

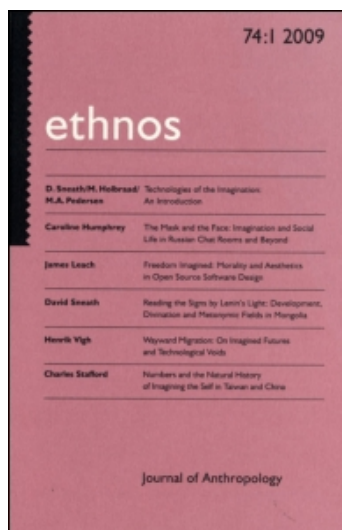
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Intermediary Varieties of Experience

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ABSTRACT *This paper engages in a phenomenologically informed examination of the cultural and personal influences implicated in the constitution of experiences that may shift from subjective to objective, and to intermediate varieties. Drawing from extensive ethnographic research on the island of Yap, Federated States of Micronesia, the paper explores how a cultural phenomenological understanding of intermediary varieties of experience is resonant with aspects of Yapese ethno-epistemology in which material objects are understood as variously invested with subjective entailments, and vice versa. Two examples are used to illustrate the active inter-subjective constitution of such intermediate varieties of experience: the ambiguity of pain as an object of experience and the significance of food in everyday social life.*

KEYWORDS *Experience, phenomenology, pain, food, Yap (FSM)*

Let me begin with a quote from Bashkow's (1991) excellent article 'The Dynamics of Rapport in a Colonial Context', one that refers to some of David Schneider's reflections on his relationship with his Yapese informants when leaving the small volcanic island of Yap in the Western Pacific Ocean:

His informants statements during the last days of his stay that they would miss him for his tobacco, coffee and sugar, Spam and biscuits, rice and beef stew, did not strike the warmest chord in Schneider's American cultural consciousness; liking him only for his gifts, he complained, they 'de-personalized' the relationship. (1991:225)

It may seem odd to begin a paper examining intermediary varieties of experience with Schneider's rather melancholic reflections on the putative 'de-personalization' of his field relationships through the exchange of foodstuffs. We will make our way to addressing Schneider's concerns as the paper

progresses. For now, let me turn to discuss more explicitly the subjective, objective, and intermediate areas of experience that I hope to shed some light upon in the context of this essay.

Phenomenology and Experience

In the context of phenomenological and pragmatic analyses of experience, it is a truism that there are modalities of experience that do not evidence a clearly demarcated separation of subjective and objective elements (cf. Throop 2003, forthcoming; Jay 2005). That is, in this tradition, experience, whatever its possibilities for meaningful configuration might be, is held to be given primordially as an intermediary phenomenon, although one, it is true, that is always necessarily mediated by our embodied existence in the world.

For James (1904a, 1904b), for instance, this was most clearly spelled out in the context of his notion of 'pure experience', which he took to be a non-reflective modality of existence in which there is no split between consciousness and what consciousness is 'of'. According to James, the identical 'bit' of pure experience once reflected upon functions as both the qualities of objects in experience and the various states of consciousness in which those qualities inhere (cf. Throop 2003). The world as immediately given is for James a complex and dynamic whole that is yet to be differentiated in terms of subjective and objective qualities. The determination of what is of the mind and of the world, what is of the subject and what is of the object, is thought to be a later determination that is not otherwise given to experience in its 'pure' state.

James famously called attention to fringe or vague experiences, experiences in which meaningful articulations of objects of experience are yet to crystallize. It was indeed James (1890) who argued that it is necessary to shift away from examining only the most clearly articulated forms of understandings and to reinstate 'the vague and inarticulate to its proper place in our mental life'. For James, this meant that it was necessary for philosophers and social scientists alike to recognize that much of what we deem to be experience is characterized by those transitions, margins, and fringes, by the barely graspable and yet still palpable transitive parts of the stream of consciousness that serve as the connective tissue between more clearly defined thoughts, ideas, images, feelings, and sensations. In short, by what we might call intermediary varieties of experience.

The structure of consciousness, James most memorably asserted, is comparable to the life of a bird that continuously engages in a series of alternations between 'flights and perchings'. While we may easily contemplate the relatively stationary moments of rest as end points of our reflection, the transitive parts of

the stream, the moments of flight between such perchings, are by their very definition ephemeral, fleeting, and at the fringes of our awareness. Our very attempts to turn our attention to reflecting upon such transitive experiences only results in our annihilating them, James (1890) argued.

Influenced by James's (1890) writings on the stream of consciousness in his *Principles of Psychology*, Husserl (1962, 1964, 1993), the father of phenomenology, held to the notion that experience should not be rigidly defined according to a strict distinction between subjective and objective components. Indeed, Husserlian's phenomenology is deeply rooted in the assumption that subjective and objective poles of existence are orientations to experience that are constituted by means of a thoroughly embodied consciousness that is already imbued with a primordial inter-subjectivity (see Duranti 2007; Zahavi 2001). Very often, what we take to be distinctions between subjective and objective aspects of experience are for Husserl the result of acts of phenomenological modification that are implicated in foregrounding some aspects of the stream of experience, while backgrounding others (see Duranti 2009; Throop forthcoming).

When we undertake Husserl's (1962) call to 'bracket the natural attitude' – that attitude in which social actors take the existence of the natural world of which they are a part for granted – it becomes apparent that objective properties of the so-called natural phenomena are in fact necessarily implicated in constitutive acts of consciousness. For instance, the fact that occluded (and thus not immediately perceivable) sides of a given object are given as co-present with its perceptible sides is just one example of the necessary interpenetration of the subjective and the objective in everyday experience, Husserl asserts. That the perspectives of possible others is also infused in our perception of objects that have sides that we cannot see, but which we nonetheless, anticipate as existing, is thus understood by Husserl to be evidence for the existence of a basic inter-subjectivity that is the ultimate ground out of which later determinations of subjectivity and objectivity are claimed.

