

INTRODUCTION

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Know Your Feeling

In 1998, when he visited his friend the shamanic healer Jonathan Horwitz in Denmark, Don Handelman saw a ghost. He was lying on his back, his eyes closed as Horwitz chanted, directing energies into and away from the room. Handelman then felt an urge in him, a sort of presence, and opened his eyes. His pupils expanded as he found himself gazing at Henry Rupert, the Native American shaman with whom he had worked as a young student thirty-four years earlier near Carson City, Nevada. While Handelman was stunned to see Rupert—in flesh and blood although he had been among the dead since 1973—Rupert was casual and self-assured as he had been decades before, when they first met. Rupert bent over, putting his mouth on Handelman's mouth, breathing air into him. He then looked at Handelman intensely and uttered: "Know through your feelings, but know!" As he said that, he dissipated into thin air.

Contemplating on this close encounter in 2018 during a conversation with Jackie Feldman and myself, Handelman interpreted Rupert's message as a reaffirmation of his own intellectual trajectory in anthropology. "Henry," he said, "was the master of fusing together analytical thinking about the world and a deep feeling for some kind of sensory connectivity with everything in it. Washo cosmology was all about the cohesion of the fixed and the free, and you can decide for yourself where to locate emotions and where to locate epistemic knowledge in this equation." He continued:

But the very possibility of this cohesion, the perception of reality as multiple, the idea that the free and the fixed can be fused in creative ways to inspire some kind of transformation in the world, countermanded everything I had learned in academia as an anthropologist in the '50s and '60s, which was all about making order out of movement by bringing it to a halt and putting it under control.

That encounter with Rupert in 1998 inspired in Don Handelman a sense of emotional integration combined with lucid conceptualization of something new. As Han-

delman understood this in hindsight, Rupert thus intimated that Handelman himself was capable of realizing empirically that same simultaneous duality of thinking and feeling in his ongoing intellectual work. Henry Rupert’s resurgence from the dead in 1998 in that sense reignited Handelman’s own quest to live an intellectual life in the shaman way, a *creative* intellectualism of sort. “One only knows in a fuller, perhaps in a more holistic sense, by knowing that feeling is integral to the existence and movement of organic worlds,” Handelman explained.

The chapters in this book will serve as an index to decipher these somewhat confusing words. They express Don Handelman’s unique intellectual stance with regard to the nature of human social phenomena. While supplying massive theoretical insights, Handelman’s approach to the social—especially to its structuring—is primarily methodological, a systematic tool for cross-cultural analysis, which he has been developing over the last five decades. “My best moments and relationships,” writes Handelman (2014: xv) in a short preface to his book on South Indian cosmology, “arrive . . . unannounced, quiet presences that sometimes are life-changing. My anthropology then and now is to grab onto a strange line of flight and then to hold on for dear life. To wherever.” He continues, poetically:

India fills the senses with imaginings, yet these are imaginings within imaginings, fractal imaginings that are borderless and, for me at least, that curve mind-work inward, involuting, yet involution that is emergent, always re-emerging elsewhere into another angle of an expanding cosmos to which I had not had access before. (Ibid.: xv)

Involution, convolution, imaginings, curving, cosmos: Don Handelman does not use these terms merely as poetical metaphors nor does he refer to them as rudimentary writing techniques used to sidestep intricate logical conundrums. Rather, he employs these terms directly and straight-forwardly as analytic “razors” (Handelman 2004) by which it becomes possible to capture social phenomena in their incessant dynamic, a dynamic which he refers to as the process of forming of social forms. Here, the often paradoxical and self-contradictory processes of formulating distinct types of feeling and knowing, in their creative localized formations, are not only objects of study but also conceptual-affective experimentations in their own right, which for him, as I now turn to explicate, must remain at the center of any anthropological analysis of what Handelman sees as the *logic* of forming of form.

