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## From Pain to Virtue: Dysphoric Sensations and Moral Sensibilities in Yap (Waqab), Federated States of Micronesia

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**Abstract** This article contributes to the development of a medical anthropology of sensation through providing a thick ethnographic description of pain's significance in the context of a particular community's – Yap (Federated States of Micronesia) – understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality. After first proposing an attentional–synthetic model of the patterning of sensory experience, the article goes on to describe in some detail the linguistic, moral, and cultural frameworks that serve as the semiotic, existential, and practical resources providing the background against which individual sufferers tend to interpret their dysphoric sensory experiences. Central to the article is an exploration of a local illness category *maath'keenil'* that is implicated in two, at times competing, models of ethical subjectivity. It is argued that through configuring their subjective experiences in light of these virtues individual sufferers are at times able to transform their experiences of pain from excruciating dysphoric sensations to meaningful, morally valenced, lived experiences.

**Key words** pain • sensation • subjectivity • virtue • Yap

[throughout history] . . . all human groups subjected their impulses to the inhibition of some type of customary control and exercised choice among perceptions or actions in terms of some sort of aesthetic or ethical standard.  
(George Stocking, Jr. 1968)

The stimuli that cause physical pain to which the emotions react are constant in history. But the capacity for enduring and tolerating pain, which is different from its stimuli, has varied in the history of civilization . . . we can 'give ourselves up' to suffering or pit ourselves against it; we can 'endure' suffering, 'tolerate' it, or simply 'suffer;' we can even 'enjoy' suffering (algophilia). These phrases signify styles of feeling and of willing based on feeling, which are clearly not determined by the mere state of feeling.

(Max Scheler, 1963/1992)

In light of many of our commonsense assumptions about the relationship between mind and body<sup>1</sup> it seems self-evident to say that pain is a sensory experience. Understood as an affliction of the body, pain in the context of biomedically informed North American folk models is indeed often located in the province of those somatic modes of perception colloquially labeled 'sensations.' In the philosophy and anthropology of pain, however, the connection between 'pain' and 'sensation' is seldom so clear cut.<sup>2</sup> For instance, while Descartes sometimes characterized pain as a passive bodily affliction akin to simple sensations of warmth or cold (Morris, 1991),<sup>3</sup> Aristotle classified pain as an example of a moral emotion<sup>4</sup> (Landar, 1967). Locke (1689/1979) took pain to be a simple idea that arises at the intersection of reflection and sensation, as such incorporating elements of both psychic and somatic modes of experience. Though for Peirce, pain is a 'secondary sensation' that is classified in terms of mental activity intermeshed in 'firstness,' an 'absolutely immediate consciousness, or feeling' (Peirce, 1886/1992a, pp. 258–259). As Trigg (1970) notes, Wittgenstein had trouble categorizing pain since it seems to display elements of sensory immediacy that are interfused with emotional forms of expression. And according to Schutz (1932/1967), while initially emerging in awareness as a primary passivity – a dysphoric sensory experience 'merely "undergone" or "suffered"' through – pain can also be considered a full fledged intentional-object that has been actively structured by 'meaning-endowing experiences of consciousness' (pp. 54–55).

Much as philosophers have struggled to articulate the often-elusive qualities of pain, anthropologists have also remarked upon what seems to be pain's inherent ambiguity.<sup>5</sup> While noting that culture can play an important role in shaping pain along a number of dimensions – including its intensity, expression, response, and interpretation – many anthropologists have pointed to pain's tendency to actively resist the cultural patterning of linguistic and interpretive frames (Daniel, 1994; Das, 1997; DelVecchio Good, Brodwin, Good & Kleinman, 1992; Garro, 1990, 1992, 1994; Good, 1992, 1994; Jackson, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 2005; Kleinman, 1988; Kleinman, Brodwin, Good, & DelVecchio Good, 1992). Not unlike the philosophical perspectives briefly noted earlier, these anthropological studies point to an inherent ambiguity in the experience of pain that may

often defy conceptualization, while also succumbing to culturally shaped systems of categorization, classification, and narrativization.

With regard to the theme of this special issue, it seems that the multifaceted nature of pain – ranging from its putative somatic and sensory immediacy to its conceptually mediated articulation in the form of propositional and imagistic mental contents infused with dysphoric feelings – makes it an especially relevant site for exploring the cultural patterning of sensory experience from a medical anthropological frame. Accordingly, in this article, I will set out to contribute to the development of a medical anthropology of sensation (Hinton & Hinton, 2002, in press; see also Chuengsatiansup, 1999; Desjarlais, 1992; Howes, 1987, 1991, 2003, 2004) through providing a thick ethnographic description of pain's significance in the context of a particular community's (Yap, Federated States of Micronesia) understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality. In so doing, I focus primarily upon the moral and cultural frameworks serving as the semiotic, existential, and practical materials providing the background against which individual sufferers tend to interpret their dysphoric sensory experiences.

In the pages that follow, I will approach the transformation of pain to virtue through discussing a culturally particular way in which pain arises as a concrete embodied experience in Yap in the context of a prevalent illness category termed *maath'keenil*<sup>7</sup>. With a description of this local experiential articulation of pain sensations in hand, I then detail how varieties of pain are linguistically encoded at the levels of both lexical and grammatical representation. Having briefly suggested what may be interpreted as the initial contours for a Yapese *grammar of suffering* (see Capps & Ochs, 1995; Ochs & Capps, 2001), I examine how the conceptualization of pain is situated within the context of local understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality. I argue that pain is understood in Yap as a form of suffering that may be categorized either as an unwanted dysphoric experience in terms of 'mere-suffering' or as a virtue, inasmuch as it is experienced in the context of 'suffering-for.' This insight will bring us back full circle to better understanding the moral significances of sensations of pain associated with *maath'keenil*<sup>7</sup>.

#### TOWARD AN ATTENTIONAL–SYNTHETIC APPROACH TO THE CULTURAL PATTERNING OF THE SENSES AND SENSATIONS

There is growing recognition that the faculty of 'attention' plays a key role in configuring the texture of our subjective life as mediated through the senses. The assumption is that an individual's attention can be shaped according to personal and cultural dictates so as to affect the ways in which an individual monitors and interprets changes in her bodily sensations and

functions (Berger, 1999; Berger & Del Negro, 2002; Csordas, 1993; Kirmayer, 1984a, 1984b; Leder, 1990; Throop, 2003).

The hypothesis that attention serves as a discriminating faculty in the organization of experience was recognized as early as William James' writings on the stream of consciousness. At that time, James noted that 'in a world of objects thus individualized by our mind's selective industry, what is called our "experience" is almost entirely determined by our habits of attention' (James, 1892/1985, p. 39). Beginning with the work of Edmund Husserl, the phenomenological tradition extended James' insights to recognizing how the patterning of attention importantly serves to structure what is foregrounded and backgrounded in the field of our awareness (see Husserl, 1931, 1970; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Schutz, 1970). An argument can in fact be made that even Husserl's earliest writings on the role that acts of phenomenological modification play in the structuring of differing attitudes (e.g., natural, scientific, phenomenological, etc.) at least implicitly recognizes the significance of cultural influences on the patterning of attention in the subjective constitution of experience. That said, a model that ties such patterns of attention to cultural influences was perhaps first most explicitly elaborated in Ernest Schachtel's later psychoanalytic work on attention and memory.

According to Schachtel (1959), there is an important connection between shared schemata, an individual's focal attention, and the process of selectively parsing the vast field of sensory experience that confronts individuals from the moment of their birth. Central to Schachtel's perspective is the idea that cultural schemata – a term he borrows from Bartlett (1932) – selectively highlight some forms of experience, while 'starving' others (Schachtel, 1959). Accordingly, it is often the case that non-schematic experience is difficult to incorporate and preserve in memory (Schachtel, 1959). As Schachtel puts it, 'That part of experience which transcends the memory schema as performed by the culture is in danger of being lost because there exists as yet no vessel, as it were, in which to preserve it' (p. 295). In this way, 'the schemata provided by the culture and gradually acquired by the growing child cannot accommodate his experience in its entirety, but will distort and bias it according to the patterns of the culture' (p. 297). And yet, Schachtel observes that 'trans-schematic' experiences are still importantly part and parcel of human perception and action such that the conventionalization of attention and memory never serves to completely efface 'unschematized experience.'

More recently, recognition of the place of the cultural patterning of attention in the configuration of meaningful forms of experience has been fruitfully elaborated in the writings of Robert Levy (1973), Drew Leder (1990), and Thomas Csordas (1993) to somewhat different, but yet still complementary ends. These perspectives all support what I would like to

call an attentional–synthetic approach to the cultural patterning of sensation that pivots on differences found in specific cultures tied to the functioning of attention and memory. To borrow James' apt terminology, it seems to be the case that forms of *collectively structured selective attention* are one means to account for observed variations in the articulation of sensory experience in differing cultures or communities (cf., Berger, 1997, 1999; Berger & Del Negro, 2002). This approach is significant precisely because it can effectively account for observed variations in individuals' culturally and personally patterned experiences of pain, experiences that support possibilities for transforming painful sensations into meaningful, morally valenced, lived experiences.

### FROM SENSATION TO MORAL SENSIBILITIES

To trace a culturally configured trajectory from pain to virtue it is necessary to connect such forms of collectively structured selective attention more broadly to the formation of cultural subjectivities and local forms of morality. To this end, a recent book by Kathryn Linn Geurts, *Culture and the Senses* (2002), is most helpful (see also Classen, 1993a, 1993b). In this work, Geurts expands upon the idea of collectively structured selective attention in the context of the cultivation of moral sensibilities among Anlo-speaking peoples in southeastern Ghana. Geurts draws specifically from Csordas' (1990, p. 9) contention that 'the goal of a phenomenological anthropology of perception is to capture that moment of transcendence in which perception begins, and, in the midst of arbitrariness and indeterminacy, constitutes and is constituted by culture.' She argues that the process of learning to appropriately focus and isolate elements of fluctuating sensations in culturally appropriate ways is a mode of organizing experience that may be implicated in 'ways of understanding and expressing morality' (Geurts, 2002, p. 74). Geurts focuses specifically upon the ways in which Anlo cultural logics recurrently and redundantly emphasize those kinesthetic sensations associated with balance and flexibility as a basis for generating appropriate moral dispositions that are generative of appropriate styles of comportment (Geurts, 2002). She suggests that moral values themselves can be understood to be residues of such collectively structured modes of selective attention. For Geurts then, the transition from sensation to sensibility is one that interlaces 'culture, psyche, soma, and sociality' (p. 17). Accordingly, she proposes that:

we think about *sensibility* as a term that unites individual experience with perception, thought, cultural meaning, and social interaction . . . sensibility is [therefore] a field where habituated bodily sensations link to individual feelings, attitudes, orientations, and perceptions and finally to cultural themes, motifs, and ethos. (Geurts, 2002, p. 17)

With Geurts, I find it productive to view moral sensibilities as importantly rooted in the patterning of sensory modalities. In Geurts' case, the sensations in question are tied to the kinesthetic sense. In the case of Yapese morality, however, it is often sensations associated with pain, effort, exertion, and suffering that are understood to be indispensable for the cultivation of virtue. In the remainder of this article, I seek to investigate the ways in which local understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality may work to recurrently orient individuals to first selecting and then re-casting certain elements of their dysphoric experiences in light of core cultural virtues. In the process, these dysphoric experiences may be configured such that they are no longer merely held to be unwanted painful sensations, but rather, are viewed as basic to the cultivation of moral sensibilities. Accordingly, experiences of pain so configured may thus be directly implicated in what Joel Robbins (2004), following Foucault (1985, 1997), terms 'forms of subjectivation.' That is, those cultural guidelines for 'how "one ought to form one-self as an ethical subject" in relation to the moral code under which one lives' (Robbins, 2004, p. 216).<sup>6</sup>

#### YAP (WAQAB)

The island of Yap is located in the Western Caroline Islands of Micronesia, about 1100 nautical miles east of the Philippines and 450 miles southwest of Guam. Unlike the coral atolls that constitute some of its closest neighbors, Yap is a volcanic high island, the result of an exposed area of a large submarine ridge. Yap proper actually consists of four main islands – Yap (Marabaaq), Gagil-Tomil, Maap, and Rumung – each separated by narrow water passages that have, with the exception of Rumung, been linked together by man-made land bridges, roads, and paths. Although it is much larger than neighboring coral atolls, Yap proper is still a relatively small island with a land mass of only approximately 38.6 square miles and a population estimated at 7391 (Yap State Statistical Bulletin, 2000). Having endured four waves of colonial governance (Spanish, German, Japanese, and American), today Yap proper is the administrative capital of Yap state, one of the four states (Yap, Pohnpei, Kosrae and Chuuk) that comprise the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM); an independent nation that holds a compact of free association with the USA.

#### *MAATH'KEENIL' ('SEVERED SPINE'): PAIN AS EMBODIED EXPERIENCE*

- G: Long ago myself and my household we were all suffering, no car, at that time no car . . . no private cars there were only government cars,

so we all used to live at that side of the island, staying in Colonia. So . . . to eat food we would come to Colonia and we would cross the island from the other side . . . to our village to get the food and to fix the food and what I, I would take, I would put it around my neck and I would take it over there [to Colonia] and at that time I was a child not yet grown. I was going to school, at that time I was going to school a bit in the village and when I was done with elementary I went to intermediate in Alaw [in town] and that time I took things, I was working very hard taking coconuts, all of the bags of copra that were put there, they were big, and myself and my father, the two of us were staying together, and he was old so if there was a large bag that I . . . it was put in the bag and I would carry it. So I think that is the cause of those things [the pain] and is what caused those and . . .

JT: Yes . . .

G: Um. Hard work I put in long ago when I was a child.

Prior to turning to place pain within the context of broader Yapese understandings of ethical subjectivity, virtuous comportment, and morality, I would like to first examine a significant way that pain arises as a tangible somatic experience for many Yapese sufferers in the context of a local illness category termed *maath'keenil'*. As the earlier brief quote taken from an interview with a 64-year-old man suffering with *maath'keenil'* attests, however, an understanding of such concrete embodied experiences of pain cannot long be divorced from a discussion of Yapese cultural logics and moral sensibilities (particularly as they relate to the themes of work, effort, suffering and compassion).

Quite literally, *maath'keenil'* can be translated as 'severed spine,' for *maath'* is an adjective that denotes something that has been severed, separated, and/or cut loose, while the noun *keenil'* refers to the spine and/or backbone (as well as to a midrib of a leaf or the main stem of a vine; see Jensen, 1977a). *Maath'keenil'* is, however, an illness category that encompasses a broad range of illnesses and symptoms, all of which are linked to a common etiological source stemming from overexerting the body in the context of hard work and labor. In this respect, *maath'keenil'* is distinguished from another Yapese illness category that is also commonly associated with pain called *gubriig*. Where *maath'keenil'* is understood to result from an individual's intentional effort and activity participating in hard work, *gubriig* is viewed to stem from unintentional (from the standpoint of the sufferer) forms of injury to the body that are caused either by unexpected accidents or beatings.

Although there is significant overlap in the types of treatment garnered for each illness, and even despite the fact that some individuals suggested that *gubriig* may also at times result from work-based activities,

*maath'keenil'* was by far one of the most prevalent pain-related illnesses reported by the individuals I worked with. Indeed as one local healer explained to me, *maath'keenil'* is perhaps the most prevalent illness in Yap. Significantly, he noted that while each person who is afflicted with *maath'keenil'* suffers with a different set of symptoms, most share *amiith u fithik ii doowey* ('pain inside the body'), as well as feelings of *waer* ('weakness'). In his estimation, this constellation of pain and weakness is due to a problem with the 'veins' (*nguchey*) or 'nerves' (*gaaf*) in the spine that have become damaged through strain associated with hard work. Although, as we will see later, there are in fact a number of ways that pain is associated with sensations of 'weakness,' 'fatigue,' and 'laziness,' in Yapese cultural logic.

*Maath'keenil'* is a type of illness that is not only directly associated with sensations of pain, however. Far from being a singular or bounded variety of illness, *maath'keenil'* is rather considered more complexly as the root cause of what would otherwise be viewed as quite disparate forms of illness that range from different types of cancer, to common colds and flu (*misilpig*), to skin irritations, to tuberculosis (*saafriit*), to joint, back, and neck pain.

Given the number of differing illnesses and symptoms that *maath'keenil'* may give rise to, there is accordingly no one definitive form of treatment available to cure it. Instead, individuals suffering from *maath'keenil'* most often seek out medicines and treatments (both local and biomedical) specific to the illnesses and/or symptoms they are suffering from. For example, a given treatment may include: taking a combination of analgesic medicines for dampening pain (e.g., *falaay na amiith* – 'pain medicine') as procured through a local healer or in the form of acetaminophen prescribed at Yap State's Memorial Hospital; receiving traditional massage to help repair damage to muscles (*ufin*), nerves (*gaaf*) and veins (*nguchey*); restricting one's diet according to certain prescribed foods (e.g., not eating particular varieties of fish); and/or taking medicines (both local and biomedical) specific to the other illness(es) caused by *maath'keenil'* (e.g., taking antibiotics prescribed at the hospital for a particularly bad bacterial infection). Common to most treatments of *maath'keenil'*, however, is the use of local medicines to 'clean the blood' (*falaay na rachaaq*) and to heal the nerves and veins (*falaay na gaaf* and *falaay na nguchey*), which are all construed to be key loci for work derived damage to the body that results in the sensations of pain and weakness often associated with *maath'keenil'*. As a woman suffering with *maath'keenil'* in her early sixties explained to me:

- T: Right now there is very intense pain (*nib geel ea amiith*) associated with my illness. I also don't have much energy. It gets particularly bad

when I pick something up, or put something down on the ground, or if I try to make something because I am unable to stand or crouch for long without pain coming, which forces me to sit down. So here in Yap this type of sickness is called . . . *maath' keenil'*. I am a person who is very sick with *maath' keenil'*.

JT: What is that? What causes it?

T: Hard work, hard work so that a person loses strength inside of their body. Umm, if there is very intense work it will damage the veins (*nguchey*) and what, . . . and muscles (*ufin*) . . . when *maath' keenil'* came to me it damaged the veins inside my body, and now that I am old it is shrinking my veins so that it is hard for the blood to pass inside of them, the veins get smaller and there is a problem there. I can even feel the pulsing/shaking (*daqdaaq*), when I look at my veins I can also see them pulsing/shaking. I know that the blood is trying to move through my veins but it cannot.

A key defining feature of *maath'keenil'* is therefore not so much a given sufferer's specific cluster of symptoms (although pain and weakness seem to be prevalent in most cases), but more specifically its cause: damage to nerves, veins, and blood derived from over-exertion in the context of hard work and labor. It is fitting in this regard that in Yapese cultural logic there is also a close relationship between *maath'keenil'* and *magaer* ('work-induced exhaustion,' 'fatigue' or 'tiredness'); a concept that I revisit in more detail later.<sup>7</sup> More specifically, *magaer* is often held to be an attenuated version of *maath'keenil'*. Given this association, it is possible to think of *maath'keenil'* and *magaer* as representing two ends of a similar continuum of suffering wherein hard work, effort, and service are held to have a tangible impact upon an individual's body and sensorium.

#### ON THE LINGUISTIC OBJECTIFICATION OF PAIN

While a common way in which sensations of pain arise as embodied experiences in Yap is in the context of illnesses associated with *maath'keenil'*, a significant way in which attention and memory become canalized so as to selectively parse such dysphoric sensory experiences in meaningful ways is through the medium of language. Accordingly, a necessary step in coming to understand how experiences of pain (such as those that are associated with *maath'keenil'*) may be meaningfully transformed into virtues is through better understanding how such experiences become recurrent sites for attentional focus and objectification through linguistic means.

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 can be represented linguistically. For example, adding the nominal morpheme *nify* ('fire') to the possessed noun phrase *amiithuun ea*, one is able to describe the feeling of 'pain due to fire' (*amiithuun ea nify*); 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').

These possibilities for describing varieties of pain through genitive constructions are notable precisely because, as Duranti and Ochs (1990, pp. 5–6) have observed in the case of Samoan, 'while genitive constructions . . . often express a relation of "possession," they express other participant roles as well.' That is, it is possible for some languages to encode the agency of human participants through the use of genitives that refer in a more oblique fashion to the causative role of a human actor in relation to some perceived alteration in a particular property, state of affairs, or quality in the world (Duranti & Ochs, 1990). In this light, the genitive construction of pain descriptors in Yapese may provide a means for individuals to refer more obliquely to the causative role of a given object, phenomena, or state of affairs giving rise to a particular variety of pain, while simultaneously backgrounding the subject's role as a person undergoing a dysphoric experience. Indeed, there is no explicit grammatical indication of the suffering subject in such genitive constructions. At the level of discourse, at least, the various pain descriptors that can be employed through a genitive construction may thus serve to delimit such dysphoric experiences as separate, or at the very least separable, from a given experiencer;<sup>8</sup> an observation that is tied to local understandings of moral subjectivities and virtuous comportment as outlined later.

Yapese does not, relatively speaking, have an expansive vocabulary for differing types of pain (I managed to collect only 34 pain-related terms and phrases).<sup>9</sup> There are, in addition to the possible modifications of the morpheme *amiith*, however, other linguistic vehicles through which experiences of pain or experiences closely associated with it can be described and represented. In this respect, there are a number of nominal lexemes referring to various types of pain. For example, the term *gaemiig*, which is also utilized to refer to electricity, is used primarily in reference to those various feeling qualities that are associated with losing or regaining tactile sensation, including numbness and the feeling of 'pins and needles.' The term *galuuf*, which also refers to a species of monitor lizard, denotes pain associated with muscle cramps. The connection between lizards and cramping pain is perhaps a reference that gains its significance

from an allusion to the tendency for a lizard's muscles to become paralyzed when it becomes too cold.

Yet other ways in which pain is expressed grammatically in Yapese include a handful of reduplicative morphemes that capture some of the temporal and spatial qualities of particular types of pain through a combination of metaphorical extension, iconicity, and sound symbolism. The most prevalent of these terms are *oeb oeb*, a reduplication of the intransitive verb *oeb* 'to initiate,' which in its reduplicative form means 'aching and/or throbbing pain;' and *yip yip*, a reduplication of the transitive verb *yip* 'to pierce, to sew, to shoot,' which in its reduplicative form means 'shooting or sharp pain.'<sup>10</sup>

One of the most prevalent ways in which individuals refer to their pain in everyday interaction, however, is simply to state *baaq amiith* ('there exists pain') or *kab ea amiith ngoog* ('pain came to me'). Again, what is striking here is the fact that pain is objectified, made tangible, and fashioned to some extent into an entity separate, or separable, from the self who is suffering from it. In the case of the former phrase, there is no mention of the suffering self at all. Instead, the construction, which combines the existential verb *baaq* and the noun *amiith*, simply highlights the existence of pain without delineating its precise location and/or its relationship to a particular sufferer (although such utterances were often given a deictic center of an experiencing subject through other non-verbal contextual cues). In the case of the latter phrase, the experiencer is included in the utterance but is positioned in a passive role as an indirect object toward which the object transferred (*amiith*) is directed. Grammatically, this is accomplished through the use of the impersonal third-person perfect tense rendering of the verb *yib* ('to come'), the noun *amiith*, the relational preposition *nga* ('to'), and the first-person possessive pronoun suffix (*roog*): *ke yib ea amiith ngoog*. In this case then, the focus of the utterance is upon the presence and activity of pain confronted by the experiencer who is undergoing it or perhaps more accurately persevering in the face of it.

With all of these various linguistic means by which pain may be represented, it is perhaps most important to note how this Yapese grammar of suffering is organized in such a way that pain is rarely identified as co-terminus with a given sufferer. In fact, in contrast to constructions that describe various internal states through the quality and/or condition of *yaen* (the Yapese term for 'mind' or 'subjective experience'), many of which are rendered as verbs (e.g., *kug kirbaen* – 'I am sad'), grammatical constructions utilized to describe or indicate pain are configured in such a way that pain is most typically designated as an object of attention that has a certain distance from the subjective state of the sufferer. Interestingly, this is also quite different from those Yapese terms for other varieties of

sensory experience, which are largely rendered as verbs. There is, in fact, a clear distinction in Yapese made between those lexical items that mark active and passive phases of sensation (which take the form of either intransitive [iv] or transitive verbs [vt]) and those sensory objects that are perceived through these various sensory modalities (which are always nouns [n]). For example, in the case of visual perception there are: *guy* (vt), 'to see'; *changar* (iv), 'to look'; *yaqan* (n), 'image'; in the case of audition: *rungaqag* (vt), 'to hear'; *matooyil* (vi), 'to listen, to pay attention'; *lingan* (n) 'sound.' In this light, it appears that the morpheme *amiith* (n) can be considered to index a phenomenon that is more comparable to an object of sensory perception than to an active phase of sensing with or through the body.

*PAIN, SUFFERING, EFFORT, AND ENDURANCE*

Insight into how pain is meaningfully configured by individual sufferers in Yap must consider the ways in which experiences of pain figure in local understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality. As we will see later, pain is deeply implicated in many aspects of Yapese social life. Central to both Yapese social theory and ethics are two interconnected, and yet at times competing, models of ethical subjectivity and virtuous comportment that each bear on the meaning of pain in everyday life. Such models are themselves predicated upon the virtues of 'self-mastery,' 'effortful exertion,' 'endurance,' 'suffering-for,' and 'compassion.'

*Self-governance and Virtuous Personhood*

A socially competent person in Yap is understood to be a person who is able to sacrifice his or her individual desires, wants, wishes, feelings, opinions, and thoughts to family, village, and broader community dictates. In this view of the ethical subject, self-abnegation and self-restraint as realized through careful reflection and deliberation are essential to the cultivation of a virtuous person – a person who acts thoughtfully, with self-control, humility, and concern for others. A person who is not able to cultivate these qualities, who acts impulsively, who transparently expresses his personal feelings and emotions, who speaks without thinking, or acts without regard to the concerns of others, is thought to have a weak mind not unlike a child. The capacity to monitor and selectively share one's emotions, feelings, thoughts, and opinions in the service of wider familial and community goals is therefore one of the essential qualities of Yapese conceptions of what it means to be a good person, to lead a good life, and to act in a virtuous manner.

Such ideals of self-governance are also implicated in the value of privacy, secrecy, and concealment in Yapese society (cf., Petersen, 1993).

Not sharing, not expressing, and not acting upon one's 'true' feelings, opinions, or thoughts – a pattern also widely noted in the context of other Polynesian and Micronesian cultures (Besnier, 1994; Mageo, 1998; Petersen, 1993; Wilson, 1995) – is one of the core cultural values at the basis of Yapese social life. This understanding of virtuous comportment and the ethical subject thus ideally emphasizes a fundamental disconnection between individual expressivity and an individual's inner life. An individual's inner states, defined in terms of personal wants, desires, opinions, feelings, emotions, sensations, and thought-objects, are held to have, in many contexts, a non-direct, non-transparent, connection to action and expression. It is instead, purposeful, goal-directed thought that is oriented towards the consequences of one's actions on the thoughts, feelings, and desires of others, be it others living in the village, one's family, or the ancestors, that is ideally to guide one's speech, expression, and action.

Yapese epistemologies are oriented, as Shore (1982) similarly claims for Samoa, to emphasize 'effects' and not 'causes.' In this sense, Yapese epistemologies tend to value pragmatic (in the Peircian and Jamesian senses of the term)<sup>11</sup> orientations to social action and personality structure. It is the perceptual effects of an act and not its hidden roots that are often the preferred orientation of social actors in judging or describing the behavior and personalities of others.

Attempting to balance, reconcile, or integrate personal ambition and desire with these moral frames for appropriate social action is most certainly never a simple matter. And the tensions that arise in the face of these competing motivational frames are at the very heart of individuals' struggles to navigate day-to-day experiences suffering with pain, since pain is ideally an experience that is not to be transparently expressed to others. Although, as we will see later, pain is also a potential site for the realization of a second, at times competing, model of ethical subjectivity and virtuous comportment, a model that is rooted in the virtue of 'suffering-for.' As such, it is generally acknowledged that the disciplining of one's somatically mediated desires, needs, and wants is a difficult practice that necessitates the expenditure of considerable effort. And it is effortful endurance, the Yapese term being *athamaqil*, that enables an individual to perfect those abilities for self-governance entailed in controlling and monitoring the expression of personal desires, needs, and wants in the service of broader community goals. That is, ideally, an individual's wellspring of personal desires and motives should be redirected away from action benefiting oneself to efforts at governing oneself for the benefit of others.

Finally, generally speaking, Yapese understandings of subjectivity are importantly configured according to a privileging of mental processes over

somatic ones. In fact, the very word for body in Yapese – *doow* – is the same term that is used to designate the refuse resulting from human activity.<sup>12</sup> The body is thus denigrated quite literally as ‘trash.’ Accordingly, the body is to be mastered, controlled, and disciplined by the mind; a mind that is oriented to cultural virtues highlighting the value of endurance, perseverance, and effortful striving. Whether evidenced in the proliferation of strict ascetic practices in multiple aspects of Yapese life (see Lingenfelter, 1979), the rhetorics of constant deferral of personal desires, wants, and needs in light of obligations to one’s family and/or community, or in terms of a general orientation to work, effort, suffering, and endurance as core cultural virtues, a salient cultural trope in Yap consists of viewing an individual’s physical self as ideally subordinated to a mentally governed moral self.

### *The Virtues of ‘Suffering’ and ‘Compassion’*

The Yapese term for suffering is *gaafgow*, a concept that is absolutely pivotal to understanding local configurations of social relationships, personhood, and morality. The term, which is heard repeatedly in everyday conversations and in innumerable different contexts, as one well-respected elder explained to me, is one of the central *machib nu Waqab* (‘teachings of Yap’). Indeed, it is out of *gaafgow* (‘suffering’) that a number of other important virtuous qualities of a moral person are cultivated; qualities such as *nuwan* (‘patience’), *athamagil* (‘endurance,’ ‘perseverance,’ or ‘striving’), *k’aedaen* (‘self-mastery’ or ‘temperance’), *liyoer* (‘respect’), *taa fan* (‘concern’), *ayuw* (‘care’) and *sobutaen* (‘humility’). A particularly articulate friend once told me that in this regard she does not recall her parents ever needing to tell her explicit stories about the virtue of suffering, since the term was ‘a period, a semicolon, a comma in all of our sentences – “Don’t do that we are *gaafgow*,” “Don’t say that we are *gaafgow*,” “We are *gaafgow* you should do this,” “Don’t think that way we are *gaafgow*,” etc.’

Aside from its prominent role in socialization practices, a further facet to the centrality of *gaafgow* in Yapese moral sensibilities is the fact that the experience of suffering is held to be the very means through which a Yapese mother is able to ‘anchor’ her child to the land. This anchoring is itself viewed in terms of an exchange of sentiment that is metaphorically rendered as ‘tying’ (*m’aag*) the child to the father. What is held to facilitate the *m’aag* (‘tie’) between the child and the father (and through the father to the land) is precisely the mother’s and her child’s experiences of suffering.