Husserl's student Heidegger (1996) has perhaps done the most in the context of this tradition to destabilize distinctions between the subjective and the objective. Central to his existentialist rethinking of the place of ontology in metaphysics is his notion that the being that we humans are is necessarily being-in-the-world (*Dasein*). The idea is again that the foundation of our existence is one that lies in-between, in an intermediate zone of experience that is not yet solely subjective or objective. It is not a state of being given to us in which an isolated subject confronts distinct objects. Being finds itself, Heidegger argued,

thrown into a yet to be differentiated world of experience in which being is always necessarily emplaced and a part.

Building on some of Husserl's key insights into acts of phenomenological modification, Heidegger's writings on tools and his distinction between what is ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) and present-at-hand (*vorhanden*) offers yet another good case in point. In Heidegger's scheme, a tool that is ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) is not experienced as an object, material or otherwise. It is instead inextricably embedded in the activity and intention of the social actor utilizing the tool to accomplish a given goal. A hammer that is ready-to-hand fades from awareness as an object of experience while the goal of hammering, perhaps a picture to a wall, becomes the focus of attention. In contrast, that which is present-at-hand is that which is available to consciousness as an object of awareness. The tool that is present-at-hand is a tool, a hammer again for instance, that I inspect. It is the object's (in this case a hammer's) qualities and properties that become a focus of my attention.

Heidegger importantly noted that the tool that appears present-at-hand is often the tool that is no longer functioning to fulfill the actor's goal. When the hammer is no longer working, my awareness is refocused from the task that I am accomplishing to the implement of accomplishment. It is in such a moment that the hammer emerges from the horizon of its transparency as ready-to-hand as an object of my attention. That is, it shifts from an undifferentiated or intermediate zone of experience to something that is deemed to be distinct from my subjective life. In its non-functioning, the hammer's objectness is foregrounded as it is no longer readily amenable to my goals, cares, and concerns. In resisting my will, my desire, my intentions, the hammer emerges as an object that I can inspect.

In anthropology many of these basic insights have been clearly articulated in Csordas' (1990, 1994) astute interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's (1999) phenomenology of perception, which sets out to extend a number of basic Husserlian insights into the active subjective constitutions of objects of experience. To paraphrase Csordas, at the heart of the phenomenological enterprise is indeed the effort to view perception as a process that does not begin with objects but rather ends in them. Experience in its 'pre-objective' form, is again for both Csordas and Merleau-Ponty, given in its immediacy in an intermediate stage that has yet to be reflected upon, thought about, analyzed or conceptualized. Objects (and the subjects against which they are distinguished) are secondary products of reflective thought and conceptualization (cf. Throop 2005). Methodologically, Csordas argues that it is not already constituted objects or

subjects that should be the site of analytic and ethnographic engagement, but instead those processes of objectification whereby pre-objective varieties of experience are articulated into subjective and objective varieties.

Of central importance here is, I believe, the fact that these basic pragmatic and phenomenological insights lay bare the possibility that the way in which experience is parsed into so-called objective and subjective poles is not necessarily transparently given to social actors. Indeed, according to Husserlian phenomenology and Jamesian pragmatism, this parsing of otherwise intermediate zones of experience is held to be the result of the active constitutive processes of an embodied being who is already enmeshed in his or her lifeworld. However, for phenomenological anthropologists like Csordas – stressing the anthropology side of the equation – the question remains as to what other historical, social, and cultural factors may play a role in helping to define the subjective and objective poles of what would otherwise remain intermediate areas of experience.

I believe that one productive place to turn, as Csordas (1994) has done to somewhat different ends, is to the pioneering 'proto-' cultural phenomenological work of Irving Hallowell. In his influential article, 'The Self and its Behavioral Environment', Hallowell advocates a phenomenological approach to self experience, an approach that works to approximate an understanding of 'the most significant and meaningful aspects of the world of the individual as experienced by him and in terms of which he thinks, is motivated to act, and satisfies his needs' (1955:88). Significantly, Hallowell destabilizes absolute distinctions between subjective and objective aspects of experience by means of advancing a subjectively infused understanding of the 'behavioral environment' and an object-oriented view of self-experience.

Borrowing the term from the Gestalt psychology of Kurt Koffka, Hallowell argues that the behavioral environment is not merely the generalized physical or geographical environment but rather that culturally ordered environment that is experience by an individual social actor. That is, according to Hallowell, the behavioral environment consists of an ordered world of objects, persons, and relations that is experienced by a social actor whose perceptual capacities effectively suffuse those objects, persons, and relations with personally and culturally constituted meanings, values, feelings, and motivations.

In his examination of the cultural constitution of self-experience, Hallowell specifies a number of universal self-orientations that are patterned by culture. These include: (1) orientations to the self itself as an object and locus of experience; (2) to objects other than self that are constituted in self-experience;

(3) to space and time; (4) to particular motivations for action; and finally, (5) to normative standards of judgment and behavior. The self itself becomes an object distinguishable from other objects, Hallowell asserts, through a contrasting of the self to a culturally constituted 'world of objects, experienced as "other than self"' (1955:83). Accordingly, 'the activities of particular selves in their world of culturally defined objects is not by any means precisely coordinate with any absolute polarity of subjectivity-objectivity that is definable' apart from such cultural cleavages (1955:84); a point that Hallowell brilliantly elaborates in his discussion of Ojibwa understandings of other-than-human persons and their role in animating what would otherwise be held to be inanimate objects.

Perhaps most significantly, in turning to the orientation of the self toward objects of experience, Hallowell argues that so-called objects of experience are often infused with subjective entailments. As he puts it,

... culturally reified objects in the behavioral environment may have functions that can be shown to be directly related to the needs, motivations, and goals of the self (1955:87)

And again

A world of objects is not only discriminated; objects of different classes have specific attributes that must be taken into account in interaction with them; even the valence they have for the self is culturally constituted (1955:100)

It is important to note here that Hallowell's perspective is one that situates intermediate varieties of experience within their cultural matrices. Those moments within which a given object of experience is taken to be distinct or distinguishable from particular aspects of self-experience are always moments that are informed, as Hallowell would say, *in part*, by cultural assumptions about the existential topography of the self and its behavioral environment.

There is a clear line of thinking here that runs through these otherwise rather distinctive phenomenological approaches to experience – one that points to the cultural and personal influences on the demarcation of areas of experience that may shift from subjective, to objective, to intermediate varieties. A central insight from these literatures is that the distinction between subjective and objective varieties of experience are distinctions that are not pre-given in experience *per se*, but, are instead actively constituted through culturally and historically informed practices of perceiving, imagining, feeling, and judging

in ways that parse an otherwise yet to be differentiated field into a differentiated one.¹

What I would like to do for the remainder of this paper is to explore how such an understanding of intermediary varieties of experience is to some extent resonant with aspects of Yapese ethno-epistemology in which so-called material objects are thought to be variously invested with subjective entailments, and vice versa. I will take two examples to accomplish this goal. First I will discuss the ambiguity of pain as an object of experience. I will then return to Schneider's concerns and the topic of food.

Pain as Intermediary Experience

Social scientific and philosophical investigations have long noted pain's ambiguity as a subjective and embodied state. On the one hand, pain in its immediacy and intensity severs the experiencer from her footing in the everyday social world. It is, as Scarry (1985) asserts, 'world destroying'. In its most extreme manifestations, pain evokes in a sufferer an experience that language encounters but is not able to capture. Pain is, in Levinas' (1998) words, 'unassumable'. In outstripping linguistic forms of representation, pain shatters the tendrils that connect a sufferer to her consociates, as well as fundamentally altering her habitual orientations to her body, to time, and to space. As Leder (1990) asserts, in its centripetal modality, pain constricts the sufferer's motility as what were once habitual regions of action and possible ranges of motion are rendered unavailable. Pain also alters the sufferer's orientation to time. Immersed in the long-standing now of a present painful moment, a sufferer may no longer be able to imagine future self-states in which pain is no more and may be equally unable to recall past self-states where she was once free from its grasp.

On the other hand, there are numerous accounts in anthropology and elsewhere of the ways that pain is given cultural, symbolic, and personal significance for individual sufferers. Pain may be objectified into a meaningful datum of consciousness, as some 'thing' that triggers an effort after meaning, an explicit seeking for significance. For instance, in what Leder (1990) terms its centrifugal modality, pain leads a sufferer into imagined future temporal horizons whereby present suffering has been transformed, alleviated, or effaced. It may also lead a sufferer to search her past experiences for potential causes of pain, or times when it was possible to inhabit a pain-free body.

In some of its manifestations, pain can be considered an intermediary experience *par excellence*. Pain often obdurately resists meaningful forms of objectification (see Jackson 1994). It is, as many philosophers have noted, not

only not objectifiable but without an object. Pain is non-intentional. As Scarry asserts,

physical pain is exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual states for being the only one that has no object. Though the capacity to experience physical pain is as primal a fact about the human being as is the capacity to hear, to touch, to desire, to fear, to hunger, it differs from these events, and from every other bodily and psychic event, by not having an object in the external world. Hearing and touch are of objects outside the boundaries of the body, as desire is desire of x, fear is fear of y, hunger is hunger for z; but pain is not 'of' or 'for' anything – it is itself alone. This objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language; objectless, it cannot easily be objectified in any form, material or verbal (1985:161–2).

Scarry's view of the 'objectlessness' of pain is echoed in Levinas' characterization of suffering as a '*datum* in consciousness' that evidences 'unassumability'. In Levinas' words, suffering

is not only the consciousness of rejection or a symptom of rejection, but this rejection itself: a backward consciousness, 'operating' not as 'grasp' but as revulsion. A modality. The categorical ambiguity of quality and modality. The denial and refusal of meaning, thrusting itself forward as a sensible quality: that is, in the guise of 'experienced' content, the *way* in which, within a consciousness, the unbearable is precisely not borne, the manner of this not-being-borne; which, paradoxically, is itself a sensation or a datum Contradiction *qua* sensation: the ache of pain – woe (1998:91–2).

In the context of my research with chronic and acute pain sufferers on Yap, I found that pain too inhabits a number of possible articulations that range from a fully discernable, describable, and recognizable experience invested with a particular moral significance to its most inchoate and intense manifestations as un-namable, unspeakable forms of suffering. Two brief passages taken from interviews with two Yapese men suffering from chronic pain conditions associated with the local illness category *maath'keenil*' (see Throop 2008a, forthcoming) well exemplify those modalities of pain that evidence a form of unassumability and objectlessness.

The first passage comes from a man, who I call Ma'ar. A man in his mid-forties with a stocky build and a boyish face, Ma'ar had three brothers and four sisters but was raised an only child by an adoptive grandfather. Hailing from a mid-ranked village, Ma'ar was married in his late thirties and had

three children. Ma'ar was sharp, inquisitive, and had a good sense of humor. Throughout all of our interactions together I found Ma'ar to be a genuinely caring, calm, and patient person. This did not in anyway diminish his strength of character, however. Nor did it mean that he was incapable of asserting himself at times when the necessity to defend his own interests was warranted. This particular mixture of patience, intellect, conviction, and confidence, was recognized in the fact that he was considered to be one of his community's leaders even despite his relatively young age.

In his first attempts to describe his pain to me, Ma'ar focused on the pain's progressive trajectory through his body. He pointed out that the pain began in his lower back prior to moving down his hip through to his leg. He suggested that the pain might be associated with *gaaf* ('nerves/veins') that were perhaps damaged when he slipped under the weight of a tree when participating in a village work-project. In terms of the felt quality of his pain, he maintained that the pain in his back was experienced as a fairly constant heaviness (*toomaal*) and the pain in his leg was hard to describe. His leg pain was not really pain (*amiith*) but something between *magaaf* ('soreness', 'tiredness') and *gaamiig* ('pins and needles', 'numbness'). Its sensory contours seemed to defy a definite description.

It's different that pain, different, I don't know how to explain it but it is different. This is something that I only use the word 'pain', that word 'pain', but that is not pain. Oh, there is pain in the midst . . . I, I think that there it is in the midst of soreness and pain. I don't know the name. But . . . there is something that I call pain there. First I . . . when my back was first injured from work that pain, that pain, I felt pain but it stayed for a bit . . . it stayed for a while, perhaps three days or something, but it changed . . . a same thing eh, but how it, I feel, the pain changed from the first time, it is only soreness or pins and needles, numbness or something.

The second excerpt comes from a series of interviews I conducted with a man I call Fla'eag. Married with six children, Fla'eag was a man in his early sixties who had been suffering with chronic back, joint, and head pain for well over 15 years. Kind, gentle, and a dedicated worker, Fla'eag was devoted to his family, to helping others, and to contributing to community projects. Indeed, even in the face of his ongoing struggles with pain he was easily one of the busiest and most hard working people I knew on the island. Fla'eag was also one of his community's leaders and was well respected both within his village and in other municipalities.

The passage in question comes from Fla'eag's recounting of the long recovery he had to endure after suffering from a severe head injury incurred after a random, non-work related injury. What is particularly striking about his recounting of this experience is the extent to which even in the context of its retelling there is evidence for what Scarry (1985) has termed the 'world destroying' nature of pain. Also of note here is the fact that this particular injury was not initially recalled when I first asked Fla'eag about his other various (often work-related) pain conditions. And yet, its effects were still palpable in the form of chronic headaches, and at times dizziness, that he experienced on a weekly basis. In Fla'eag's recollection of the time when he first regained consciousness after the injury, there was:

F: Extremely intense, extremely intense pain there. When there was a bit of clarity to my mind I said, it would be good had I died. I was depressed it would be good had I died and that I don't feel pain.

JT: The pain that you were usually feeling was like what?

F: There is nothing that is like it. I cannot explain [it]. So severe that not only the pain but I don't know where is up and down, I don't know how many days 'cause when I start feeling myself, I was in pain until I could think a little bit and I gave up 'cause when I was in a coma, it was okay, I didn't feel anything but when I start feeling ... I felt a little ... I experienced severe pain. It's a horrible feeling, not only pain but ... I thought I was ... I couldn't feel ... I was in a bowl shape, I couldn't feel my legs, I don't know where I am, I don't know my position.

Something round ... I felt very intense pain but I don't feel my body. I feel like a ball turning. I don't know it's a horrible world. I don't feel my body but I feel just the pain, where the pain is, I don't know, but there's a pain feeling.

JT: So there is only that pain? Only you and your pain, or not just you just that pain?

F: Only pain until I felt my body. I felt something like a ball that was turning there is pain, there is pain. I am thinking that, I will think that, now I would be thinking that the village is turning in my eyes. All I knew was pain, I don't know my head, I don't know my legs, I don't know my hands, I don't know my body.

Only that there is something, a yellow sphere.

In the talk that followed, Fla'eag described the process by which he began to regain his sense of self and his struggles to regain some semblance of hope in the face of such a completely disorientating and destabilizing pain.

F: Umm during the time I felt feelings like that, but if I look [back] now perhaps some improvement arrived during the time that I could think a bit. There was nothing that I could think about, I am thinking I, I am thinking something will happen that I will not

feel pain, it is good that I . . . there came weakness that I . . . I don't know why I still survive[d] and having that pain. I gave up a [nervous laughing] I gave up a . . .

JT: So, how did you strengthen your mind during the time that you lost hope or you . . . how did it return or it . . .

F: I don't know if two weeks I . . . I felt my body, my leg and . . . but I was inside that sphere that . . .

JT: Was spinning.

F: It's spinning . . . a . . . but perhaps I am thinking that perhaps at that time the pain was weakening or I don't know if that was how it was but that is what I thought.

What I was thinking at that time there I could not think that. . . I was aware that I'm recovering, I was not thinking things about that. . . to get rid of myself, to get away from the pain.

A pain for which it would have been good that he died, for which there is nothing that it is like, and in the midst of which there seemed to be no longer any hope, is most certainly a pain that is 'world-destroying' by any measure. In feeling only pain, in no longer being aware of the position or boundaries of his body, Fla'eag attempts to describe an intensely destabilizing intermediary experience in which it is impossible to discern where the world begins and his selfhood ends.

The Language of Pain in Yap

That pain may be world-destroying, that it may resist clear objectification through language, does not mean that pain does not have a language, nor that pain does not reveal itself through language, however (Throop 2008a, forthcoming). To examine more formulated modalities of pain experience, it is helpful to turn briefly to discuss the language of pain in Yap. The general Yapese term for pain is *amiith*, a noun referring primarily to any noxious or dysphoric physical sensation. Through modifying the morpheme *amiith* with the third-person genitive (possessive) suffix *-uun*, the noun phrase connector *ea*, and a possessor noun, phrases delineating differing varieties of pain associated with specific objects are represented linguistically.

As Jensen (1977a:188) observes, in Yapese a possessed noun followed by a noun phrase establishes a 'construct construction' wherein 'the second noun phrase expresses the possessors of the first (possessed) noun itself'. For example, through adding the nominal morpheme *nifyi* ('fire') to the possessed noun phrase *amiithuun ea*, one is able to describe the feeling of 'pain due to fire' (*amiithuun ea nifyi*), literally 'fire's pain'. This same configuration can be utilized to refer to pains associated with specific varieties of illness (e.g. *amiithuun*

ea gout – ‘pain due to gout’, literally ‘gout’s pain’) or to pains associated with certain activities (e.g. *amiithuun ea gargeal* – ‘pain due to childbirth’, literally ‘childbirth’s pain’).

While there are a number of other important linguistic vehicles for representing and communicating pain states in Yapese (see Throop 2008a, forthcoming), I want to forgo further discussion of these in order to focus attention on a prevalent use of the term *amiithuun* to describe a form of connectedness, attachment, and ‘empathy’ (Throop 2008b). This is of particular relevance given the ways that subjective experiences of pain become the tangible link to material and social histories that connect people to land and to each other. The ambiguity of pain as neither quite of the self nor of the world is foregrounded as an intermediary zone of experience tied directly to the experience of collective suffering.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Throop 2008a, 2008b, forthcoming), *amiithuun* is often used to describe not only the concrete source or cause of pain but also as a means to indicate a form of compassion, concern, or empathy for another’s suffering. In some ways, it can be understood as a form of ‘co-suffering’, whereby the pain that I feel is caused by the pain of another who also feels my pain. There is a dual-directionality implied in *amiithuun* that makes it somewhat distinct from notion of sympathy (what Smith (2002) would have termed ‘fellow-feeling’) (see Throop 2008b). Perhaps not surprisingly, the ability to experience ‘co-suffering’ with another is weighted with a moral valence. To have or not have *amiithuun* is to be with or without moral sensibility.

One of the more interesting uses of *amiithuun* for exploring forms of intermediary experience is found in the phrase *amiithuun ea binaew*. The phrase *amiithuun ea binaew* can be literally translated as ‘pain of the village’. The phrase is made up of the term for village (*binaew*), the noun phrase connector *ea*, and the term *amiithuun*. One of the first individuals I questioned about the term explained that *amiithuun ea binaew* is a concept that is grounded directly in the concept of effortful work or labor (*maruwel*). As a number of others later concurred, *amiithuun ea binaew* is held to be a form of collective pain or co-suffering that arises from collectively working together as a community.

This collective work, endurance, and suffering is held to be responsible for generating feelings of mutual belonging, concern, and love for one’s village, one’s community. To say that such pain is present solely in the self, present in one’s consociates, or in the activities and materials implicated in the work of the village is to imbue *amiithuun* with a misplaced definitiveness. In many

ways, amiithuun can be understood as a form of *distributed suffering*. It is neither solely of the subject, the result of her actions, nor embedded in the social and material matrices within which she is enmeshed. It is, I would argue, an intermediary experience of the sort described above. As one of my research assistants described it,

I think of it as deeply felt strings of pain that do not start from you but comes toward you from the object that is causing your pain. These strings bind you and pull you back toward that object or person. It is something that is felt both ways and is a bit different from runguy [compassion], which can sometimes be felt only in one direction.

Amiithuun ea binaew, one's feeling of attachment, concern, love, and pride for one's village, is tied to the suffering, striving, and enduring of a community that is collectively working toward a common goal of building and improving the village. As one elder put it, *kaakaroom yaed ma athamagil ko maruzveel ko binaew* – 'long ago, they put effort, endurance, striving, and perseverance into the work for the village'. Indeed, the cultivation of amiithuun ea binaew was repeatedly described to me in terms of a cycle in which striving, enduring, and effortful suffering was seen as the generative source for feelings of amiithuun that were then themselves the source motivating further works and further efforts for the benefit of the community.

Here, there seems to be a recurring theme of suffering and pain as a basis for engendering compassion, attachment, pity, and love in another. This theme, I have argued, indexes a dynamic, morally valenced sentiment that serves to define the generation of social relationships at a number of different levels in Yapese society (see Throop 2008a, forthcoming). Central to the configuration of social relationships and the emplacement of persons within the complex web of asymmetrical relations of status that characterize Yapese society is the harnessing of such suffering in the context of the producing, harvesting, and ingesting of foods.

Keeping in mind Schneider's disappointment with the reduction of his attachments to his Yapese friends to his provision of foodstuffs and other material goods, let us now turn to examine the ways that pain and suffering are implicated in the significance of food. In doing so, we will examine the ways in which an understanding of experience as clearly either subjective or objective is ill-equipped to deal with the intermediary varieties of experience that are evident in Yapese thinking about morality, subjectivity, and social action.