The Logic of Forming of Forms

Don Handelman was born in Quebec, Canada, in 1939 to a working-class Jewish family. His parents had emigrated separately from the Ukraine to Canada, where they met and married. Until the age of fourteen, Handelman grew up in a remote rural hotel resort his father, uncle, and friends had bought and operated in the small town of Ste. Agathe des Monts. While it is difficult to assess what drove Handelman to turn

to anthropology, he has stated in a biographical interview from the end of the 1990s (Handelman [1998–99] 2017) that living in the hotel provided him with a very dynamic perception of the social world at a very young age, as he was able to observe and feel the transformations between total emptiness off-season and the hustle and bustle of guests who kept coming and going during the busy periods. He studied in a tiny Protestant school in the town, and after graduation—he and one girl were the only students who had not dropped out of high school—moved to Montreal to study at McGill University. Handelman did poorly in most of his classes, excluding the Introduction to Anthropology course, which he says was less strange to him due to his teenage passion for reading science fiction novels. He then applied and was accepted into the MA program in anthropology at McGill (MA 1964), initiating a prolific research career in anthropology that included two years as a PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh (1964–66) and a doctoral degree under the supervision of Max Gluckman at the University of Manchester (1966–71), followed by numerous publications during thirty-three years of work as a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1972–2005).¹

From his MA days and throughout his long career, Handelman was deeply interested in social organization, a concept he understands not so much in sociological terms as rules, norms, and conventions, but rather in terms derived from theoretical physics of the David Bohm variety (e.g., Bohm 1980). For Handelman, “organization” consists of spontaneous becoming, a generative emergence of micro-structures that are ephemeral, albeit orderly, like climatic storms, with their own density and pace, depth and intensity and duration. It is from this basic interest in small-scale human interactions and their tendency to form something larger than the sum of their parts—three people working in a factory (1998: 104–12), a healing ritual involving Henry Rupert and a young girl (1967), a game in a workplace for the elderly in Jerusalem (1998: 86–101) that he called “the donkey game”—which stands at the heart of Handelman’s lifelong fascination with “forming.” “Whatever these people were generating together, even in a short span of time,” Handelman states in the aforementioned biographical interview ([1998–99] 2017: 203), “would probably have its own forms, its own rules, which were then impacting on the participants and shaping their interaction.” He continues:

So you couldn’t say about interaction, if you had two people beginning to interact, that one person plus one person would equal two, whatever their interaction was, however long it lasted. They’d always be generating something potentially new in their interaction. They were creating this kind of structure to their interaction, and that structure was also creating them as interactors, as they continued to interact. So I tried to think about it like that.

For Handelman, then, a dynamic of “forming” exists in all things, natural and social alike, at all times. In its social manifestation, this dynamic is generated by the ongoing

fusion of epistemological and experiential/phenomenological aspects of Being. Social phenomena are never fully at rest. Yet, at the same time, as they are incessantly forming and un-forming, social processes are temporarily stabilized in concrete forms. Cultural practice, to use a widespread anthropological concept, keeps collapsing into itself as it is enacted, always fragmenting into variants of itself. In this process, culture becomes multiple independent forms with finite boundaries, i.e., density, specific gravity, and volume. Yet, at the same time Culture is flowing, a comprehensive, holistic totality, smooth as waves gushing in the ocean of History.

Although he had used the notion of “forming” in many texts and manuscripts, Handelman himself never formulated what “the logic of forming form” might be. Tentatively, in the gist of the argument developed so far, and while avoiding a fixed definition as such, I suggest that the logic of forming can be seen as plural and singular at the same time. It is both primordially self-energizing and a determinist creation, that is, depending on whether you experience forming authentically as it is happening or whether you choose an arbitrary point of emergence for the analysis of the process of forming.² The origin of ethnography, in this view, which is also the origin of analysis and its driving force, is a sort of sudden crystallization, which gains momentum and flight as it evolves within itself to bend space-time; but as it moves it also becomes a lever that gravitates to create concrete anthropomorphic figures, frameworks, and dwellings. While the logic of forming of form moves all the time, it sometimes indeed creates the illusion of motionless, passive, eternal presence. The logic(s) of forming of form thereby inhabit human minds, everywhere and always, which means that they are abstract and tangible at the same time. A vignette from that short preface on South Indian cosmology (Handelman 2014: xvi–xvii) will elucidate this (see Chapter Eight in this volume):

One twilight I was relaxing on the balcony of a small hotel looking out at the waters of Big Lake, within which the goddess, Paiditali, had been born, the Old City of Vizianagaram on the far side. The liquid depth of the waters. Porous mountains reflecting in the waters. The conjuncture of so much transformation and continuation in the lengthy association of Paiditali with Vizianagaram, within which she emerges annually through her own interior fluidity, from her own liquid depths that are her cosmos, in order to grow anew the fruitfulness and vitality of the city. And I felt, indeed felt, an inkling, a momentary shadowy glimpse of just how recursive this cosmos is. Of how the depth of a mountain fits into the depth of a lake, while the porous interior of a mountain (with its swirling caves and twisting tunnels) can take in the sea. Of how in a plowed field the space between one furrow and another is a high mountain ridge, while the furrow itself filled with water is a deep lake. Of how, if the spheroid cosmos is turned on its head, the waters of the lake fall on the land like rain; as rainwater flows down the mountains into the fields and their furrows. Of

how all of these surfaces that are depths fit fluidly into one another, and of how this fullness of cosmos becomes immanent as Paviditalli appears in the human world. I went to sleep feeling deepened.

This vignette moves from an immobile and immutable setting—a hotel by the lake near an eternal mountain—to the fluid convulsion of the goddess in the water, which makes up the depth of the cosmos in the lake and under the mountain and ultimately within Handelman’s own mind. From the tangible into the abstract and back again, the cosmos being at once a real, everlasting space for the living, and an exercise of the mind, a reflection, a thought process. It is precisely this simultaneity of one thing being another, and therefore neither (cf. Handelman 1998: 68), a nuance located between binary oppositions and clearly defined categorizations, which Handelman develops analytically as the space of and for the generation of meaningful social scientific iterations about knowing and feeling the world. This space is of course paradoxical, or at the very least obscure. Where does the lake begin and the sky end? When does the furrow distinguish itself from the mountain? Or, to use a famous example from Bateson (1977: 246), which Handelman himself has once used (2004: 12–13), what differentiates the swirling of a smoke ring from the air around it?

Don Handelman has consistently and systematically constructed methods to transform such paradoxical observations into heuristic devices for the cross-cultural comparison of social, cultural, and behavioral intensities. Handelman’s method begins by identifying the processual emergence of otherness in mindful feelings and their convoluting, ongoing, motile dynamics. It continues with a description of how this dynamic consistently forms precarious, ever-changing social forms—a multiplicity of the conceptual and experiential structures inherent to human interactions in their localized manifestations. Within these terms the social thereby keeps twisting, turning, torquing and bending, folding and unfolding, incessantly shaping new possibilities for being otherwise in cosmos.

Yet, as Handelman insists, that very image of a stable “whole” (cosmos, or indeed, society, culture, etc.) is always simultaneously shaped by flow, trajectory, and movement, the potentiality of change, which continues to recur in human practice as a result of these unfolding possibilities for transgression (or, if you prefer, immersion with otherness). The logic(s) of forming of form consequently prevail(s) as multiple dimensions of a single, infinitely complex, socio-natural universe, which inhabits people’s minds as much as they imagine themselves to be elemental aspects “in” it.