The significance of suffering in mediating relationships between family members is made clearer when understood in light of Yapese social theory and land tenure. Briefly, the Yapese kinship system is a virilocal,

exogamous, matrilineal system (Labby, 1976). Since women marry into their husbands' villages, and since clan affiliation is traced through the mother, the transfer of land from the wife's husband to her and her children is in actuality a transaction between two different matrilineal clans as mediated through the husband who represents the interests of his estate or *tabinaew* (Egan, 2004). In this system, the mother/wife and her children as representatives of one matri-clan are expected to work the land, expending their effort and labor in order to earn a right to claim that land in the name of their clan when the father/husband (who is necessarily of a differing clan than his wife and children) passes away (Labby, 1976).

In Yapese social theory, the father/husband's matri-clan must be paid off through the labor and effort of those successive clans who come to occupy the land after they have departed. To this end, land itself can be understood as the accretion of past generations' work, service, effort, striving, endurance, and suffering as crystallized into a material form (Labby, 1976). Work, effort, and striving in the face of suffering for the benefit of others, in particular others of higher status who currently hold title to the estate's collective landholdings, are held to be the means through which estate titles are transacted from one clan to another, from one generation to the next. As it turns out, this particular system of exchange between matri-clans, which is predicated upon the expenditure of effort through work and service, has significant implications for a number of psychical and somatic experiences which are themselves tied to the significance of cultivating self-mastery over the expression of one's internal states. Indeed, an individual's effort – *magaer* – is ideally directed toward the care and cultivation of the estate's land holdings (*tabinaew*), which is significantly tied to an individual's ability to *athamagil* – to strive to endure through one's physical suffering (one's exhaustion, fatigue, pain, hunger, etc.). This is further connected to the individual's ability to discipline his or her own feelings, desires, wants to the dictates of broader family and community needs.

From the time a woman leaves her home to marry, give birth and raise her children, she is faced with the reality that she is suffering (*gaafgow*). She is landless and is without a title. To gain access to the knowledge that will eventually enable her children to take responsibility for the landholdings of the children's father's clan's estate (*tabinaew*), a woman has to work, endure through hardship, pain, and suffering, and has to contribute to both estate and village projects. Without this work, a woman (and her children) will never gain access to knowledge, knowledge of the estate's land holdings, ultimately leaving her and her children landless, *gaafgow*.

The moral implications of suffering (*gaafgow*) are further tied to the culturally appropriate response to the perception of suffering, or perhaps

more accurately endurance in the face of suffering, which is encapsulated in the term *runguy*<sup>13</sup> – a term that I will gloss as ‘concern,’ ‘pity,’ or ‘compassion’ (cf. Jensen, 1977a; Lutz, 1988).<sup>14</sup> In perceiving his wife and children as suffering (*gaafgow*), seeing them endure through suffering, pain, and hardship on his and his estate’s behalf, a husband is ideally to feel *runguy*. It is this feeling of *runguy*, as a form of compassionate concern or pity in the face of suffering, that is held to motivate the husband to help and care for (*ma piiq ayuw ngooraed*) his wife and children by granting them access to knowledge, land, and food. The bonds that are formed through the exchange of knowledge, land, and food are predicated upon a dynamic interchange of feeling. The wife and her children, through their striving, effort, and physical exertion are perceived as suffering (*gaafgow*) by the husband whose response is to feel *runguy*, a feeling that is ultimately held to bind (*m’aag*) the husband to his children. It is thus out of the dynamic interplay of *runguy* and *gaafgow*, between compassion and suffering, that titles to land are transacted from one clan to another.

*Magaer and Athamagil* (‘Exertion’ and ‘Endurance’)

Moral suffering, what I later term ‘suffering-for,’ is also importantly associated in Yapese cultural logics to the concept of *magaer*. *Magaer* 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 *chuw chuw* (‘sleepiness’), which are not necessarily associated with work-based activities. In Yap, work-based activities are activities that necessarily implicate some kind of social relationship as well as the responsibilities, duties, and expectations that accompany such relationships. In this respect *magaer*, as Labby (1976) 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, p. 93; see also Egan, 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 for it is recognized as a lived experience comprised of a constellation of sensations that index an individual’s previous effort, labor, and their expenditure of energy on behalf of other individuals, be they members of the individual’s *ganong* (clan), *tabinaew* (estate), and/or *binaew* (village).

Indeed, 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 is nicely summarized by Schneider when he explains that:

The land of the *tabinau* [*tabinaew*] was made, and it took work, *magar* [*magaer*], 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*. (Schneider, 1984, p. 27; see also Egan, 1998, p. 92; Labby, 1976, pp. 32–33)

In this light, *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 understood to be imbued with moral value. Indeed, it is interesting 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 (1977a) Yapese–English dictionary as both 'you have become tired' and 'thank you.'<sup>15</sup>

Closely connected to the concept of *magaer* is the concept of *athamagil*, which I gloss here as 'perseverance,' 'endurance' or 'striving.' The term *athamagil* can be used as an adjective, an intransitive verb, and if modified with the suffix *-liy* can also be used as a transitive verb. Jensen's (1977a) dictionary translates the adjectival and intransitive verb forms as 'perseverant' or 'patient,' while rendering the transitive verb 'to strive for.' School report cards in Yap currently use the term as a translation of the English term 'effort.' Although, I had numerous people explain to me that this was a rather inadequate translation. Instead, *athamagil* connotes both excellence and perfection in striving or enduring through suffering, hardship, adversity, and challenge. And as such, it is held to be one of the most valued qualities in a person. As perseverance, endurance, or striving, *athamagil* is closely tied to suffering (*gaafgow*). In fact, *athamagil* is construed to be a virtuous quality precisely because one's ability to endure or persevere in the face of suffering is perhaps one of the core virtues in Yapese culture. It is *athamagil* that enables an individual to endure in the face of the pain and exhaustion that arises when participating in family, village, and community mandated work projects (*maruweel*) and it is thus *athamagil* that enables an individual to experience *magaer*.

Inasmuch as *athamagil* is directly associated with work, effort, and physical activity, it is interesting to note that the term itself contains the morpheme *aath*, which literally refers to the smoke that rises from a fire.

There are a few other Yapese terms that are similarly based upon this root morpheme and when taken together evidence connotative connections to the sensory based experiences of exertion, exhaustion, and effort. The most salient of these terms include: *athiithiy* (vi), to sweat; *athuwk* (n), sweat, perspirational *athigthig* (v, a), 'grubby,' sweaty from work; *athngool* (a), to be bored with, tired of, to be sweaty.

As one well-respected elder commented, *laen ea athamagil baaq magaer u fithik* ('within endurance, effort, and perseverance there is exertion, exhaustion, and fatigue in the midst'). With *athamagil* comes *athuwk* ('sweat'). And sweat serves as an indication to others that an individual is experiencing *magaer*. In experiencing *magaer* individuals should thereby be recognized for their expenditure of effort and energy with the saying *kam magaer* ('thank you,' 'you have become tired').

To sum up, in Yapese cultural logic an individual's effort or physical exertion (*magaer*) is ideally directed toward the care and cultivation of the estate's land holdings (*tabinaew*), which are significantly tied to an individual's ability to *athamagil*, to strive to endure through one's physical suffering (one's exhaustion, fatigue, pain, hunger, etc.). And it is endurance in the face of suffering that is evoked through one's effortful exertion in the form of work or service for the benefit of the estate that is the basis for evoking feelings of *runguy* ('compassion') in those of higher status (in this case the husband, his sisters and his mother) for those of lower status (the wife and her children) who are all contributing to the estate through their effortful striving in the face of hardship, adversity and suffering.

### *Amiithuun ea Binaew* ('Pain of the Village')

Returning more directly to the topic of pain, closely related to this discussion of the interplay of suffering (*gaafgow*), endurance (*athamagil*), effortful exertion (*magaer*) and compassion (*runguy*) is the concept of *amiithuun ea binaew* – which can be understood as concern, attachment, love, and/or positive pride for one's village. The phrase *amiithuun ea binaew*, however, can be translated 'pain of the village.' It is in coming to better understand the idea of 'pain of the village' that we are able to further see the ways in which experiences of pain, such as those associated with *maath keenil*, are able to gain moral worth for individual sufferers.

The phrase *amiithuun ea binaew* is made up of the term for village (*binaew*), the noun phrase connector *ea*, and the term *amiithuun*, which is itself a combination of the morpheme *amiith*, a noun referring to the sensation of pain, and the directly suffixed third-person possessive *-uun*. As noted earlier, the term *amiithuun* may be used in the context of describing the direct material cause of a physical pain (e.g., *amiithuun ea gargael* – 'childbirth's pain'), in referring to pains associated with specific varieties of illness (e.g., *amiithuun ea maath'keenil* – 'maath'keenil's pain'), or in

the case of *amiithuun ea binaew*, in indexing a feeling state very similar to that of *runguy*. Indeed, to say *kab amiithuun ngeak* (literally 'there comes his or her pain') is to evoke the image of great care, love, compassion, and concern for another. Moreover, the term is also often used in the context of songs of love in which phrases such as *be liyeg amiithuun* (literally, 'his or her pain is killing me') are used to generate images of intense feelings of loneliness, longing, attachment, and love in the listener.

One of the first individuals I questioned about the term explained that *amiithuun ea binaew* is a concept that was grounded directly in *maruweel*. As a number of others later concurred, *amiithuun ea binaew* is held to arise from collectively working and suffering 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. This feeling, one individual argued, is only hard-earned through effort, suffering, and work, and is experienced by many people with great intensity.

There seems to be a parallel evident here between the way in which individuals understood the generation of feelings of attachment within the village and within the family. Much like one's authority, rights, and title to a particular piece of land are understood to result from one's effort and one's labor, *amiithuun ea binaew*, one's feelings of attachment, concern, love, and pride for one's village, are similarly tied to the suffering, striving, and enduring of a community that is collectively working toward a common goal of building and improving the village. The cultivation of *amiithuun ea binaew* was repeatedly described in terms of a cycle in which striving, enduring, and effortful suffering were 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.

According to Yapese cultural logic, there seems to be a recurring theme of suffering and pain as a basis for engendering compassion, attachment, pity, and love in another; a dynamic of morally valenced sentiments that serves to define the generation of social relationships at a number of different levels in Yapese society. As noted earlier, the term *amiithuun* was also often used in ways very similar to that of *runguy*. Although, as one of my research assistants suggested, there is an important, yet subtle, difference between the two concepts. As she stated in English:

My picture of the word [*amiithuun*] is that it is more like a bond of attachment that is painful. 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*, which can sometimes be felt only in one direction.

Moreover, as one elder stressed to me, the presence or absence of *amiithuun* has significant consequences for an individual's moral worth. Thus to say *baaq amiithuun roek chanev* ('he or she has pain from that person') or *chanev ea baamit ea amiithuun ngaak* ('he or she has the quality of caring,' 'compassion,' 'concern') is to highlight a person's virtuous qualities. Whereas to say that a person is *daariy ea amiithuun* ('without pain'), is to present a very negative assessment of her moral character.

*'MERE-SUFFERING' VERSUS 'SUFFERING-FOR': ON TRANSITIVIZING  
DYSPHORIC EXPERIENCE*

A significant goal of my investigation into the experience of pain in Yap was to explore the ways in which dysphoric experiences like pain can be differentially articulated as meaningful morally valenced experiences, on the one hand, and as fundamentally disjunctive, 'world destroying' (Scarry, 1985) experiences, on the other hand (see Throop, 2005). In working through the data I collected for the project (consisting of interview data collected from 30 chronic pain sufferers and video-tape and observational data collected from interactions between 15 chronic and acute pain sufferers and their local healers), I came to see that one of the primary, but by no means only, routes through which such a configuration is affected is through providing a framework within which pain experienced in its immediacy as 'mere-suffering' is effectively transformed into an experience of 'suffering-for.' As Loewy argues, citing Victor Frankl, it is possible for experiences of pain to 'cease to be true suffering when they subserve a person's greater goal and become meaningful' (Loewy, 1991, p. 3).<sup>16</sup>

Briefly stated, the process of fashioning pain into a meaningful experience, that is, transforming it from an instance of 'mere-suffering' to one of 'suffering-for,' is deeply implicated in a sufferer's ability to situate such dysphoric experiences in a time frame that stretches beyond the present moment of pain. In the Yapese case discussed earlier, this temporal stretching is at least partially accomplished through an articulation of ongoing painful sensations with the virtues of endurance, effortful exertion, self-governance, and compassion – all virtues that may provide a meaningful bridge to a sufferer's history of past actions, as well as to possible future self-states in which his or her moral strivings may be potentially realized.

Of course, in speaking of the transformation of 'mere-suffering' to 'suffering-for' it is not enough that dysphoric experiences simply be situated in time. As Loewy notes, the very ability to suffer is at least partially predicated upon 'an appreciation of past, present, and future as connected' (Loewy, 1991, p. 12). And yet, it is very much an ability to extend one's temporal horizons beyond the confines of the present moment of pain that gives rise to possibilities for understanding one's

dysphoric experience as undergone or suffered through in light of some broader purpose or goal.

A key way in which this transformation may occur, I argue, is through a process of transitive dysphoric experiences through imbuing them with an intentional (in the Husserlian sense of the term as consciousness directed toward an intentional object; see Husserl, 1900–1901/1970) ‘-for’ structure. The significance of transitive experiences of pain is made all the more compelling given what many philosophers have held to be the non-intentional structure of pain states. For instance, 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. (Scarry, 1985, pp. 161–162)

In the context of Yapanese understandings of subjectivity, social action, and morality, however, it is precisely when pain is understood to arise or result from an individual’s efforts to provide for, contribute to, and help an individual sufferer’s family, village, and/or community, that dysphoric sensations can be actively oriented toward an intentional object. Recalling the attentional–synthetic model outlined earlier, in recursively patterning an individual’s attention to the ways that experiences of pain index previous and ongoing work on behalf of others, such dysphoric sensations are imbued with a ‘-for’ structure that emplaces pain within local moral sensibilities, models of virtuous comportment, and understandings of ethical subjectivity. Accordingly, such dysphoric experiences are made significant, valuable, and meaningful.

The connection between pain, suffering, endurance, and work, which lies at the heart of Yapanese articulations of the good life and the good person, resonates with Scarry’s insights into the general phenomenological relationship between pain and work. According to Scarry, the activity entailed in work does:

Under all circumstances, and regardless of whether it is primarily physical or mental labor, entail the much more moderate (and now willed, directed, and controlled) embodied aversiveness of exertion, prolonged effort, and exhaustion. It hurts to work. Thus, the wholly passive and acute suffering of physical pain becomes the self-regulated and modest suffering of work.

Work is, then, a diminution of pain: the *aversive intensity* of pain become in work *controlled discomfort*. (Scarry, 1985, pp. 170–171)

Once transsitivized as a form of ‘controlled discomfort’ the temporal structure of ‘suffering-for’ can be compared with phenomenological characterizations of the temporal structure embedded in the experience of hope (Crapanzano, 2003). Drawing from Heidegger (1996), Minkowski (1970), and others, Crapanzano (2003) observes that in the phenomenological tradition, hope is described according to a temporal structure oriented to what Minkowski terms the ‘mediate future.’<sup>17</sup> Poised between the immediate future of expectation and action and the remote future of prayer and ethical activity, hope is held to open for a given experiencer an as yet unrealized future. In Heideggerian terms, Crapanzano argues, hope can be tied to care (*sorge*), which is based upon an experience that ‘something is still outstanding’ (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 9). There is, therefore, a quality of transcendence that is invested in hope, which as Minkowski asserts, ‘separates us from immediate contact with ambient becoming: it suppresses the embrace of expectation and permits me to look freely, far into lived space which now opens before me’ (Minkowski, 1970, p. 100; cited in Crapanzano, 2003, p. 9). Thus through hope, individuals are ‘put into contact with a becoming that is unfolding at a distance’ (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 9). The mediate future of hope can therefore be contrasted with the atrophied futurity that is held to be characteristic of despair and hopelessness. And yet, as Crapanzano also argues, despair is rarely divested of temporality since there are still often possibilities for ‘hope-in-hopelessness.’

