand is that people's lives and experiences were the most profound terrain in which the wisdom of religion would emerge. From this perspective, instead of the

congregations having to resemble the Judaism learned in the classroom, the classroom had to resemble the life of the community.

The realization that religion is found and developed in community demanded a radical transformation of the rabbinical school curriculum. Gillman explains: “Of course, we expect Wissenschaft-style research, that’s assumed before we walked into the classroom. But the class itself works on going beyond that stage of understanding, and the focus is always on what is happening within the room, around the table, on what the text or the ritual or the idea means to all of us, and how it can be translated or transmitted into a meaningful statement to our congregations. The classroom becomes the arena for the shared inquiry into issues of personal meaning, a prototype for what should happen in the synagogue itself.”³⁶ Note that Gillman does not disqualify the Wissenschaft method. However, he places it at the beginning of the inquiry. The findings of scholarship are the starting point of a discussion about personal meaning. Those who remain in the intrinsic study of the sources have not completed the journey.

The Identity of the Movement: Discomfort as a Virtue

Those who study with Gillman appreciate his love for patterns.³⁷ He enjoys searching for the fundamental concepts and metaphors that constitute a narrative. As he taught us, I invite you to do the following exercise. Take a highlighter and mark the conceptual words in Gillman’s controversial address at the United Synagogue’s convention in Boston. A word emerges that, in itself, connotes disturbance: “tension.”³⁸ That tension manifests itself in numerous ways, including subjectivity and relativism, in the ambiguity of our reading of Judaism, and between God and our evil impulses.³⁹ Gillman maintains that tension is a sign of vitality. It is the natural state of life and is inherent to the religious pursuit.

A mature religious life entails constant struggle. It demands courageous individuals who posted by the gates of meaning frankly and straightforwardly face the struggles of existence. Gillman believes that the willingness to live in tension characterizes the Conservative Jew. As he writes, “I have long felt that to think and live as a Conservative Jew is to live in a state of perpetual tension.”⁴⁰

Gillman's pursuit of integration is at the core of that disturbing tension. Integration entails tension. There is no cosmic blueprint to be imitated. Tension is the prize to be afforded for resisting a regression to the dichotomy between knowledge and practice, which characterized the origins of the movement. Tension is an insurance against infantilization. To be a Conservative Jew is to resist the temptation of allocating the Torah to heaven, away from the contradictions and fluctuations of the terrestrial domain. It is within that tension that halakhah finds its place. In Gillman's own words, "Our approach to halakhah is a superb paradigm of living with tension."⁴¹

"We are a halakhic movement" means that we uphold the law as a response to the challenges of life. As life presents us with endless tensions, halakhah will reshape itself not as a result of our failure to be consistent, but as the consequence of our willingness to live in a complex reality filled with tension. Ultimately, we will become observant when we acknowledge that our imperfect halakhah must compel us as members of a community in which we love and respect each other and share a constant search for God.⁴²

NOTES

1. See for instance the following quotes from "The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi," *Conservative Judaism*, 43:2 (Winter 1990–1991). "Paradoxically, then, rabbinic education at the Seminary was subversive. Not only did it neglect to train the rabbi for his main role; it actually undermined his ability to function in that role." (p. 5). Or "Looking at the picture as a whole, I suggest that the reigning educational paradigm for the movement was infantilization. The Seminary infantilized its faculty. . . . The faculty, in turn, infantilized its rabbinical students . . . and the rabbis proceeded to infantilize their congregants . . . Infantilization was the inevitable result of the Seminary's rabbinic paradigm, of its commitment to *Wissenschaft* [italics in the original] and to halakhic traditionalism." pp. 7–8.

2. Gillman's expanded and revised version of his address entitled "A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement," is found in *Conservative Judaism*. 58:2–3 (Winter/Spring 2006), pp. 29–45.

3. Other books on this shelf include: Rudolf Otto's *The Holy*, James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, and works by Victor Turner, Basil Mitchell, Anthony Flew, R.M. Hare, William James, Erich Fromm, Margaret Mead,

Peter Berger, Camus, Kierkegaard, Mary Douglas, and lately James W. Fowler, among others.

4. I am not suggesting that other professors disregard the wisdom and methodology of general scholarship in their fields. But, for Gillman general knowledge and hermeneutics of a field were not background strata. On the contrary, the general concepts that constituted a field remained ubiquitous, permeating every analysis regardless of the specific Jewish subject.

5. Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, trans. Anders Wedberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945). The Austrian-American jurist Kelsen, (1881–1973) is one of the fathers of the positivist legal doctrine according to which the nature and authority of a legal system is intrinsic to it. Norms always refer to a prior norm which ultimately relies on a basic norm presupposed by the system. The legal system operates independently from the historical sources, such as philosophical, political, sociological or economic factors that motivated its promulgation. For a more recent example in the English spoken legal community see the writings of H.L.A. Hart, (1907–1992).

6. Joel Roth, *The Halakhic Process: A Systematic Analysis* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1986). This book is mentioned by Neil Gillman in “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” p. 34.

7. The leading representative of this approach is Ronald Dworkin in his book *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977). For Gordon Tucker’s position, see “God, the Good, and Halakah,” in *Judaism*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1989), pp. 365–376.

8. As Dworkin explains, “The Constitution, through the due process clause, the equal protection clause, the First Amendment, and other provisions I mentioned, injects an extraordinary amount of our political morality into the issue of whether a law is valid.” *Taking Rights Seriously*, p. 215.

9. See Nachmanides’ interpretation of “Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord” (Deut. 6:18).

10. “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” p. 34.

11. For Gillman’s frequently recommended article on this subject “Religion As a Cultural System,” see, Clifford Geertz’s, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973), pp. 87–125.

12. “The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi,” pp. 4–5. *Ibid.*, p. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

13. From this perspective the Seminary favored a positivist-Kelsenian approach to halakhah. In fact, I would venture to affirm that it created a full Kelsenian Judaism in which the entire corpora of sources was seen as a self sufficient entity separated from the historical circumstances that gave it origin.

14. “The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi,” p. 6.

15. “*Looking at the picture as a whole, I suggest that the reigning educational paradigm for the movement was one of infantilization.*” *Ibid.* p. 8. “*Infantilization*

was the inevitable result of the Seminary's rabbinic paradigm, of its commitment to *Wissenschaft* [italics in the original] and to the halakhic traditionalism. That **elitist** [bold mine] package was simply beyond the reach of anyone but the Seminary faculty." Ibid., p. 8.

16. "Infantilization was the inevitable result of the seminary's rabbinic paradigm, of its commitment to *Wissenschaft* [italics in the original] and to halakhic traditionalism." Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 6.

18. "A forthright theological inquiry, or an inquiry into phenomenology of religion could have begun to refashion the package, but neither was on the Seminary agenda." Ibid. The concept of integration is at the core of Gillman's thought, "for what he [the rabbi] did not have, and therefore could never help his congregants to achieve, was precisely an integrated, religious understanding of his tradition or of his role." "The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi," p. 6. Gillman remained loyal on his integrationalist quest. Thus, differently from the Seminary's culture, he has recently taught joint courses with professors Geller and Brown from the departments of bible and education respectively.

19. This was previously attempted by Kaplan. Gillman explains: "Mordecai Kaplan's contribution to the culture of both school and movement. Briefly, he alone integrated theology, ideology, and program." Ibid., p. 5.

20. "We too [as Kaplan strived], have finally integrated theology, ideology and program." "The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi," p. 10.

21. "Second, it was simply [*Wissenschaft*] unachievable by most rabbinical students, let alone a lay person." Ibid., p. 7.

22. We must clarify the tone of Gillman in this article. As the title of the article suggests, "The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi," his critique of the rabbinate is aimed at setting it free from the model established by academia. Despite outlining the deficiencies of the rabbinate Gillman writes that "in fact, to the extent that there was a Conservative movement out there, it was created not by the Seminary but by an extraordinary competent group of rabbis and their congregants." p. 7.

23. Ibid. Also: "The Alternative to infantilization is empowerment." p. 9. Note that by community Gillman includes "not all Jews, but rather the caring, learning committed community." Ibid. And "Indeed, the paradigm change from infantilization to empowerment has to begin at the Seminary." Ibid., p. 10.

24. "The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi," p. 8. See also "A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement," p. 35.

25. The first sentence of *Sacred Fragments* reads, "Why does a book on Jewish Philosophy begin with a discussion on revelation?" *Sacred Fragments* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. 1.

