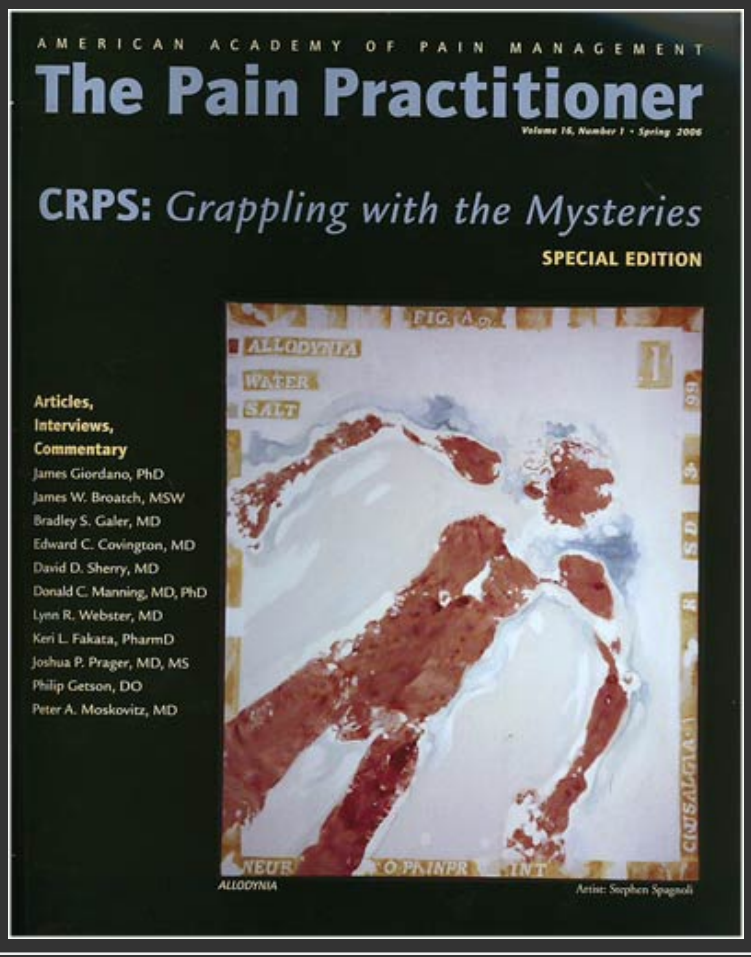
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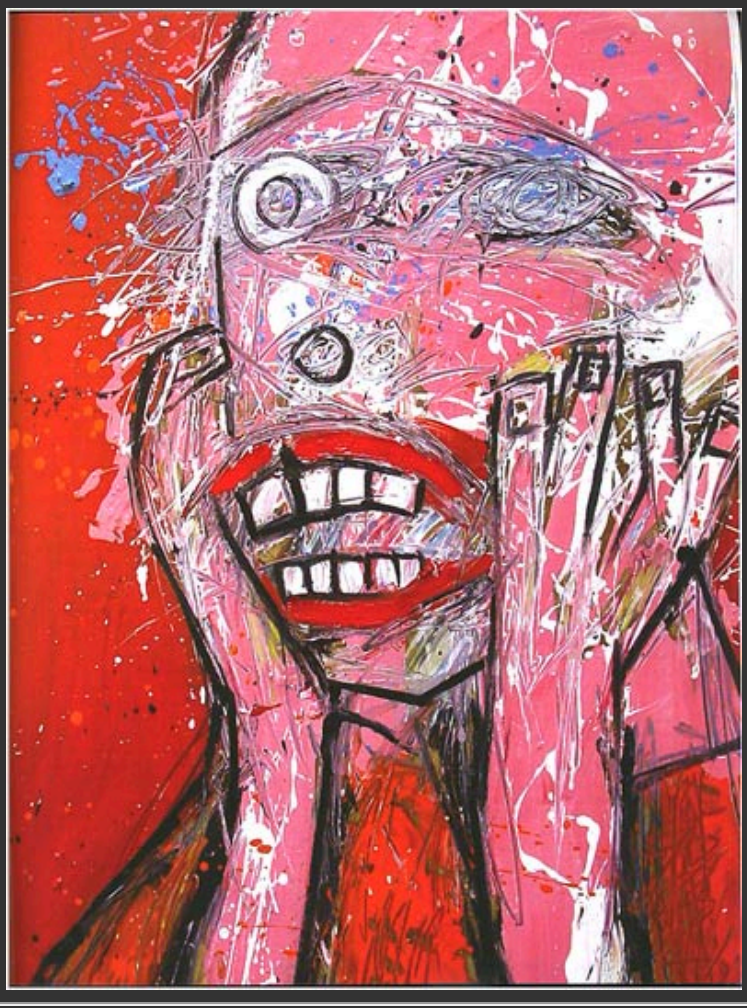
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A Theory of Suffering

BY PETER A. MOSKOVITZ, MD

I present here a personal theory of suffering. It differs from previous efforts to understand suffering by proposing that the nature of suffering is evolutionary and neurobiological, rather than metaphysical, phenomenological, or linguistic.

In this theory I argue six interrelated premises:

1. Persistent grief or fear evokes distinct bodily disturbances (somatic markers) that are experienced as suffering;
2. When pain evokes fear and grief, it has the same effect on the maps in the brain's body-sensing regions as do fear and grief alone;
3. Suffering is not an emotion, but it is an "emotionally competent stimulus," capable of evoking emotions;
4. The neural substrate for the experience of suffering requires, in part, the anterior cingulate cortex;
5. The evolution of suffering is essential to the communication of emotion and to mammalian nurturing; and
6. The capacity for suffering is the experiential precursor of empathy and altruism, which are the components of natural morality.

CRPS as the Quintessential Maldynic Pain Disorder

James Giordano used the term maldynia to address and describe the trajectory of chronic pain and stated that maldynia "... evokes considerable suffering, but the (direct) cause of this is pain qua [as] illness (1)." "Pain" and "suffering" are distinct experiences; suffering has causes other than pain. The suffering of grief, for example, is often severe and some

At Right 30"x40" oil on board. Matt Sesow is an independent American artist residing in Washington, DC. Visit his website at www.sesow.com

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