I believe the temporal structure that I am attributing to the experience of ‘suffering-for’ is perhaps best understood as shifting between the mediate futurity that Minkowski characterizes as entailed in hope and the more distal future he attributes to prayer. Moreover, unlike these phenomenological and existential renderings of hope, I would argue that ‘suffering-for’ is deeply implicated in both distal and proximate pasts, which reach back from the immediate unfolding of the present moment to residues of one’s own, one’s family’s, one’s community’s, and one’s ancestors’ histories of work, effort, and exertion.

It is significant that, in this regard, the Yapese term that can perhaps be most closely rendered as ‘hope’ is *athapaag*; a term that is closely connected with *athamagil*. Indeed, the morpheme *aath* (which was earlier linked to the physical sequelae of work, effort, and exertion) is used in both, and both implicate an orientation to a future. A key difference between the two terms may be understood in light of what is largely the former’s dissociation from practical action, and the latter’s embeddedness in ongoing and eventuating activity. And it is often a social actor’s attempts to *athamagil* that serve to imbue suffering with a ‘-for’ structure.

In the context of Yapese medical theory, a primary means through which the process of transforming 'mere-suffering' into 'suffering-for' is accomplished through designating certain experiences of pain as resulting from illnesses that are associated with those activities adumbrated in local models of virtuous comportment and ethical subjectivity. By situating pain in the context of such illnesses, pain can be construed as an indication that a given social actor is indeed approximating the virtues of effortful exertion (*magaer*), perseverance (*athamagil*), and suffering (*gaafgow*).

As we saw earlier, while the sensations of pain and weakness implicated in both *maath'keenil'* and *magaer* are certainly most often experienced as dysphoric (*maath'keenil'* is held to be an illness after all), they are also imbued with a definite moral valence. To the extent that an individual's actions, framed in terms of effort and work undertaken in the service of family, estate, village and/or community needs, are seen as the generative source for experiences of *amiith*, individuals are thus able to interpret their pain as a virtuous form of 'suffering-for.' In other words, by adding a '-for' structure to their suffering, individuals are not only framing their effort and labor as undertaken for the benefit of another. But, are also organizing their subjectivities to align with a temporality that positions them between a past defined in terms of commitment to those ancestors who had previously worked the land, a present which is predicated upon continuing service to and respect for those contemporaries who currently hold title to that land, and a future in which obligations to those of a higher status are to be eventually fulfilled.

### CONCLUSION

Pain states, like all forms of sensation, are in continuous flux, ever-changing through time. That is, phenomenologically speaking, pain does not remain 'similar' in terms of its qualitative attributes in the streaming flux of subjective life. To wit, when we talk about meaningful experiences of pain we are, in reality, talking about (often co-constructed) interpretive overlays upon an ever-shifting sensory phenomena. In this light, when an individual communicates that a series of painful moments or episodes constitutes coherent, interconnected events, this is the case only inasmuch as there is a socially available, and at times collaboratively accomplished, framework that configures the perception of these events as being of the same kind. As such, what would otherwise be a series of discrete experiences may be interleaved along the recollected and imagined temporal trajectories of a suffering self whose present preoccupations with a fluctuating dysphoric experience may be aligned with personal and cultural assumptions about virtuous comportment, ethical subjectivity, the good life, and what it means to be a good person.

In configuring experiences of pain according to core cultural virtues – virtues that in Yap are deeply implicated in an ethical system that pivots on the nexus of pain and suffering engendered through hard work and service – many of the sufferers I spoke to were able to recast painful sensations in light of core cultural understandings of what it means to be a good person and to lead a good life. Sensations associated with effortful striving, physical exhaustion, suffering, and bodily pain that are linked, either retrospectively or prospectively, to these contexts may thus be re- (or pre-) cast as morally valenced and meaningful lived experiences.

According to the literary theorist David Morris (1991), our struggles to imbue pain with meaning serve to transform it from a simple sensation to a complex perception. As a perception, painful sensations are organized in an experiential field that is suffused with value, meaning, and emotion. In traversing the expanse from pain to virtue, what might otherwise be held to be the most ‘basic’ (and yet also dramatic and compelling) elements of our subjective life – experiences of pain – are infused with moral, cognitive, and affective valences, and as such are inextricably and importantly linked to both personal and collective histories.

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## NOTES

1. As Kirmayer (1989) notes, many of these commonsense assumptions are grounded in 'a continuous metaphysical tradition in western thought, traceable from the pre-Socratic philosophers down through the medieval alchemists, expressed by such metaphoric contrasts as active, hot, male and right, on the one hand, versus passive, cold, female and left, on the other hand. Paralleling this are contrasts between reason and passion, thought and emotion, free will and compulsion, matter and spirit, mortality and immortality, and so on . . . These polarities are hidden behind the colloquial uses of "mind" and "body" and also condition their implicit use in medical classification of distress' (p. 76). Schrag (1982, p. 113) maintains that sensory characterizations of pain in philosophy are rooted in a much broader metaphor of the internal versus external that translates into recurrent debates between introspectionist and behaviorist accounts of pain. As Schrag puts it, for 'the introspectionist, pain is an interior psychic state or event, knowable through some species of internal reflection; and the behavior of the organism is at most an exterior sign of an interior happening. For the behaviorist, on the other hand, pain is reducible to the external behavioral reactions, and the language of internal states of consciousness becomes superfluous and suspect' (Schrag, 1982, p. 113).
2. In psychological literature devoted to the study of pain there is also the acknowledgment that the experience of pain goes well beyond 'merely the sensory.' For example, Melzack and Torgerson (1971; see also Melzack, 1975) argue that lexical categories of pain description in English have at least three distinct dimensions that include the sensory, cognitive (evaluative), and emotional.
3. This is of course a greatly simplified rendering of Descartes' views on the topic (see Rey, 1998, p. 74).
4. As Landar observes, Aristotle 'excluded pain from his enumeration of the senses not because of any a priori proof that there can be no sixth sense but because he could not decide upon the object of pain in the same way that he could decide that the object of sight, for example is color' (Landar, 1967, p. 120).
5. Given that this issue of *Transcultural Psychiatry* is devoted to advancing a medical anthropology of sensation I have made a deliberate choice to foreground the ways in which approaches to the senses and sensation in anthropology may inform an understanding of how pain is fashioned into a moral experience. Accordingly, I have not provided a detailed examination of the pain literature per se, which is, however, accessible to interested readers in the context of a number of excellent and thorough reviews: see Classen, 2005; DelVecchio Good et al., 1992; Garro, 1990, 1992; Good, 1992, 1994; Jackson, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 2000; Kirmayer, 2007; Kleinman, 1988; Morris, 1991; Rey, 1998; Throop, 2005.
6. Some readers may take issue with the fact that in evoking Foucault in this article I do not work to explicitly discuss issues of power and processes of normalization. The reader should note, however, that I am drawing

explicitly from Foucault's later work – namely the second and third volume of his *History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1985, 1986) and his recently published lectures on the *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005) – in which the accent is placed not upon power, but upon the formation of ethical subjectivities in particular historical communities of practice (namely, Early Greek, Roman, and Christian communities). As Frédéric Gros notes, in the context of his late writings and lectures, Foucault moves away from his longstanding interest in issues of power to those of the historicity of the subject, ethics, and truth. According to Gros, during this later period of Foucault's thinking, he 'maintains that this problem of the subject, and not that of power, is his main concern, and has been for more than twenty years of writing' (Gros, 2005, p. 512). In Foucault's own words 'Thus, it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research' and 'Thus I am far from being a theoretician of power' (cited in Gros, 2005, p. 512). Moreover, as Joel Robbins notes, the usefulness of Foucault's later ideas concerning moral systems and forms of subjectivation for anthropological investigations into issues of ethics and subjectivity are that they 'put in place a conceptual framework that can guide . . . comparison. Foucault's framework is especially useful in that it analyzes moral systems into various parts, allowing for a comparison that locates precisely those parts that are similar and those that are different' (Robbins, 2004, p. 216).