26. Ibid. The same structure is seen in "A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement." Following the statement that Judaism is a creation of the Jewish peo-

ple and that this forces us to ask about the place of God, Gillman proposed that we begin by articulating a doctrine of revelation, p. 25.

27. Gillman poignantly ends his analysis on “The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi” with Numbers 11:29: “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord put his spirit upon them!” p. 11.

28. The landmark article on this subject is Robert Cover’s, “The Supreme Court, 1982 Term—Foreword: ‘Nomos and Narrative,’” in *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 97 (1983) pp. 4–68. Roth’s application of legal positivism to narrative (Aggadah) and halakhah is clearly seen in his “Halakah and History,” in *The Seminary at 100: Reflections on the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Conservative Movement*, edited by Nina B. Cardin and David W. Silverman (New York: JTS-RA: 1987), pp. 281–290. There he writes: “*Halakbically speaking, the results of critical scholarship are agadic-non-normative, non-binding. Not so the results of pesak halakhah [italics in the original] which are normative and binding. Pesak [italics in the original] itself is not a discipline to which the cannons of Wissenschaft [italics in the original] apply.*” p. 282.

29. For a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of the decline of the generations see, Menachem Kellner’s, “Maimonides on the Decline of the Generations and the Nature of Rabbinic Authority” (New York: SUNY Press, 1996). Although Roth maintains a positivist approach, as far as I understand, he does not expressly adhere to the theory of decline. Dorff places Roth within the “Conservative I” group which believes in continuous revelation. See Elliot Dorff’s, *Conservative Judaism: From Our Ancestors to Our Descendents* (New York: USCJ, 1996), pp. 98–99.

30. See Gordon Tucker’s, “A Philosopher’s View on the Problem of Scholarship and Belief,” in *The Seminary at 100*, pp. 256–257. It is suggestive that in the same volume Joel Roth writes his article entitled “Halakha and History” in which he rejects the interdependency of Jewish law and history.

31. For a theology which places halakhah as an *a priori* reality after which the world must be model, see Joseph B. Soloveitchick, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), p. 23.

32. Anthony Flew has a distinguished place on my “Gillman Shelf.” See Flew’s “Theology and Falsification,” in *The Existence of God*, edited by John Hick, (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 224–228. In fact, poignantly echoing Flew, Gillman explains that while *Emet Ve’Emuna* clearly states that for many Conservative Jews halakhah is indispensable “*because it is what the Jewish community understands [bold is mine] God’s will to be,*” it proceeds to “qualify that claim out of existence.” “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” pp. 37–38.

33. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

34. “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” p. 41.

35. “*It is a claim, [we are an halakhic movement], created by and for rabbis and designed primarily to promote our wish to feel authentic.*” “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” p. 41.

36. “The Changing Paradigm of the Conservative Rabbi,” p. 10.

37. His habitual use of pattern, especially the game of connecting dots on a paper, originated in an article which frequently mentioned by Gillman constitutes the backbone of his approach: John Wisdom’s “Gods,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1944–1945. Reprinted in *Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge*, edited by Ronald E. Santoni (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1968), chap. 18. See “A New Aggadah,” p. 40.

38. I counted 14 times. “Revelation” as mentioned earlier is another repeated concept.

39. “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” pp. 40–41.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

41. Some of the tensions mentioned by Gillman are: Why can a *kohen* marry a divorcee, but a Jew can’t marry a non-Jew? Why change some portions of the liturgy but not others? *Ibid.*, p. 33.

42. “If God is no longer the *metzaveh* [italics original] then can we continue to speak of *mitzvah*? [italics original]. We can, of course, by acknowledging that the community has become the *metzaveh* [italics original]. We can even retain God in that role . . . God’s will is transmitted through the community. But what is clear is that if we are to remain an *halakhic* community, it is because we want to be one.” “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” p. 38. It is important to indicate that differently from Kaplan who maintained a naturalistic view of the Divinity, Gillman affirms that the metaphors we use to describe God are the language we utilize to convey the human-Divine encounter. Asked if his theology implies that we create God, he strongly replies: “My response is ‘No, we discover God and create the metaphors.’ But this ‘discovery’ is fraught with subjectivity.” “A New Aggadah for the Conservative Movement,” p. 40.

Rabbi Alfredo Borodowski is the executive director of the Shalom Hartman Institute for North America and adjunct assistant professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary.