

“My Body Remembered”:
Trauma, Consciousness, and Bodily Memory

By
Ryan Kramer

Senior Honors Thesis
Department of Philosophy
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Approved:

Ram Neta, Thesis Advisor

Carla Merino-Rajme, Reader

Markus Kohl, Reader

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Abstract:

In this thesis, I seek to characterize the experience of insight in incidences of individuals remembering and recognizing “bodily memories” of traumatic events. These cases, identified through published narratives (see **Appendix A** for a selection of excerpts I will refer to throughout), focus on individuals who assert that “their body remembered” or “their body knowing before they did.” In addition to ascribing such thought-provoking descriptions, these individuals also describe an “aha!” (or “uh-oh”) moment, also known as insight. Altogether, I am examining phenomenology of two, apparently linked, experiences: the experience of insight, and the experience of reporting something called bodily memory.

I argue that the key to understanding these phenomena lies in the discussion of consciousness. Specifically, I present a conception of consciousness that emphasizes the ability of a state to serve as the basis for action and as a premise in reasoning. I then connect this to introspection and the role that introspection plays in our mental lives. Ultimately, I argue that the ability of a state to be capable of guiding action but to be not introspectable underwrites the phenomena of bodily memory and the experience of insight about thereof.

I. Introduction

In this section, I will provide an overview of the current taxonomy of memory as set forth by psychologists, neuroscientists, and philosophers. I will then discuss some of the more contentious cases, as developed by Mark Rowlands, and argue that the discourse on consciousness may prove illuminating. I will also introduce the narratives that I will cite throughout this thesis as examples of bodily memories, and discuss one essential feature to them, namely the experience of insight. Finally, I will connect the discussion of memory, consciousness, bodily memory, and insight to motivate the question that I seek to answer: what does it mean to have an insight experience wherein one reports a bodily memory?

Beginning with the discussion of memory, there are many different types of memory and divisions thereof. The first distinction proposed by psychologists is sensory memory (<1 second), short-term memory (<1 minute), and long-term memory. Indubitably, each is philosophically interesting, not to mention scientifically valuable. Sensory memory and short-term memory may help inform epistemology and philosophy of mind. Nonetheless, my interest is primarily on long-term memory. Long-term memory and knowledge help serve as the basis of our beliefs about ourselves and our lives, as well as guide our future actions and decisions. Some philosophers, such as John Locke, even go so far as to suggest that part of what it means to be the same person (in the sense that I am the same person today as I was when I was ten) is continuity/inheritance of our memories.¹

Not all memories are positive memories, however. Memories of trauma have attracted attention from cognitive scientists, physicians, psychologists, and philosophers alike for the often-unusual (and both adaptive and maladaptive) ways that they are processed and operate

¹ Michaelian and Sutton, "Memory."

within our mental lives. Freud identifies cases of “neuroses” where an unconscious state representing trauma exert unexpected effects, such as paralysis with no neurological etiology.² As a result of this, research is underway regarding what the similarities and differences are between our quotidian memory systems and how we remember trauma, and what each informs about our understanding of our mental lives.

Generally, there is a standard taxonomy for long-term memory. It is first divided into procedural memory and declarative memory; the former is memory of skills and tasks (i.e. how to hold a pen) and the latter is memory of facts and events. This distinction is not a perfect one. Consider the case of me skiing: I used to be a regular skier, so I have some degree of muscle memory and implicit knowledge of how to ski; however, I have not skied in years, thus I have to also remember “Oh, I am supposed to tilt my skis in this manner to go through these moguls.” I mention this as to show that, though the standard taxonomy provides significant clarity and is fairly widely accepted, there are many intermediate cases even at the first division, and there likely will continue to be intermediate cases as we progress throughout the taxonomy.

This paper will primarily focus on declarative memory. It is true that our procedural memories are part of the set of memories that help “make us who we are”; my memory of how to swim breaststroke is part of what it is to be me. Nonetheless, I will be primarily focusing on declarative memory, as it is generally this type of memory that we act on, report on, and perform all sorts of rational actions on the basis of. In other words, because my interest primarily lies in how memory factor into our rational (mental) lives, I will be turning to declarative memory.

Declarative memory, too, can be divided into two subtypes. The first subtype is semantic memory, which is considered to be memory of facts. The second subtype is episodic memory,

² Freud, “Part III. General Theory of the Neuroses.”

which is memory of events or experiences. The two can co-occur: I remember that the peregrine falcon is the fastest member of the animal kingdom (semantic memory), and I remember myself sitting on the train to New York City reading an article about falcons when I found this out (episodic memory). Sometimes, memories that are originally episodic can degenerate into semantic memories,³ though the inverse does not appear to be possible. For example, shortly after I swam my fastest race in senior year, I remembered swimming the race as an episodic memory. Since then, I have lost the “episodicity”; now I merely remember it as a fact (“I swam a 33.24 50m breaststroke my senior year of high school.”) Rowlands argues that this is mediated by the “Presence of Self in Memory” (“PSM”) which is necessary and sufficient for a memory to be episodic, and when lost, renders a previously episodic memory now semantic.⁴ PSM is the property of a memory such that it is remembered “as something that you have experienced.” Rowlands then uses his conception of episodic memories, and memory more generally, to argue for the existence of what he calls “Rilkean memories,” a type of bodily memory. It is to bodily memories, more generally, that I will now turn. The framework of types of memory as I have presented it (short- vs. long-term, declarative vs. procedural, semantic vs. episodic) characterizes the memories that we typically think of when we say “memory,” but provides little clarity about bodily memories. However, it’s not immediately clear what it means to have a bodily memory. As mentioned earlier, Rowlands develops his own theory of bodily memories (Rilkean memories) that are contentless memories that arise by “transforming” the “act” of remembering following the forgetting of the content of the memory.⁵ Freud proposes a theory of memory in which there are unconscious states that result in bodily manifestations and might be considered

³ Rowlands, *Memory and the Self*.