Work, Collective Suffering, and Food

Scholars like Douglas (1966) and Appadurai (1981) have long noted the ways in which food consumption and production can become crucial sites for culturally marking and constituting social inclusion, exclusion, solidarity, and hierarchy (see also Miller, Rosen & Fiske 1998). Yap in this respect can be viewed, to borrow Appadurai's apt phrasing, as an archetypal example of a society founded upon 'gastro-politics' (Appadurai 1981).

Traditionally, the importance of food in Yapese social life is demonstrated in the fact that each social stratum, each gender, and each estate has its own foods that are grown on specific lands with specific rankings. In addition, there were traditionally different men's eating classes (*yogum*) based on age and rank. Moreover, there is great value attributed to the suffering and effort undergone by those individuals involved in planting, caring for, harvesting and preparing food (Lingenfelter 1979). All of which is associated with a prevalent, if at times implicit, belief that in the process of ingesting foods individuals are held to incorporate qualities of purity (*tabugul*) and/or impurity (*taqay*), so crucial for defining one's place in the social hierarchy.

The basic assumption is that the nourishment that comes from the land, in the form of the food grown upon it, is a means for the rank, status, and authority inscribed in that land to penetrate the body. Accordingly, an individual is imbued with the power of the land through the ingestion of the foods that were grown through previous and ongoing efforts (*magaer*) of successive generations upon the land. Planting, harvesting, preparing, and ingesting food is only made possible alongside the work, suffering, and endurance of those individuals who helped to prepare the gardens, build and maintain the water works, claim new lands from the sea, and secure the title to specific lands through their service and sacrifice in times of crisis, need, and inter-village warfare. All of which, is implicated in local understandings of the significance of working and living on the land for ensuring the gradual acquisition of the appropriate emotional attachment (*amiithuun*) to a particular estate or village.

Intergenerational suffering through effortful collaborative work is further importantly tied to the concept of *magaer*, which can be glossed as 'effort', 'fatigue', or 'feelings of physical exertion' that arise from hard work or service. In this respect, *magaer* can be clearly distinguished from other sensory experiences like *malmaal* ('laziness'), *magaaf* ('muscle fatigue or soreness stemming from standing or sitting too long'), *galuuf* ('muscle cramp'), *awparwon* ('feeling tired, very sick, and unable to move') or *churw churw* ('sleepiness'), which are not necessarily associated with work-based activities. Instead, work-based

activities are activities that necessarily implicate some kind of social relationship as well as the responsibilities, duties, and expectations that accompanied such relationships. Magaer, as Labby (1976:19) attests, is understood as an experience that arises when an individual has expended his or her energy or effort on *behalf of another*. It is, as Egan (1998:93, 2004) observes, a concept that 'draws attention to invested labor and to what has been accomplished through one's effort'. As such, magaer denotes a morally laden subjective experience. Magaer is recognized as a lived experience that is comprised of a constellation of sensations that index an individual's previous effort, labor, and their expenditure of energy on behalf of other individuals in the *ganong* (clan), *tabinaew* (estate), and/or *binaew* (village).

The centrality of magaer in Yapese conceptualizations of the dialectical interplay of land and people in the context of forming, perpetuating, and contesting social relationships as well as its intermediary emplacement between subjective and objective varieties of experience, is nicely summarized by Schneider when he explains that

The land of the *tabinau* [sic] was made, and it took work, *magar* [sic], to make it what it is. People who lived before built taro pits, planted them, terraced the inland gardens as was necessary, planted yams and sweet potatoes, built the house platforms and their surrounding paved areas, paved the paths, and so on, and those who hold the land today say they are indebted to those who came before for the work they did to make the *tabinau* what it is. However inherent its rank may be, it is work that makes and maintains a *tabinau* and people exchange their work for their rights in the *tabinau* (1984:27).

In light of this, magaer should not merely be viewed in terms of the expenditure of effort, but more precisely as a demonstration of one's feelings of attachment, concern, care, and respect for those of higher status and for the community to which one aspires to belong. Accordingly, magaer is imbued with moral value. It is interesting in this respect that it is the term magaer that is used when an individual wishes to recognize the service, work, or help of another, as the often-heard phrase *kam magaer* attests. This phrase, which can be literally translated as 'you have expended effort' or 'you have become physically exhausted from your work or service', is rendered in Jensen's (1977b) Yapese-English dictionary as both 'you have become tired' and 'thank you'.

While *magaer* as a sensation or feeling that arises in the face of hard work or service is directly implicated in local conceptions of 'work', it is important to

note that there is a distinction made in Yap between work understood as a form of intentional activity, called *maruweel*, and the sensorally based *sequelae* of such intentional activity in the form of *magaer*. I should also note here, however, that it is a mistake to simply translate the concept of *maruweel* as 'work', even though it is true that the term is currently used in everyday talk to refer to all forms of work, including wage labor. Instead, *maruweel* was traditionally understood in light of the physical exertion (*magaer*) that is enacted in the service of establishing and maintaining recognized relationships between particular individuals, families, estates, villages, or broader inter-village alliances (*nug*). Again, the key is recognizing that an individual has suffered through fatigue and exhaustion *for another's benefit*.²

The moral underpinnings of local understandings of work are further implicated in the fact that traditionally work-based activities were ideally only conducted while following a number of important restrictions and abstentions. Most importantly, these included abstentions from engaging in sexual activity and restrictions concerning the ingestion of certain foods. These ascetic practices associated with sexual abstention, preparatory seclusion, and periods of fasting associated with work-based activities, as the German ethnologist Wilhelm Müller noted in the early part of the 1900s, were collectively known as *ma koel ea fal ko maruweel* (Müller 1917).