For Handelman, then, the object of study of anthropology is the logic(s) of forming form. As with “curving” (Handelman 2004) or “involutions” (Handelman 2014), Handelman does not conceive of forming as a metaphor, a representation, or an allegory, but rather as a natural phenomenon whose tangible manifestation in the world is felt and known ontologically in body, mind, and soul. Moreover, this is not a “logic” in a semiotic sense, nor is it a socially produced discipline, common sense, or “discourse,” as these are understood in traditional cultural constructionism. Rather,

for Handelman, the logic of forming of form is an independent process that is fused with the social, but also one that manifests in the natural world separately from collective human phenomena. Its uniqueness as a “logic” is that it somehow knows itself *as* distinct from other logics, and hence it becomes a form in and of itself, which both emanates from and results in human experience while organizing humanly possible worlds in the making of concrete social dramas.

The logic of forming of form, to put this in yet other terms, is a system that emulates itself, but in so doing changes the conditions of its own reproduction. Humans cannot be said to produce or “create” the logic because, in Handelman’s understanding of reality, there is no cause and effect. Rather, the logic of forming is in itself a continuous phenomenological instability, whose consequences sometimes gravitate toward structural rest or constancy, and sometimes not. Human beings in that sense are the vehicles through which the logic of forming of form manifests, while at the same time they are active agents that enhance that logic, divert it, and make their world through it. The logic of forming of form in that sense is inherent to a process of repetition that enfolds through itself to shape the precise dispositions that allow, as they transform, for the coming into being of something else. And this is true to the same extent for Vizianagaram, Jerusalem, and London.

Forming of Form in Ethnographic Analysis

In order to exemplify the logic of forming of form as the fusion of phenomenological and structural processes, Handelman has repeatedly used the image of the Moebius Strip, a single surface that has no inside and an outside, top or bottom, but rather, smooth continuity across regular distinctions. It is easy to make a Moebius by cutting a narrow strip of paper, twisting it 180 degrees and then connecting the two edges to form a continuous loop. If a tiny dragon were to walk on the surface of that loop it would be treading sometimes “on top” and sometimes “below,” crossing from the “internal” to the “external” side effortlessly and unselfconsciously, as it would not be transgressing any threshold or boundary at any given time. For Handelman, this is the most crystalized experimentation of the paradox of “knowing and feeling,” as Rupert has taught him. He claims (Handelman 2012: 68):

The moebius [*sic*] surface is paradoxical because mathematical logic demands this, and the phenomenological acquiesces: topologically the surface has one side; phenomenally it is a binary, an outside and an in-side. “Out” and “in” relate to one another such that phenomenally they are separate and distinct yet topologically they are one another. Here logical paradox generates dynamism in every crossing of the boundary which also reproduces the boundary as paradox.

Hallmarking the paradox as a crucial topic of intellectual contemplation in the cross-cultural study of the logic of forming of form, Handelman thus suggests that

it is not enough to focus on framing on the one hand and experience on the other. Rather, for Handelman, as amorphous as it sounds, the logic of forming of form is the infinite complexity inherent in the paradoxical fusion of these distinct human qualities of perception and conceptualization. What is new about Handelman's approach, as this compares with other contemporary theoreticians in anthropology, is that it treats affect as a property of the universe, an interdimensional quality of cosmological ontology in any of its localized manifestations everywhere in the world, which circulates simply because it needs to circulate. This Handelmanian "logic" is opposed to the classical Kantian idea that flow, or the transfer of affect, is initiated into the world through the power of various types of agents, who are themselves separated from the energy they produce.