⁴ Rowlands.

⁵ Rowlands, “Rilkean Memory.”

bodily memories.⁶ There is, to my knowledge, no clear consensus on what it means to have a bodily memory. Thus, it is my hope in this thesis to help clarify what it amounts to when we say someone “has/had a bodily memory.”

I intend to do so by turning to the discussion of consciousness. Generally, procedural memory is considered a type of implicit memory and unconscious, whereas declarative memory is considered explicit and conscious. One unique feature of bodily memories is that their content is declarative in nature (specifically, in the samples presented, episodic⁷) but the memory is “unconscious” (on our naïve understanding of unconsciousness). For this reason, I argue that the discussion of consciousness may inform our understanding of bodily memory.

In this thesis, I will cite three narratives in which individuals report bodily memory. These narratives were found online by searching the key phrases “bodily memory” and “my body knew.” The first was published in a peer-reviewed journal with the intent of engendering new policies against predatory behavior in youth athletics. The second was published through the national #MeToo movement to enrich the discussion by providing additional experiences. The third was published on a website for mothers and served as a testimony for grief and for faith. These narratives serve as real-life examples of bodily memory. If we seek to understand what it means to have a bodily memory, I argue that the best play to turn is to individuals who ascribe it to themselves and determine if there is some commonality that explains why each deploys this concept, and if that commonality is elucidating about bodily memory itself. In this thesis, I will argue there are genuine commonalities that furnish a better understanding of what people are referring to when they report “bodily memory.”

Interestingly, two of the three narratives report an experience of insight. Insight is often

⁶ Freud, “Part III. General Theory of the Neuroses.”

⁷ For discussion of what role episodic memories, in particular, play in bodily memory, see **Appendix B**.

described as the “aha!” or “uh-oh” moment. These can occur in problem solving settings (e.g. the Random Association Test, in which three words are presented and one must find a fourth word that unifies them) or in more quotidian settings (e.g. I go to the supermarket, can tell that I’m forgetting an ingredient to buy, then suddenly realize what it is). One of the particularly interesting components of the experiences of insight articulated in the narratives is that they are not cases of re-examining a problem, “thinking outside the box” to discern a solution, or recombining previously unrelated components, as often is the case for examples of insight. Rather, the narrators suddenly are able to remember something that previously was not (at least *prima facie*) consciously accessible: the content of the bodily memories. Thus, the insight experiences in the narratives seem to be linked, in some capacity, to the narrator’s bodily memories. It is not immediately clear if there is a causative link, or whether there is an independent factor that binds both; nonetheless, it seems that each is important in understanding the other in the narratives. Also interesting is that the product of the insight is, in many ways, explanatory. The narrators identify a cause of their experiences or a factor guiding their action; the memory of the trauma helps explain many otherwise disparate factors (e.g. mental states, sensations, actions). This added feature of the insight experience will, I argue, prove to be the link between the bodily memory and the insight experience.

Ultimately, my thesis hopes to answer the question: What does it mean to have a bodily memory, and for it to engender an experience of insight? I argue that discussion of consciousness will help characterize this phenomenon. A first pass at elucidating the concept of consciousness produces a conscious versus unconscious paradigm; ultimately, though I will argue this is inadequate in explaining the phenomenon of interest. Ned Block argues for a distinction between Access- and Phenomenal-consciousness, with the former being identified as the type of

consciousness involved in guiding rational action. I will argue that it misses an essential feature, which is introspectability, and this is in fact what drives the aforementioned phenomenon.

I want to make a brief but important point before proceeding. In this thesis, I discuss extensively Block's theory of consciousness. I do so because this framework allows me to present these narrators' thoughts and actions as rational, which I take to be an ethically important feature of my project. Block's account also emphasizes features, namely a state's rationalizing functions and subjective features, in a way that I find persuasive regarding a successful conception of consciousness. Finally, though it is by no means uncontroversial, Block's conception of A- and P-consciousness is regarded as promising and has many proponents. I believe this shows that this phenomenon and the states underlying it, as I describe them, can exist within a broader, established conception of consciousness. (In other words, my argument does not wholly break with tradition.)

That said, I acknowledge that not all readers endorse Block's conception of consciousness. I do not seek to persuade them otherwise. Perhaps one instead chooses to endorse the transitive versus intransitive consciousness paradigm, or another conception altogether. Essentially, though, I do not believe this invalidates my argument or goal. It might be the case that we disagree on the nomenclature of the states in these narratives; I will eventually call them non-introspectable A-conscious states, but perhaps one might call them unconscious arational states or transitively conscious semi-rational states. The label depends on one's conception of consciousness and rationality. Nonetheless, even if we disagree on nomenclature, I believe my project succeeds if we agree on the label's content—if we agree that there is a distinct type of state that underlies this phenomenon of bodily memory and insight in survivors of trauma.

II. Consciousness and Memory

Earlier, I motivated the question: What does it mean to have an experience of insight wherein one reports a bodily memory? I argued that consciousness is a key component to answering this question; thus, I will now appraise one of the narratives as it relates to consciousness/unconsciousness in order to better understand the role of consciousness in the phenomenon of interest.

It is, generally speaking, well-accepted that there is such thing as unconscious memory, at least on the naïve understanding of the unconscious. Many are benign—delightful, even. (For example, my very positive childhood memory of an ice cream shop in Cape Cod, which I had not been able to consciously access until my family showed me a photo of it, whereupon I suddenly remembered the sights and smells.) Some unconscious memories are far more unpleasant. Freud and Breuer, notably, argued for a concept they termed “repression.” As they construed it, repression occurs when the “intolerable idea is forced out of the self’s consciousness.”⁸ Certain thoughts, beliefs, and memories are simply too painful to include in the conscious sphere; thus, they are excluded.

It is worth noting that the delineation between “conscious” and “unconscious” is not a particularly clear one. In fact, there is ongoing discussion about the concept of consciousness itself: Is it one thing, or many? Might it be a cluster concept? Or are those separate things different enough to warrant conceptual distinction?⁹ These refinements later will prove to be illuminating. However, we will begin by examining the phenomenon described in the above narratives using the naïve understanding of consciousness.

⁸ Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*.

⁹ Block, Flanagan, and Guzeldere, *The Nature of Consciousness*.

Consider the following narrative, **Excerpt Two**, which describes a woman interacting with a man who had sexually assaulted her. She loosely recalls the event itself (she was inebriated when it occurred) but is not conscious of the fact that it constitutes anything objectionable, much less illegal. Yet, when she encountered him later, she reacts as if she is conscious of that fact:

I hardly knew him, and hadn't spoken three sentences to him before he [raped me]. A few weeks later, I saw him at a basketball game, and he tried to joke around with me and lightly, maybe even kindly, put his hand on my arm. I shocked him, and myself, when I quickly pulled my arm away, looked him straight in the eye, and said, "Don't you ever touch me again." My body knew, way before my mind or heart did.¹⁰

In **Excerpt Two**, the narrator expresses surprise at her reaction; to her, it is unexpected and even (at the time) seemingly undeserved. On what basis did she act the way she did? I argue that she acted on the basis of the knowledge that he violated her. Either the narrator acted irrationally, or she acted rationally (or somewhere in between). I am inclined to say she did act rationally—we know he did, in fact, violate her, and ethical factors (such as supporting survivors of sexual violence) compel me to assume rationality unless given reason otherwise. If she did act rationally, she must have acted on the basis of something; there must be some reason for which she acted. What is this reason? The only reason, that is available to us in this narrative, that could rationalize her behavior is the knowledge of his violation of her. Thus, if we seek to affirm that the narrator's action as rational (insofar as it was guided by reasons), then we find that we must endorse the narrator's knowledge of her assault.

Yet, the narrator herself says that "[her] body knew, way before [her] mind." The narrator was "shocked" by her actions. While her action is rationalized by her knowledge of her assault, the knowledge of the assault is not conscious. If it were conscious, it would not shock her, and

¹⁰ "Yellin 'Me Too.'"

she would not explicitly identify that her body (or something other than her introspectable mental facilities) knew before her mind did. So, where does this leave us? On this conceptualization of consciousness, the narrator acted on the basis of unconscious knowledge.

III. The Unconscious and Action

The view that one (in this case, the narrator) may act on the basis of unconscious states has some merit. Some authors, such as Freud and Breuer, argue for this analysis.¹¹ Nonetheless, I argue that this view of consciousness and unconsciousness misses what I take to be an important feature of consciousness and produces falsely equivalent unconscious states.

When discussing consciousness, we often say a person is conscious of a certain thing or state. Some have likened this usage of “X is conscious of Y” to “X is aware of Y.” When one is aware of a thing or state, they can report on it, act on it, use it as a premise in deliberation, and, more generally, perform rationally-assessable actions on the basis of it. These actions, at least intuitively, seem to belong to the conscious sphere of our mental lives. Yet, in the above analysis, the narrator is acting and reasoning on the basis of an unconscious state. Under the aforementioned conceptualization rationally-assessable action on the basis of a state, it would be conceptually impossible to rationally act on the basis of an unconscious state. That which guides action is necessarily conscious in virtue of its actionability—to label that state as unconscious is incorrect, then.

This reasoning leaves us with the following question: Is something conscious in virtue of one’s ability to perform rationally-assessable actions on the basis of it, or can unconscious states serve as the basis for performing rationally-assessable actions too? I seek to endorse the former. If we endorse the latter,¹² what does consciousness amount to other than the phenomenal/experiential aspect? What is specifically special about consciousness? It seems undesirable to say that consciousness is merely qualia; consciousness seems to do work in rational action as well. If rational action can be guided by both consciousness and

¹¹ Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*.

¹² Meaning that both conscious and unconscious states factor into rational action.

unconsciousness, then it seems that the role and significance of consciousness is markedly reduced.

I do not take this to be a knockdown argument; there continue to be reasons to endorse the idea that unconscious states may guide rational action. As I will later discuss, though, there are some authors who take actionability to be so central a role of consciousness that they take it to be something *in virtue of which* a state is conscious.

Above, I discuss what the view that unconscious states may serve as the basis of rational action says about consciousness. What does this view say about the unconscious? I argue that unconsciousness is construed too broadly; unconsciousness states, on this view, are too heterogeneous to belong to a singular concept. Consider the following two states:

1. I have an unconscious fear of drowning, which, unbeknownst to me, factors into my hesitance in booking a beach weekend with my friends.
2. I have an unconscious fear I will be a bad father someday, upon which I do not act.

I argue there is something different about the two states at this time. State 1 guides action and engages in rational deliberation that is not introspectable. State 2 does not guide action; it merely lies latent in my unconscious. Thus, there are states that are “truly unconscious” in the naïve sense (that is to say, the states are present but not introspectable, not actionable, and there are no qualia overtly associated with them) and there are states that are unconscious but capable of guiding action and may even be associated with qualia. The latter of the two seems to possess qualities we generally associate with consciousness, and yet the two are both considered unconscious on this view.

Perhaps one solution is to divide unconsciousness into two categories: unconsciousness that guides rational action and unconsciousness that does not. Interestingly, the former category—unconscious states that may guide action and operate in rational processes—is very

similar to another conception of consciousness, proposed by Ned Block. Block identifies the same idea, namely that there is a component of our mental life beyond the experiential/phenomenal component, and this other component is the ability of a state to operate as a premise for rational action or inference.¹³ Critically, though, Block identifies this capacity as *conscious*, rather than part of the unconscious.

¹³ Block, "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness."

IV. Refinements of Consciousness: A-Consciousness and P-Consciousness

Earlier, I argued that the conscious/unconscious distinction is insufficient to account for the different features of memory and awareness thereof articulated in the narratives. I argued that there is a special category of states where they guide action but are not reportable (or are not introspectable) that the conscious/unconscious paradigm fails to describe well. Thus, I will now turn to Ned Block's conceptualization of consciousness which, I argue, does justice to that category and perhaps will allow for better understanding of the narratives.

Block proposes that consciousness is a "mongrel concept." There is no such thing as a singular "consciousness"; rather, consciousness comprises two concepts. The first type of consciousness is phenomenal consciousness ("P-consciousness") which is the experiential component of consciousness. P-consciousness is where the phenomenal character of consciousness originates. The second type of consciousness, according to Block, is access consciousness ("A-consciousness"). A state is A-conscious if it guides action, speech, and/or (a state need not fulfill all three) serve as a premise in reasoning. A-consciousness is not an intrinsic property of a given state, but rather a feature of a state at a given moment in time; Block uses the example of a car, which may or may not be accessible depending on whether his wife is using it or not.¹⁴ Typically, states that are A-conscious have corresponding P-conscious states. Consider a quotidian example: I brew a cup of coffee. I am A-conscious of the knowledge that it is hot, which serves a premise in my reasoning culminating in my belief that I should not immediately drink it. I am A-conscious of my desire for the coffee, which directs me to pick it up and begin drinking it as soon as I can. P-conscious states include my relaxation and pleasure in smelling the scent of freshly brewed coffee and the pain from drinking it while it is too hot. Some states, such

¹⁴ Block.

as pain, are both A- and P-conscious. Pain certainly guides action—if I am pain because the coffee is too hot, I will certainly not take another sip—but there is something to pain over-and-above its action-directing features. There is a distinct phenomenal component to pain; there something *it is like* to be in pain.¹⁵

I argue that the states that Block labels as A-conscious are also the states which the earlier, Freudian-inspired view, refer to as unconscious states that can guide rational action and deliberation. Block acknowledges that the status of A-consciousness as consciousness is not universally accepted, and certainly not intuitive.¹⁶ Perhaps it is, perhaps it is not. There is extensive philosophical and neuroscientific discussion about what constitutes/underwrites consciousness as opposed to unconsciousness.¹⁷ This is indubitably an important conversation; however, I believe it is beyond the scope of this paper. In fact, in this paper, I believe not much rests on whether or not A-consciousness is consciousness, unconsciousness, or something in-between, should such a “space” exist. Rather, what I take to be important is that there is a category of mental states that fulfill the requirements of A-consciousness as Block presents them. As I am adopting Block’s criteria for admission into A-consciousness, I will also adopt his nomenclature.¹⁸

Now that we have refined previous consciousness-unconsciousness paradigm, we will now re-examine **Excerpt Two** to determine whether or not additional clarity is provided. **Excerpt Two** describes an incident in which the narrator reacts in a way that is justified by knowledge of her violation upon which she cannot report at that time. As I argued earlier, while

¹⁵ Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”

¹⁶ Block, “On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness.”

¹⁷ Block, Flanagan, and Guzeldere, *The Nature of Consciousness*.

¹⁸ I mention this as to specify that, though I will be using the phrasing “A-consciousness,” I am not taking a stance on whether “A-consciousness” is conscious or unconscious, should such a distinction exist.

she cannot report or introspect on the knowledge at that time, it seems that she nonetheless acts on the basis of it. Because the knowledge of her assault *qua* assault guides her action, it is A-conscious.

Yet, there is still something apparently missing to the narrator such that she identifies her states at that time as her body knowing even while her mind did not. I argue that what is so curious about the narrator's experience with this knowledge—this knowledge that is A-conscious insofar as she is acting upon it—is that it is not introspectable. There are many factors that are not introspectable that shape our decision-making. For example, consider the phenomenon of emotional eating. Certainly, stress subliminally influences me to go snack in a way that may not be introspectable, but it is not the basis upon which I act. Rather, it is the fact that I have some desire for pretzels, which is A-conscious (I act on the basis of it), and this *is* introspectable. It seems uncommon and unintuitive that there are states that are not merely factors in our actions, but instead the reasons for which we act, and are wholly unavailable to introspection. The A-conscious state's ability to be introspected upon (“introspectability”), I argue, is the component that is “missing” in **Excerpt Two**. When there is a state that is A-conscious but not introspectable, one has the unusual experience of acting on the basis and reasoning based on information that they cannot introspect on. This, I argue, conforms with the narrator's experience in **Excerpt Two** and raises the following question: What is the role of introspectability in consciousness and in the narratives?

V. Applying the ni/iA-consciousness distinction

Previous discussion of Block's conceptualization of consciousness and the narratives indicated that introspectability may play a role. Thus, I will now discuss how introspection relates to consciousness (as construed by Block) and what work it might do in the narratives.

Examination of A-consciousness in **Excerpt Two** pointed to an important distinction between states that were introspectable and states that were not, especially with respect to states that are A-conscious but not introspectable. Introspectability, more generally, might be a component (or product, or feature) of P-consciousness, insofar as there is "something it is like" to introspect and that it might arise by examining the "Executive System" which is related to P-consciousness.¹⁹ However, introspectability might also be a component of A-consciousness, as it relates to individual states rather than overall experience and is a relation between the state and the Executive System. Ultimately, not much rests on whether or not introspectability is part of P-consciousness or A-consciousness or both, or whether introspectability is some other feature of our mental life altogether. Rather, what is important is that there are some states that appear to be introspectable, and some states that are not introspectable. Whether this is due to some feature "introspectability" that is either present or absent in the state's encoding or that there are other features that render it "introspectable" or "not introspectable" when in the Executive System, it is the case that there is something about a given state that makes it introspectable or not introspectable.

Thus, we are left with the following paradigm of consciousness. There are states that, whether intrinsically or instrumentally, are able to either be introspected upon or unable to be introspected upon. When these states guide action or factor into reasoning as a premise, as in the

¹⁹ Block, "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness."

narratives, these states are A-conscious. Looking in the narratives, there are two types of A-conscious states: introspectable A-conscious states (“iA-conscious states”) and non-introspectable A-conscious states (“niA-conscious states”). This is the distinction that was established in order to identify the unique features of the epistemic profiles of the narrators, and thus these narratives will be read again through the lens of the i/niA-consciousness distinction.

In this section, I will argue that the i/niA-consciousness distinction underlies the “peculiarity” of these states. Later, I will also argue that a state’s shifting from niA-conscious to iA-conscious is what constitutes the insight experience the narrators undergo, and that this distinction explains the language (namely, the phrasing that the body remembered or the body knew) the narrators use.

Excerpt Two served as the initial example of an instance in which introspectability plays a role in how an A-conscious state factors into an individual’s experience, and thus that is the excerpt I will re-examine first. **Excerpt Two** describes a woman’s experience with a man who sexually assaulted her while she was under the influence of alcohol and then later interacting with her a football game:

...he tried to joke around with me and lightly, maybe even kindly, put his hand on my arm. I shocked him, and myself, when I quickly pulled my arm away, looked him straight in the eye, and said, “Don’t you ever touch me again.” My body knew, way before my mind or heart did.²⁰

As I argued earlier, in this narrative, the narrator acts by pulling her arm away and threatening her assaulter. This action is justified by the knowledge that he previously assaulted her.²¹ It is very reasonable to think that, of all the possible factors that could guide her action, it was this

²⁰ “Yellin ‘Me Too.’”

²¹ In this narrative, the narrator does, in fact, remember the incident itself. It is not that the memory of the assault is altogether un-introspectable, but rather the knowledge that the incident constituted assault is un-introspectable. The memory exists, but the knowledge of the assault and violation she feels is not introspectable.

knowledge of her assault. Thus, the knowledge is A-conscious. Yet, she is unable to introspect on that knowledge. It is for this reason that she “shocks... [her]self” – the knowledge is not accessible to her to cite as a reason for her actions. Thus, in this narrative, there is an example of an niA-conscious state; the knowledge of the narrator’s trauma guides her actions, but she is unable to introspect on it.

VI. ni/iA-consciousness and Insight

I will now analyze the narratives through the lens of iA-consciousness vs niA-consciousness and argue that it successfully explains the narrators’ experiences and states. I will argue that the memory of the trauma being niA-consciousness obtains—and, in fact, is a driving force—in each of the narratives. In this section, I seek to show that the status of the memory as niA-conscious allows us to understand why the narrators acted the way they did, and explain the insight experience as the narrators report.

In **Excerpt One**, a victim of childhood sexual abuse comes to remember the grooming she experienced from her sports coach. The narrator begins by describing her thought process listening to a fellow survivor who had a similar experience with the same man. She says, “I could not help but question why he had never crossed the line with me.”²² In this, she reveals that not only does she not know that he did, in fact, cross the line with her, but that she actually believes the opposite.²³ It is irrational, and perhaps even psychologically impossible, for one to be able to introspect on p while also believing $\neg p$. Nishiten Shah argues that deliberating about

²² Prewitt-White, “I Was His Litmus Test.”

²³ I take this to be intuitive. If I believe p occurred, I would not ask “why did p not occur?” The question itself contains an implicit assertion (that p did not occur). The structure of “why” questions is such that they inquire further about something they take to be true. Thus, I believe the aforementioned inference (that the narrator asking “why he had never crossed the line with [her]” implies the narrator believes “he had never crossed the line with [her]”) is reasonable.

whether or not to believe p necessarily leads us to deliberate whether or not p is true.²⁴ As it relates to this narrative, deliberation about whether or not one believes they experienced p requires they deliberate about whether or not it is the case they experienced p , and to do so, they examine their memories and other relevant evidence. To believe one did not experience p requires they do not have “access” (via introspection) to the memories that would make clear that they did, in fact, experience p .²⁵ In other words, because the narrator expresses that she believes she was not a victim of abuse, then she must not be able to introspect on the memories and knowledge that support the idea that she was a victim of abuse. In sum, any memories pertaining to her abuse are not introspectable.