Food in Yap is produced through just such effortful work of individuals upon the land. As such, it is a vital vehicle for expressing and defining relationships since it also serves as a material index of sentiments and of the collective and personal forms of suffering invested in work-based activities. It is vital nourishment that is produced through the effortful work of individuals upon the land. The exchange of food at funerals, within the household, and traditionally at inter-estate or inter-village *mitmiit*, can all be seen as various means through which to express care and concern; as material means for expressing feelings of *runguy* ('compassion'), *amiithuun* ('attachment'), and *gaafgorv* ('mutual suffering'). Indeed, in many ways, the circulation of food stuffs in Yap remind us of the fact that there are diverse semiotic media available for the expression and communication of feeling states that can go well beyond those associated with bodily and linguistic forms of expression (cf. Munn 1986).

Between Subjectivity and Materiality

Food is not solely utilized as a vehicle for expressing sentiments, however, since the preparation, acceptance, and ingestion of food is also held to directly affect an individual's subjective life. As one elder remarked to me, if an individual

is to consistently eat the wrong type of food (e.g. foods taken from a garden of a higher or lower status than his/her own), this will have a direct affect on his or her behavior. It will, he suggested, change an individual's habitual ways of thinking/feeling (*taafinay*).

As ethnographers have long noted (Tetens & Kubary 1873; Müller 1917; Lingenfelter 1975, 1977, 1979; Labby 1976; Senfft 1903; Egan 1998), food production, collection, and preparation in Yap were each traditionally associated with strict ascetic practices that included restrictions on eating certain kinds of food or outright fasting, prohibitions on sexual contact, practices of seclusion (for instance men would traditionally seclude themselves in the men's house for certain prescribed periods prior to undertaking a fishing expedition), and numerous other rules associated with cleanliness and purification. Moreover, unlike many of the Outer Island cultures where food sharing is often the norm, in Yap the act of ingesting food stuffs is considered to be an extremely private affair, with strict rules against food sharing even within the context of the same household.

With reference to these various restrictions, it is quite common to hear elders reflecting upon how 'strict' life was in Yap *kaakaroom* ('long ago'). As one elder explained to me, traditionally men would have their own pots (*th'iiḃ*) and their own kitchens (*taqang*), which were all kept separate from those of their wives and children. If there were a number of men from the same family living in the same house they would also each have their own pot to eat from. Young women were not allowed to prepare the food for elder men or men who had been ritually inducted (*darvaach nag*) into one of the men's eating classes (*yogum*) (see Lingenfelter 1979).

Many older women told me of the effort (*magaer*) and suffering (*gaafgorw*) that was traditionally entailed in abiding by all of the strictures associated with the production and consumption of food, all the while preparing multiple meals, in multiple kitchens, with multiple pots. In this respect, one elder told me that *bpiin ma koel ea michin ea pagoofan ko tabinaew* ('women hold the base of the breath of the household'). This is due to the fact that women are the ones who go to the taro patch, go to the gardens to collect food, and are also the ones who return to prepare the fire, the pot, and the food for consumption. Women are the ones who provide nourishment for their children and their husbands. Without food, the members of the family would not have sustenance, and would thus not have life (*yifas*); a connection that is perhaps implicated in the fact that the morpheme *fās* can be used alternatively to designate 'life' and feelings of satiation – *kug fās* ('I am full/alive').

Without the sustenance brought by the production and consumption of food individuals would literally be without their very breath (*faan/pagoofaan*). This has very interesting implications given that breath is the source of an individual's voice (*lunguun*) – voice also being how Yapese refer to an individual's authority. People always say that *lunguun* does not convey one's own mind or authority, but the wishes and authority of the *buut* ('ground'), the *daaf* ('foundation'), the *tabinaew* ('estate'), or the *binaew* ('village'). It is also true that a voice cannot be produced without breath. And breath is sustained through nourishment, which is itself only granted through the cultivation and preparation of food. All of which implies forethought, cooperation, sacrifice, suffering, and endurance.

This connection between food, sustenance, life, breath and voice, also implies that one's voice, like one's very breath, relies upon the work and effort of others; one's mother, and the countless other generations of people who had worked on the land, whose effort had lead to acquiring the lands that were associated with a particular foundation, that were the very sources for food that sustains life. To speak for a foundation is to speak for those countless others – ancestors, contemporaries, as well as future descendents who will work on that land, whose efforts resulted in the fruits that are currently nourishing one's very life breath; the breath that propels one's voice. Voice is thus both figuratively and quite literally given by the land as mediated through breath. The very act of being able to speak signifies that one had access to sustenance, nourishment, support, land, a place, and a family. Without these things, one could not have *fas* ('life'), could not have *faan* ('breath'), and could not have *lunguun* ('voice').³

The significance attributed to the power inherent in *lunguun* can also be understood as associated with the premium that is placed on silence and not talking without good reason in Yapese culture. To speak without clear purpose, is to waste one's breath, and accordingly to waste the effort and work of those who had given one the ability to speak in the first place. Speaking too much, speaking when you have nothing to say, or just speaking to voice your own thoughts and feelings, can all be construed as a means of disrespecting the labor of those who have worked on the land that produced the food that gave sustenance to the breath needed to vocalize those thoughts.

The social significance of voice is further rooted in the fact that it is through voice enabled by breath, that one is able to coordinate action, to plan action with others (*puruuy*), and to notify others of one's actions and plans. It is also interesting to note in this regard that the Yapese word for breath, *faan*, which

is also used to refer to the 'meaning' or 'significance' of an utterance or practice, is phonologically very close to the term used for ownership, *fean*. This connection becomes all the more compelling when we recall that breath is needed to invigorate the body while one is exerting effort. It is breath that keeps the body moving, working, exerting effort; effort (*magaer*) that is the basis for acquiring title and possession of land. The term *fean rog* can further be used when somebody wants to let another person know not to touch his or her possession. *Feanog* is literally translated as 'it's mine'. While *tafean* (habitual prefix *ta-* combined with the morpheme *fean*) is used to refer to one's home.

