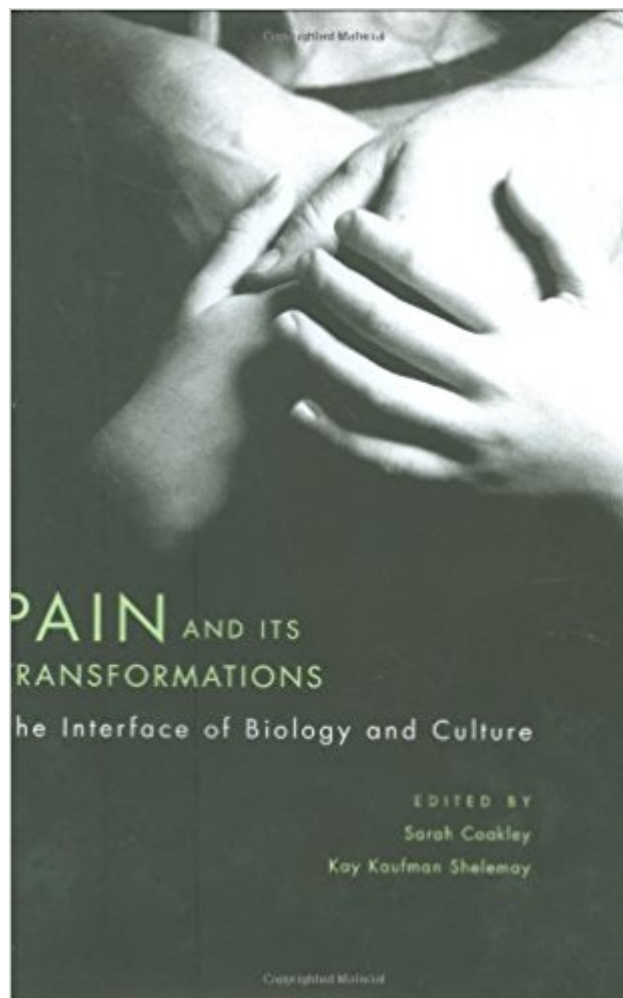




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Pain And Its Transformations: The Interface Of Biology And Culture (Mind/Brain/Behavior Initiative)



Synopsis

Pain is immediate and searing but remains a deep mystery for sufferers, their physicians, and researchers. As neuroscientific research shows, even the immediate sensation of pain is shaped by psychological state and interpretation. At the same time, many individuals and cultures find meaning, particularly religious meaning, even in chronic and inexplicable pain. This ambitious interdisciplinary book includes not only essays but also discussions among a wide range of specialists. Neuroscientists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, musicologists, and scholars of religion examine the ways that meditation, music, prayer, and ritual can mediate pain, offer a narrative that transcends the sufferer, and give public dignity to private agony. They discuss topics as disparate as the molecular basis of pain, the controversial status of gate control theory, the possible links between the relaxation response and meditative practices in Christianity and Buddhism, and the mediation of pain and intense emotion in music, dance, and ritual. The authors conclude by pondering the place of pain in understanding--or the human failure to understand--good and evil in history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The sixth and last of the Harvard Mind/Brain/Behavior interdisciplinary books, the most ambitious, and the most truly interdisciplinary of all. This book covers the waterfront in current pain research, from what we know about the biological concepts of pain in literature, the effects of music on pain,

and even the moral worth of pain. (John Dowling) Pain and Its Transformations is a goldmine. Never before has a single volume brought together such a large number of experts in numerous fields and tied their ideas together into a cohesive study of pain. This volume will be a singularly fecund first step into a number of promising research agendas. (Ariel Glucklich) These essays link to each other in a way that I have rarely seen in a collection. Coakley and Shelemay beautifully frame the entire project, locating it conceptually and making clear what are the stakes for the field of religion and science. In topic, participants, and results, it is the sort of interdisciplinary encounter that the field needs if it is to make progress. (Philip Clayton)

Sarah Coakley is Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity and Deputy Chair of Arts and Humanities at the University of Cambridge. Kay Kaufman Shelemay is G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music and Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University.

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