While these memories are not introspectable, the narrator acts on the basis of them and thus the memories are A-consciousness. The narrator describes her mental states as follows: “I always knew there was something tasteless and unsuitable about Coach; following my high school playing years I had strong opinions that he was ill-equipped to coach females. Others silenced me and forbade me to speak my convictions.”²⁶ These were for a number of reasons—crude jokes and unfair coaching strategies—but the narrator also identifies her un-introspectable knowledge of her childhood abuse as a factor. In this sense, though the narrator was unable to introspect on her knowledge and memories, she was able to believe and act on the basis of them.

Thus, we can conclude that the narrator’s memories and knowledge of her abuse by her coach were not introspectable but were acted upon; these states were niA-conscious. I first want

²⁴ Shah, “A New Argument for Evidentialism.”

²⁵ One might argue that the memories are present and introspectable, but the truth is simply too difficult to accept. I chose not to endorse this view for two reasons. The first reason is that if it were, the experience of insight that is later described likely would not obtain. If the truth was something acknowledged but unaccepted, then the experience of the “uh-oh” would instead be more akin to resignation, which lacks fidelity to the narratives. The second reason is that that view characterizes the narrator as believing irrationally; this, to me, is an ethically undesirable view to endorse.

²⁶ Prewitt-White, “I Was His Litmus Test.”

to note that I take the i/niA-consciousness distinction to furnish clearer analysis than A-consciousness alone. The former allows us to identify how a state factors into both the narrator's experience and reasoning, while the latter points only to a state's role in reasoning. This may (though further research is needed²⁷) allow us to identify ways in which trauma, more generally, operates within our consciousness and unconsciousness (and in-between).

In the above, I analyzed the narrator's states before she heard the testimony of another survivor and I argued that the memories were niA-conscious. Upon hearing the testimony, though, the narrator undergoes a notable epistemic shift and experiences intense, idiosyncratic quale/qualia. I will now analyze the narrator's states following this experience, the experience itself, and what this demonstrates about consciousness, insight, and trauma.

The narrator's states undergo shifts conscious status upon listening to the testimony of a fellow survivor of childhood sexual abuse. She writes,

Yet, when the survivor described how icky she felt when Coach held her hand and how he caressed the base of her wrist with his middle finger—I froze. Time stood still. I thought, “How do I know exactly what she is describing?” “Did he hold my hand, too?” “Did I put it so far out of my conscious memory to forget it?” He did hold my hand—tears escaped my eyelids like a runaway fugitive. My body remembered it; I felt as if he was touching me that very moment as the hair on my arms stood perked. I knew the caress she described. I could not deny... [as] she described his living room and him closing his front curtains, I knew it in my body. I listened and attempted to support her as countless summer afternoons besieged my memory.... I was disheartened because I was fully conscious of the reality of my lived truth—I was his litmus test and my body knew it first.²⁸

The first notable feature of this narrative is that the realization was sudden that she, too, had suffered abuse. In other words, upon hearing the testimony of another, the narrator experiences the phenomenon of insight pertaining to her own experiences with abuse. She describes

²⁷ A particularly illuminating project might be to interview survivors of traumatic experience and analyze how different states are coded under the ni/iA-consciousness paradigm to determine if any patterns exist.

²⁸ Prewitt-White, “I Was His Litmus Test.”

“freezing” and identifying that she suddenly was “besieged” by memories and realizations, eventually becoming “fully conscious” of her experiences. Insight, when related to problem-solving or positive experiences, can be described as the “aha!” moment, or the moment of “puzzle pieces falling into place.” Unfortunately, the narrator experiences the negative version of insight (the “uh-oh” moment) where the object of insight is deeply unpleasant, as in the case here.

To determine what mediates the insight experience, we should turn to what the differences are between the initial and final situations. In the initial situation, the narrator’s memories are A-conscious insofar as they guide her action and operate as a premise for further deliberation (such as that he is unfit to coach women). But, these memories are not introspectable; the narrator believes the opposite of what her memories support, which is not rationally possible if she is capable of introspecting on them. Thus, in the initial situation, the narrator’s memories are niA-conscious. In the final situation, the narrator’s are again A-conscious. The memories operate as premises for reasoning (e.g. that she was a victim of grooming, that she was wronged, that she was his “litmus test”) and guides her actions. Unlike the initial situation, however, these memories are now introspectable. The narrator can recognize, identify, and even voluntarily call upon memories to which she previously did not have access. Consequently, those memories are now iA-conscious.

A similar framework is found in **Excerpt Three**. In **Excerpt Three**, a woman comes to realize that she is approaching the anniversary of a traumatic miscarriage. She describes it as follows:

I understood with a new certainty the dizziness and tingling hands that even WebMD would not diagnose as a fatal malady but figured as sure signs of anxiety. I knew why my chest had been unusually heavy in the last few days, and

why I'm finding it hard to breathe in crowded spaces and when I am too much alone.

And I found the reason for the feeling of everything being too loud, too fast, too demanding but not wanting to sit still and silent either had an explanation.

“Oh gosh,” I told her. “It’s almost May. I just realized it. It is like my body knew it was May before my brain did.”²⁹

There are two primary components that should be disentangled here, as I argue one is a result of the other. There is the P-conscious component, which relate to the narrators sensory experience and qualia. This is the narrator’s chest’s “heaviness” and difficulty breathing, as well as her experiencing the world as too loud and fast. There is also the A-conscious component, which is the knowledge that the anniversary is approaching. The narrator describing how she avoids staying still and silent—almost as if she is trying to keep herself busy and distract herself, which is a common and rational method of dealing with traumatic anniversaries—indicating that she is acting on the basis of the knowledge of the anniversary. Another potential way to read this narrative is that the narrator is experiencing these negative P-conscious states that are consistent with trauma, and that P-consciousness experiences are often intertwined with A-conscious states, which again suggests that there is some A-conscious knowledge driving the narrator’s experience. Regardless of which reading one chooses to endorse, the knowledge of the impending anniversary appears to be A-conscious insofar as it is guiding action and is poised to serve as a premise for additional reasoning (i.e. “the anniversary is impending; thus, it behooves me to distract myself”).