7. With the extent to which effort, exertion, and work are implicated in local understandings of disease etiology, it is perhaps not so surprising that there is also a significant link between illness (*m'aar*), laziness (*malmaal*), and an inability to withstand hardship, adversity, and pain (*amiith*). This connection is perhaps most clearly crystallized in the concept of *muudul* ('the inability to suffer pain or to endure illness'). Significantly, the term *muudul* is also used to indicate that an individual is lazy (*malmaal*), particularly in the context of referring to persons who claim to be sick when they are in fact healthy in order to get out of doing work. As such, laziness (*malmaal*) is also saturated with moral undertones.
8. It is also possible to use the unmodified noun *amiith* in conjunction with the preposition *ko* to make a somewhat more direct statement of the relationship between a particular variety of pain and its causative object (e.g., *amiith ko nōw* – 'pain of a stone fish').
9. This list was generated in the context of a broader compilation of terms for internal states in Yapese.
10. Much like the case of genitive constructions, it is worth noting a possible significance for such reduplicative forms when employed as descriptors of pain states. According to Jensen (1977b, p. 114), one of the main functions of reduplication in the context of Yapese verbs that are also modified with the diminutive prefix *si-*, is to express a meaning of 'somewhat, a little bit' (e.g., *toey* – 'chop' vs. *sitoeytoey* – 'to chop a little'). When employed in the context of adjectives, by contrast, reduplication allows for an inchoative adjective, implying a process of becoming, to be transformed into an attributive adjective, implying a resulting state of affairs (e.g., *roow* 'to become red')

vs. *roowroow* ‘to have become red/to be red’). In the case of these pain descriptors, however, reduplication possibly serves still yet another purpose, one that highlights the temporal or repetitive quality of the sensations constituting a particular variety of pain, and perhaps additionally the degree of their intensity. Both these temporal and intensive qualities are to some extent described metaphorically through the iconicity implicated in the morpho-phonemic structure of these various verbs. Indeed, as Geurts (2002, p. 77) notes in her work with Anlo-Ewe reduplicative morphemes in Ghana, one possible feature of reduplication lies in the creation of ideophones; morphemes whose meanings are at last partially predicated upon their onomatopoeic qualities. Such reduplicative forms, inasmuch as they can be considered to be ideophonic, may thus function ‘at a certain level to sensorially evoke that which they represent’ (Geurts, 2002, p. 78). These qualitative (particularly spatial) aspects of pain are not restricted to representation through reduplicative forms, however. Such qualities can further be captured through constructions that utilize both the stative tense-aspect marker *ba* and the indefinite article *ba*. Here both may be utilized in order to describe the quality and/or spatial location of pain. For example, it is possible to express deep pain through the phrase *ba amiith ni ba tooqaer* (‘a pain that is deep’). The intensity of pain is often marked, by contrast, through a predicative adjectival verb phrase in which the stative tense-aspect marker *ba* is combined with inchoative adjectives such as *geel* (‘to become strong’) or *waer* (‘to become weak’), the noun phrase connector *ea*, the noun *amiith*, and the impersonal pronoun *riy*, which often highlights location and/or the source of motion (‘at it, from it’): e.g., *ba geel ea amiith riy* (‘there is strong/intense pain from it’). Finally, it is also possible to use a third-person descriptive verb, the noun phrase connector *ea*, and the noun *amiith*, to metaphorically describe a particular quality of pain (e.g., *be th’aeb ea amiith*, ‘it is cutting, the pain’).

11. As Charles Sanders Peirce (1878/1992b, p. 132) explained in ‘How to Make our Ideas Clear,’ pragmatism (or what he later referred to as pragmaticism) should ‘Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conceptions to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object.’ William James similarly argued in ‘What Pragmatism Means,’ (1907/1995, p. 18) ‘To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve – what sensations we are to expect from it and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all.’
12. Jensen (1977a) provides different phonological renderings for ‘garbage heap’ (*dooq*), ‘garbage, trash, rubbish’ (*dow*) and ‘body’ (*doow*). Given the prevalence for dialectal variations in the pronunciation of a great many Yapese terms I am not at all certain that these particular phonological and semantic ascriptions are definitive. Moreover, the fact that a number of individuals living in differing municipalities independently pointed out the connection

between the term for 'trash' and the term for 'body,' suggests to me that, regardless of the accuracy of these local etymologies, there was at the very least a strong culturally elaborated conceptual association between these two terms.

13. The concept of *runguy* was first explored in some detail in the context of David Schneider's (1949) dissertation, where he translated the term as 'love.' *Runguy* is a complex term, however, with a broad semantic range that at times overlaps with the English term. This Schneider at least partially recognized when he noted that the 'word "love" (*rungui*) [sic] is not confined to heterosexual attraction, but includes the affection between a parent and child and the affection which obtains between two persons of the same sex' (Schneider, 1949, p. 72). Moreover, he noted that, much like the usage of 'love' in English-speaking North American and western European communities, a great 'value is set on love [*runguy*]' (Schneider, 1949, p. 93) in helping to define family relationships. To be fair to Schneider, I should note that while never alluding to his own earlier interpretations of the term in his dissertation, he did, however, in the context of a much later work, draw on a personal communication with John Kirkpatrick, one of his former students, to assert that *runguy* was best glossed as "'compassion" and is . . . not to be confused with amity' (Schneider, 1984, p. 33).
14. In Yape, there are a number of terms, aside from *runguy*, that overlap, at least to some degree, with those semantic fields encompassed by the English term 'love.' For example, there is the term *adaag*, which refers to anything from 'liking' to 'wanting' to 'desiring,' and which can be used equally for objects and people. *Tufeg*, which connotes a form of 'cherishing' and 'caring,' and is often used to describe an individual's actions, and not necessarily his or her feelings. There is also the term *taawureeng*, which is more closely related to *runguy* and is used to refer to those feelings evoked when one is separated from one's spouse, lover, close friend, relative, or community. In addition, there is the term *amiithuun* that can be translated literally as 'pain of,' and which is often used to refer to feelings of attachment, care, and 'love' for one's village or one's community. Interestingly, however, despite these various terms that resonate to some extent with the concept of 'love,' I often witnessed individuals switching to English when they sought to express their feelings of love or caring for another. For example, it was very common to hear parents and children alike tell each other 'love you.'
15. 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 interesting to note that there is a distinction made in Yap between work understood as a form of intentional activity, called *maruweel*, and the sensorially based sequelae of such intentional activity in the form of *magaer*.
16. It is important to note that for this reason, many scholars have sought to make a careful distinction between pain and suffering (Glucklick, 2001; Loewy, 1991). As Glucklick (2001, p. 11) makes clear, where pain is 'a sensation that is tangled with mental and even cultural experiences,' and is accordingly not necessarily always negatively valenced, suffering 'in contrast,

is not a sensation but an emotional and evaluative reaction to any number of causes, some entirely painless.' According to Glucklick and Loewy, suffering, unlike pain, is thus intrinsically a negatively formulated experience. In making a distinction between 'mere-suffering' and 'suffering-for,' however, I wish to point to the fact that not only pain, but also suffering may be cast in a more positive light.

17. Crapanzano is himself critical of what he takes to be phenomenology's lack of attention to the cultural and linguistic structuring of experience. Drawing from Whorf, he holds, for example, that much of Minkowski's 'description of hope rests on a division of time that correlates with the tense structure of Indo-European languages – indeed, with tense structure itself' (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 12). As he argues, 'We have to remember that phenomenology is the product of a particular cultural era that gives, for example, evidential priority to the individual, inner experience, consciousness, and a particular take on language that at once recognizes and denies its formative specificity. Whatever his take on language, the phenomenologist describes experience as if the language he is using is transparent. He brackets, so he insists, the natural (empirical) attitude in order to attain the pure structures of consciousness, without seeming to recognize that the natural attitude – the way we discriminate and evaluate ordinary objects and events – is embedded in his language of description' (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 11; cf. Duranti, 2006).

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