Handelman thus characteristically insists that the very process of observing and then capturing in writing the infinitely complex localized ways by which people learn to "know their feelings" is *already* a form of analysis. When we focus on the paradox of the forming of form, we also understand something about the inherent dynamic of our own universe as humans, as members of society and as scholars. In that aspect Handelman's scholarship differs from Georg Simmel's (1972) famous depiction of social forms as objects of analysis; for Handelman, unlike Simmel, there are no external boundaries that define these forms as finite or stable. Handelman strives to move away from monistic terms—that is, away from dialectical processes—because for him these latter dialectical processes oblige us to include in our analysis rigid, categorical definitions, which thereby enforce stable and distinct binaries at the very core of our own interpretation. For Handelman these binaries are teleological because they force us to look at almost every social phenomenon through the back-and-forth movement of the dialectic ping-pong happening between them. Contrarily, Handelman reinvents the work of conceptualization itself through an emphasis on the inherently motile quality of social phenomena (cf. Holbraad 2012). He identifies the thingness of the social, that which is distinctively it—the phenomenality of phenomena, as he calls that "thing" in some of the chapters of this book—in such ongoing motility. For him, this is the crucial difference between a dynamic theory of the *forming* of forms and Simmel's theory of fully acknowledgeable and finalized forms.³

While seeking to describe the process by which research interlocutors cross-culturally conceive and practice their own ethnographic theories, Handelman's analyses nonetheless also refer to the scholarly efforts required for any anthropological extrapolation of meaning. While he has not been preoccupied with cross-cultural comparison in and of itself, he has nonetheless provided insights into a wide variety of ethnographic realities taking place in such distinct locations as Israel-Palestine, South India, Nevada, Newfoundland, and Northern Uganda. In a career lasting five decades, Don Handelman has thus striven to phrase a theory of social dynamics that would be flexible enough to account both for its own motility and for the spots in which it finds rest, a self-referential, double-edged method of observation that captures "the logic of forming of form" both as a phenomenon of nature and as a repet-

itive iteration of meaning in different social universes. I now turn to explicate how each of the essays selected for this volume expresses these efforts while contributing to the task of their crystallization into a coherent analytical framework.

The Book

Moebius Anthropology is an anthology of Don Handelman's major critical engagements with some of the ongoing debates in contemporary anthropology on the poetics and politics of ritual, play, cosmology, and power; widely defined. Don Handelman, Jackie Feldman, and I collaboratively handpicked the different essays out of a life-work portfolio consisting of dozens of published articles and several books, while also including three new chapters that have not yet been published. Each of these essays presents ethnographic insights on the logic of forming of form as this relates to the everyday subtleties of paradox and the self-perpetuating energy inherent in the structured dynamics of social action. The book is divided into four sections, followed by an Epilogue.

The first section, "Some Significant Formative Influences," includes Handelman's foundational ethnographic insights from the 1960s, which later informed much of his later writings and theoretical extrapolations. "The Development of a Washo Shaman" (on which Chapter One is based) is Don Handelman's first major published work, from 1967, in which he traces the life history of Henry Rupert, the Washo Shaman from near Carson City, Nevada, with whom he spoke at length in 1964. The essay takes a creative and unusual look not only at Rupert himself but also at the art of magic-making at large and how it is understood as a creative, processual forming and unforming of cosmological knowledge. In "Tracing Bureaucratic Logic through Surprise and Abduction," a previously unpublished essay, Handelman traces how his own personal life story has (almost accidentally) become entangled with Israeli society. In this chapter Handelman also lays the foundations for his theory of "bureaucratic logic," which receives wider attention in the second section of the book.

The second section, "Forming Form: Ritual and Bureaucratic Logic," focuses on the cosmological frameworks underlying the celebration of rituals as form-making social tools. The section moves from a highly analytic chapter aimed at exploring the very phenomenality of rituals as "forms that form forms," through to an analysis of how such forms manifest in different bureaucratic events. "Why Ritual in Its Own Right? How So?"—a revised version of an essay originally prepared as an introduction and epilogue for a special issue of *Social Analysis* (2004)—develops a unique method to analyze rituals. Rather than look at ritual from the perspective of the kinds of transformations it evokes in wider society, Handelman suggests we focus on that which the ritual does in and of itself, within itself. In this view, ritual is no longer primarily seen as a vehicle for the enactment of certain processes outside itself but rather as a self-reflexive system with a particular dynamic that must be studied first and foremost on its own terms. Only after we understand what these internal