Consistent with the previous narratives, this A-conscious state is not introspectable. The narrator describes suddenly understanding something she previously was not aware of; rather than there being any disease or simply random chance, the symptoms and experiencing she is

²⁹ Mitchell, “On Loss You Can Never Get Back and a Grief Your Body Won’t Forget.”

suffering is caused by the impending anniversary of her miscarriage. If this understanding is new and sudden, then she previously must not have been able to introspect on her knowledge of the anniversary and its role in her decision-making. Thus, the initial state is niA-conscious.

Upon talking to her friend about her experiences on the phone, the narrator observes the date, approaching May. Suddenly, the narrator is able to introspect on the knowledge of her impending anniversary and grief: this is her insight experience. The narrator experiences an “aha!”/“uh-oh” moment; she describes it as “suddenly making sense” and finding a “new certainty” regarding how her experiences and actions/dispositions have been affected subliminally from this knowledge and how they are being affected now. The knowledge of her anniversary is still A-conscious (it is still guiding her actions and is now explicitly serving as a premise in her reasoning), but it is now also introspectable.

Thus, in **Excerpt Three**, as in **Excerpt One**, the narrator begins with niA-conscious states which become iA-conscious. The narrator experiences insight regarding their states, actions, and in some cases, identity. Given that the primary difference, in both narratives, between the initial and final states is the introspectability of the A-conscious memories, there is strong reason to think that the shift from niA-consciousness to iA-consciousness underlies the insight experience. I will endorse this view and argue for it on the basis of how the ni/iA-consciousness distinction affects explanations and how the relationship between explanations and insight experiences.

I argue that the shift from niA-consciousness to iA-consciousness mediates (and amounts to) the insight experiences displayed in **Excerpt One** and **Excerpt Three**. The insight experience in **Excerpt One** is the sudden awareness and recognition of memories of childhood abuse and its subsequent effects on the narrator, wherein the memories are the content of the A-

conscious state and its effects are that which makes it A-conscious, respectively. This state, which was once not introspectable but nonetheless performing the roles that make it A-conscious, suddenly becomes introspectable and accessible for the narrator to recognize. Given that **Excerpt One** describes an insight experience characterized by sudden recognition of a state and its function, we have reason to think that it derives from (or, perhaps, is the P-conscious experience of³⁰) the change between a state that is guiding action but not introspectable (niA-conscious) to a state that is guiding action and is suddenly introspectable (iA-conscious). Thus, I argue the change a state being niA-conscious to iA-conscious underwrites the insight experience in **Excerpt One**.

Does this obtain in **Excerpt Three**? The narrator suddenly comes to be aware of the fact that the anniversary of her miscarriage is imminent (this is the content of the state) and the way that that knowledge is impacting her comportment and experiences (that which makes it A-conscious). Previously, that knowledge was not introspectable, but the narrator becomes suddenly able to introspect on the state and how it operates. The same paradigm in **Excerpt One** obtains in **Excerpt Three**.

Altogether, in the experiences of insight described in the narratives, it seems that a state (the relevant belief or knowledge) shifting from niA-consciousness to iA-consciousness underwrites the experience of insight. In these narratives, the shift seems necessary to produce an insight experience, but it is not clear whether it is sufficient to do so.³¹ In sum, the narrators' insight experiences are explicable and understandable by looking at the features of the state in

³⁰ This view would argue that insight is the P-conscious element of the niA-conscious to iA-conscious change. As P-consciousness is the "what it is like" and emotional/experiential system, and insight has distinct emotional components and qualia over and above merely new accessibility of information about your states, this is perhaps a compelling view. Ultimately, however, the relationship between P-consciousness and insight is beyond the scope of this paper.

³¹ Future research might examine if the niA-conscious to iA-conscious shift obtains in other cases of insight. If so is this shift necessary and/or sufficient to engender the insight experience?

question, namely its status as A-conscious and introspectable, and whether there is a shift from niA-consciousness to iA-consciousness.

VII. Bodily Memory in the Narratives

One final question remains unaddressed: what are the narrators referring to, in all three excerpts, when they purport bodily memory? One option is that there is such thing as bodily memory as a memory-type *sui generis*. If this is the case, then the content of the bodily memory and the niA-conscious would be identical. This is somewhat peculiar, given that we generally only have one “copy” of a memory. Which one factors into the act of remembering? What kinds of memories can be duplicated?

The view I endorse is that bodily knowledge/memory is a way to name niA-conscious states. Our mental lives are heavily identified with introspection and introspectability. Deliberation, decision-making, remembering, reminiscing, and other acts that we take to be components of the human mental life are often intertwined (and perhaps even require) introspectability. What is it to reminisce on a memory that is not introspectable? However, I argue there is a conflation between the mental and the introspectable. As Rowlands, Freud, Block, and countless others have argued, not all that is mental is introspectable.^{32, 33, 34, 35, 36} Nonetheless, our mental lives, as we experience them, are mostly characterized by introspectability. In fact, intuitively (without exploring the literature on consciousness), we might even think that consciousness is defined by introspectability.

Consequently, when one identifies that there is a memory or state that is not introspectable, they relegate it to “outside the mind.” Given the intuitive (albeit heavily reductionist and perhaps altogether false) tripart view of mind, body, and environment, it is fairly

³² Freud, “Part I. Parapraxes.”