Conclusion

From pain and effort to food and land, Yapese ethno-epistemology seems to emphasize the complex and mutable interconnections between the so-called subjective and objective aspects of experience. Whether by examining the variegated ways that pain may be experienced, ranging from its unassumable and 'world-destroying' realizations to its linguistically encoded moral objectifications, or to the multiple ways that embodied experiences of effort, hunger, satiation, and breath are interwoven into the materiality of food and land, it is clear that an approach to experience that ignores intermediate modalities is ill-equipped to deal with the full existential breadth of human ways of being in the world. Indeed, if anthropologists are truly interested in exploring the fullest range of experience cross-culturally, as well as those processes of articulation that may serve to render those experiences coherent in both meaningful and moral terms, attention needs to be paid precisely to such intermediate zones.

In this article, I have argued that it is profitable to follow phenomenological insights into the significance of intermediary areas of experience as a means to better understand the various ways that distinctions between subjective and objective aspects of reality are parsed in any given community of practice. As we have seen, phenomenology seeks to lay bare the complexity of a phenomenological field that is not yet parsed into subjective and objective parts. The task of phenomenology is to examine in detail how it is that such a dynamic and complex field of experience is constituted and transformed by means of the various attitudes and orientations we take up toward it. A cultural phenomenology of the sort that is advocated in this paper complements and extends the goals of phenomenology by recognizing the significant role that cultural orientations play in patterning our various potential modalities of being-in-the-world. By refusing to begin with already constituted objects of experience, cultural

phenomenology examines the processes of constitution by means of which our subjective life and our world of experience are realized in concert with one another.

To speak of intermediary areas of experience is not to argue, however, that such experiences amount to a confrontation with a meaningless 'booming and buzzing confusion', as James once phrased it. To the contrary, it is to highlight instead the fact that experience is given as a complex and dynamic whole that is delimited into discernable parts by means of culturally and personally organized acts of attention. It is not by means of addition, as James would say, but by subtraction, that we are given objects of experience that have describable characteristics, qualities, and potentialities that can be deemed separate or separable from the self who experiences them. That is, experience is not constructed out of a process of simply adding up particular elements into more complex wholes. It is instead already given to us holistically. Abstraction by means of selecting out particular qualities, characteristics, or attributes of the always complex and dynamic field of experience is the process through which objects are defined in opposition to our subjective life, and vice versa.

In recent years there have been an increasing number of scholars who have come to critically question anthropology's unexamined reliance upon the concept of experience (see Scott 1991, 1992; Desjarlais 1994, 1997; Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003; Jay 2005). In focusing upon intermediate areas of experience, this article has sought to argue not for jettisoning the concept of experience from anthropological theorizing and research but instead for expanding its range of significance. In short, I have suggested that the concept of experience should not be restrictively delimited to already formulated distinctions between subjective and objective modalities. It should instead seek to capture more accurately the richness, complexities, dynamics, and range of the existential realities entailed human ways of being-in-the-world.

Unfortunately, I am not able to discuss further other instances in Yapese understandings where putatively material objects of experience are deemed vested with subjective entailments and other forms of subjective experience that are necessarily imbued with the presence of objects. It is enough to conclude by simply noting that Schneider's sense of de-personalization was clearly defined by a rather different, taken for granted orientation to the ways in which subjective and objective poles of experience are articulated in relationship to material objects such as food – which in Yap cannot be easily understood as simply located on the objective pole of an already strictly demarcated distinction between subject and object.

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Notes

1. Such ambiguity is even evident, as Keane (2006:199) notes, in the very idea in Western philosophical traditions that the term 'object' connotes both a 'material thing and as a toward which an action or a consciousness is directed'.
2. This particular understanding of work was further exemplified in a conversation I had with a friend who once complained to me that her family was always scolding her for never 'working'. She said that she did not understand this critical evaluation, however, since she believed that she was always 'working' very hard to get taro and other foods to give to her friends from low caste Yapese families and from the Outer Islands. When I asked her why she believed that her family did not recognize her obvious efforts as 'work', she thought for a minute before replying that her family did not interpret her activities to be *maruwel*, since the effort she was expending was for the cultivation of what her family considered to be strictly 'personal' relationships that were not recognized by her *tabinaew* or by *yalean* (Yapese tradition) as

socially significant. And yet, as another friend emphasized, *maruweel* is still importantly tied to physical exertion and action, since thinking, deliberating, or speaking, all aspects of what constitutes 'work' today, would never have been construed to be *maruweel* in the past. Central to the notion is thus the idea that work is predicated upon exertion and physical effort as feelings, feelings or sensations that could include constellations of *magaer*, *magaaf*, *amiith*, and *gaafgozw* as embodied lived experiences.

3. The significance of breath, its connection to women's work, nourishment, and sustenance is also perhaps reflected in a local medicine called *falaay na be*. This was medicine that was traditionally used for treating damage to an infant's umbilical cord, which was held by some local healers to be a cause for asthma (*tunguuufaan*, *matunguuufaan*) later in life. The significance of a connection between breath and nourishment was further suggested in the fact that this type of sickness was thought to be *fuguzwan ea m'aar* – 'the worst kind of sickness', since it affected breathing, and thus one's very strength to work.

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