processes are, and how they do that which they are supposed to be doing, will we be able to reconnect the ritual to its external social surround and examine it in its wider holistic sense (cf. Shapiro 2015).⁴ In “Bureaucratic Logic,” Handelman meticulously describes the history of a form of “linear” classification brought into Palestine by the early Zionists, which became the main organizing “logic of forming of form” in the pre-State-of-Israel years. This form, as Handelman understands it, is premised on the assumption that different social categories can fit only into a well-demarcated “box” rather than overlap or interact in a non–mutually-exclusive way. Bureaucratic logic in the Israeli case is the linear schemes Israeli Jews put to work in order to capture and act on the phenomenality of social life marred by an ongoing political conflict with Palestinians, a conflict which is not merely a struggle over land or access to resources but also a debate over the very inclusion and exclusion of individuals and communities in the national body. In “Bureaucratic Logic, Bureaucratic Aesthetics: The Opening Event of Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day in Israel,” Handelman demonstrates the utility of the notion of bureaucratic logic in the analysis of an annual ritual enactment in contemporary Israel. Touching upon the morally charged issue of the memorialization of the Holocaust in the Israeli public sphere, Handelman shows how Zionist cosmology endorsed Jewish cosmological framing of time to generate a ritualized “high peak” in which the entire Zionist narrative can be experienced as a phenomenological ascension from the depth of the death pits to the heights of national liberation and independence.

The third section, “Cosmological Trajectories,” includes some of Handelman’s most innovative theoretical extrapolations of the notion of Moebius and paradox, which he sees as credible analytical tools for social analysis, especially as this relates to the comparative study of ethnographically grounded cosmologies. In “Passages to Play: Paradox and Process,” Handelman analyzes two different kinds of play, one taking place top-down in the assertion of hierarchy and another taking place bottom-up through the implementation of paradox in everyday life. The chapter is based ethnographically on the analysis of Hindu myths and it remains one of the most influential turns in play theory in anthropology. The next chapter, “Framing Hierarchically, Framing Moebiusly,” is in fact an elaborate debate with Gregory Bateson’s theory of play and fantasy, in which Handelman meticulously explicates why “framing” is an insufficient analytical tool for the understanding of play. Instead, Handelman offers a re-analysis of Bateson, suggesting that play must be understood as both the conceptual framing of the action at hand *as well as* its phenomenological or experiential manifestation at the grassroots level. Remaining with the image of Moebius, Handelman insists that a unified theory of play, fantasy, myth, and paradox must include the ever-changing dynamic of the forming of form that is at once external and internal to individual minds. In the chapter concluding this section, “Inter-gration and Intra-gration in Cosmology,” Handelman elaborates these ideas further to suggest a new methodology for the investigation of the social world. In this framework, we must primarily pay attention to local conceptualizations of bound-

aries that are taken to organize the shape of the universe, as well as to the types of movement that living beings take within it. In what Handelman calls an “organic” or pantheistic cosmos, humans and entities constantly interpenetrate one another’s domains. This creates a particular social dynamic, which is premised on intuitive inclusion and syncretic fusion. Contrarily, in a “monothetic” or monotheistic cosmos, the boundary between humans and the divine *is* set, given, and predisposed, so that only God (and His armies) can intervene in the human domain. Consequently, argues Handelman, the social dynamic typical in these cases is that of exclusion and rigid classification, which coincides with the idea of bureaucratic logic as an underlying cosmological common sense in the Global North.

The fourth section, “Deleuzian Conjunctions,” exposes Don Handelman’s deep immersion in and substantial development of the innovative theories of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. All three chapters in this section implement the notions of the rhizome dynamic and the curving of social space-time in truly innovative ways, playing creatively with the tension between inside and outside as if along an imaginary Moebius Strip that appears in different forms. “Self-Exploders, Self-Sacrifice, and the Rhizomic Organization of Terrorism” explores the intersubjective nature of self-destructive acts in suicidal terror, wherein the internality of one’s self literally becomes the shattering, shredding rage that devastates external realities. Taking an unusual (and often unpopular) philosophical approach toward this very charged political issue, Handelman analyzes in this chapter what kinds of cosmic worlds (rather than political goals) are created by this act of self-sacrifice. In this approach the rhizomic dynamic of terrorism—its complete disregard for commonsensical distinctions between combatants and civilians as well as its affront to the idea of citizenship as something that is contained “within” well-defined external borders—defines a cosmology of forming contrary to the linear formation of boundaries between self and other. In “Thinking Moebiusly: Can We Learn about Ritual from Cinema with *Mulholland Drive*?” Handelman elaborates the notion of rhizome into and through the notion of Moebius. He analyzes David Lynch’s masterpiece as an emblem of transformation dynamics in the incessant forming and unforming of social form, as if it implodes from within as we watch the movie (or read the chapter) but also explodes forward and away from us into the screen, or page, and back. Handelman ultimately argues that the film “visualizes liminality from within itself” (Chapter Ten, this volume) and that this may give some insight on how rituals work elsewhere and beyond interactive media, making cinema itself a form of postmodern ritual process (cf. Kapferer 2014). In the third chapter of this section, “Folding and Enfolding Walls: Statist Imperatives and Bureaucratic Aesthetics in Divided Jerusalem,” Handelman continues in the same direction, this time analyzing the spatiality of the city of Jerusalem through an innovative discussion of boundaries and walls that dissect the city on the one hand and circumscribe it on the other hand. He argues that the dynamic of “folding” is essential for the understanding of realpolitik in the city as much as it can illuminate

our analytical imagination with regard to the role of boundaries and barriers in the making and unmaking of geopolitical realities.

In the Epilogue, Handelman adds the notion of time as elemental to his theory of the forming of social form, moving from a phenomenological perception of time as dimension—which is thus external to social life—to the idea that time is a duration, an ontological quality in and of itself, which *is* in fact the actual process of forming of social form. He uses this framework to analyze anew some of his earlier ideas about forming, curving and cosmology, as well as a re-examination of some of his own experiences in anthropology and of anthropology, from when he met Henry Rupert to the present day. As he unfolds the analysis, which draws on complexity theory and popular physics (especially Ilya Prigogine’s famous argument about “time as arrow”), Handelman also frames knowledge as process, not a “thing” that can be stored and classified but rather an ongoing iteration of experience existing beyond epistemology, an intellectual ontology of the flow of internal and external time dynamics, by which what is knowable substantiates itself within and through social encounters. It is the structure of this encounter that is at the center of this book, an encounter between readers and Don Handelman’s grand theoretical project in anthropology.

The Anthropology of Don Handelman

The anthropology of Don Handelman is paradoxical, but at the same time it is lucid and coherent in its ongoing effort to produce a dynamic rather than static interpretation of social processes.⁵ It focuses on the organization of movement, the stable ephemerality of encounters, a rest in flow, curving, knowing, and feeling. Much like the knowledge of Washo cosmology, which Handelman acquired from Henry Rupert in the mid-1960s, it inherently includes a creative touch and a sparkle of brilliance that is always required for the stabilization of movement. Prophetically, almost, Handelman (1967: 462) concluded his first major publication, which analyzed Henry Rupert’s life history, with the following words:

We have good evidence of both social disorganization and psychological disturbance among acculturating peoples, and we can tentatively suggest that in many ways cultural processes have overwhelmed individual defenses in these cases by destroying traditional alternatives and failing to provide new ones. But what of the creative individual? What of the individual with great ego strength who is able to choose and combine traditional and new alternatives, not merely integrating them but developing new syntheses, which may be both personally satisfying and socially transmissible? Of such persons, and the roles they play, we know little.

Although he probably never planned it, Handelman’s intellectual persona through the years has begun mirroring Henry Rupert’s own image: a person with great ego

strength able to create new alternatives to existing structures. As he sought to analyze the situated fusion of knowing and feeling across diverse fields of scholarly thought and inquiry, Handelman has systematically been advancing Rupert's own "Native American" cosmological assertion that holistic predicaments of culture are inscribed simultaneously and holistically in phenomenological *and* structural (indeed, conceptual) human landscapes. These landscapes, Handelman reminds us, in themselves always contain an infinite complexity of muses and therefore they are always inherently contradictory and paradoxical both as appearances in the individual mind and as collective symbols or reifications. As Handelman told me and Jackie Feldman in a private conversation about Henry Rupert, with which we began this introduction:

What Henry told me was imperative: "Know through your feelings, but know." This was the crux of his wisdom. Structure is movement, interior movement, so is feeling, interior movement. Disciplines like anthropology are still suffering the divides created by Cartesian dualisms; but movement goes wherever it goes, as does the formation of local times.

Handelman's reading of social phenomena thereby attempts to break away from the Cartesian divide in endlessly creative ways (see Handelman 2007: 119–40). Here, both earthly and divine entities always look at themselves from the outside in order to validate their internal truths. Observable, situated, social phenomena, in other words, do not circumscribe stable or fixed identities but rather are always already indicating the emergence of possible realities, lines of flight, which *are* the structured organization of the encounter that is the business of anthropology. The intellectual effort required in order to dissect and understand this ongoing movement, as well as the moments in which it stabilizes into more-or-less finite forms, necessitates by default a creative force that engages paradox as intrinsic to the process of analysis.

In its comparative scope—that is, as a methodology—Handelman's analytic insights have also been developing slowly throughout his professional trajectory. It is a convoluted methodology, which Handelman kept adjusting and twisting and changing while working on different subjects, never actually aiming at the composition of a comprehensive theory of the social. Yet, as this book suggests, under the general framing of a Theory of the Forming of Form, Handelman has, after all, cumulatively produced over the years a consistent and lasting theory, which puts him side by side with the most sophisticated thinkers of our discipline in recent decades, from Marshall Sahlins through Bruce Kapferer and Victor Turner to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour and Marilyn Strathern.⁶ It is worth mentioning here that Handelman has worked very closely with Bruce Kapferer and Victor Turner, with both of whom he maintained intimate friendships and fruitful professional cooperation throughout the years.

While some of the analytical terms and methods of argumentation presented in this book may sound cryptic at first for readers yet unfamiliar with the anthropology of Don Handelman, they will become clear as you progress through the chapters. As

a unified collection, the chapters represent Don Handelman's major contribution to theoretical anthropology over a period of five decades. This book thus aims at bringing into the limelight one of the most original thinkers in theoretical anthropology of our generation, and, by way of doing this, making a significant contribution to contemporary anthropological knowledge production and intellectual critique more generally.

Notes

I thank Jackie Feldman for his useful comments on earlier drafts of this introduction. I also thank Don Handelman for his eye-opening responses to some of the arguments raised herein.

1. Soon after he arrived in Israel in February 1967 Don Handelman met his future wife, the sociologist Lea Shamgar, who through the years cowrote with him several important texts. Sadly, Lea died from cancer in 1995.
2. Handelman's comment to this assertion: "Why determinist? Or is the determinism an illusion created by lengthy durations of slow movement?"
3. Handelman himself rarely mentioned Simmel in his work. The comparison is my own.
4. Handelman's formulation of "ritual in its own right" was stimulated by the anthropologist, Galina Lindquist, whom Handelman describes as his muse of the intellect and emotion during a decade of intensive interaction. Sadly, Galina Lindquist died of cancer in 2008.
5. Handelman's comment to this assertion: "Where you use 'structure' I would use the 'organization' of movement rather than the sometimes 'more processual' sometimes 'more static.'"
6. Handelman's comment to this assertion: "That is not explicitly stated anywhere—a name as a theorist is given primarily to those who explicitly call their work theory."

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