³³ Freud, “Part III. General Theory of the Neuroses.”

³⁴ Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*.

³⁵ Rowlands, *Memory and the Self*.

³⁶ Block, Flanagan, and Guzeldere, *The Nature of Consciousness*.

reasonable to ascribe these memories (which are certainly one's own, rather than the environment's) to the body. In other words, because we often lack the concept of a conscious but not introspectable state, when there are cases of A-conscious states that are not/were not introspectable, they are attributed to the body, as the lack of introspectability makes it seem outside the mental sphere.

What does this mean for the narratives? For one, the narrators are remarkably specific in their ascription of their mental states. If we take "bodily state" to mean "a non-introspectable state," then the narrators are quite correct when they purport that they had bodily states that guided their lives. In sum, though predicated on what I take to be a common and reasonable misconception, the narrators are providing a precise and rational ascription of their states that can be used to better understand the nature of their states, experiences, and how we ought to respond. Given the precision of the description and the grave content of the memories in the above examples, we ought to take seriously cases where people ascribe bodily memory or knowledge of trauma to themselves.

VIII. Conclusions

Altogether, then, I propose the following view. There is such thing as A-conscious states that are not introspectable, and it is possible for them to later suddenly become introspectable. In the above cases of insight about trauma in which “bodily memory” is asserted, the insight is mediated by the transition of niA-conscious states to iA-consciousness.

Regarding cases of trauma in which one describes an insight experience and bodily knowledge, I argue these are a *bona fide* group. These narratives involve description of a niA-conscious state that operates in ways that are similar in each case. Specifically, these narrators report “unconscious” memories or knowledge on which they act/acted.^{37, 38} These niA-conscious states may, or may not, become iA-conscious.³⁹ In cases of insight, this niA-conscious to iA-conscious transition underwrites the experience similarly. Finally, the language used to describe such states is in many ways unified (note that all three narratives use the language of bodily memory/knowledge similarly), precise, and rationalized by the way we take introspection to function in the naïve conception of mental life and consciousness. Altogether, this type of memory is a *bona fide* group because of similar structure (and subsequent operation) and content.

This group of traumatic niA-conscious (bodily) states is meaningful, as well.⁴⁰ The idiosyncratic nature of the states and the narrators’ experiences with them may help contribute to discourse on consciousness, introspection, and insight. Furthermore, the content of the states, namely trauma, generates ethical imperatives to take these states seriously.

³⁷ Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*.

³⁸ Rowlands, “Rilkean Memory.”

³⁹ Future work might examine what engenders the switch from niA-consciousness to iA-consciousness.

⁴⁰ Not all groups of states are necessarily meaningful, even if such groups are valid. For example, “memories of a door” or “states I came to hold on Tuesdays” are both genuine groups, but are not particularly worthy of consideration.

In this thesis I have sought to explore and clarify the phenomenon in which people have traumatic memory/knowledge which they identify as bodily memory/knowledge. This phenomenon often coexists with the experience of insight, in which one experiences an “aha!” or “uh-oh” moment. I turned to consciousness as a potential clarifying factor, as consciousness and memory are conceptually linked and case studies, such as those by Freud and Breuer,⁴¹ suggest consciousness plays an important role in memory of trauma. However, the “consciousness versus unconsciousness” conception of consciousness was insufficient to provide clarification on the phenomena of interest. Consequently, I turned to Ned Block’s characterization of consciousness as consisting of P-consciousness and A-consciousness, though I argued this, too, failed to capture what I took to be a crucial feature of the narratives: the presence or absence of introspectability towards the relevant memory/knowledge. I refined A-consciousness into introspectable and not introspectable A-conscious, then demonstrated that these concepts allow for thorough explanation and understanding of the narratives and these phenomena. I argued that the narratives consist of niA-conscious states that, in some cases, become iA-conscious; this shift engenders the insight experience. Further, I argued that the verbiage of niA-consciousness (which is not immediately intuitive, that we might be acting on the basis of information upon which we cannot introspect) is often not accessible and thus some, not unreasonably, describe it as bodily memory/knowledge as it “acts” like memory/knowledge but lacks the introspectability that we associate with mental states. Altogether, these seemingly isolated cases of bodily memory/knowledge and insight experiences are, in fact, structurally similar and can help provide information about consciousness and insight.

⁴¹ Freud and Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*.

Appendix A

Below, I have listed three excerpts from narratives that that I cite in my thesis. Excerpt 1 recounts the moment of recovering memories of childhood sexual abuse. Excerpt 2 discusses the aftermath of a sexual assault. Excerpt 3 discusses a traumatic miscarriage’s anniversary.

Excerpt 1: Prewitt-White, Tanya R. “I Was His Litmus Test: An Autoethnographic Account of Being Groomed in Sport.” *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology* 13, no. 2 (June 2019): 180–95.

“I soon learned of similarities between the survivor’s experience and my own and each time she gave name to her experience, my body clenched. I could not help but question why he had never crossed the line with me. Yet, when the survivor described how icky she felt when Coach held her hand and how he caressed the base of her wrist with his middle finger—I froze. Time stood still. I thought, “How do I know exactly what she is describing?” “Did he hold my hand, too?” “Did I put it so far out of my conscious memory to forget it?” He did hold my hand—tears escaped my eyelids like a runaway fugitive. My body remembered it; I felt as if he was touching me that very moment as the hair on my arms stood perked. I knew the caress she described. I could not deny... As she described his living room and him closing his front curtains, I knew it in my body. I listened and attempted to support her as countless summer afternoons besieged my memory.” (183-184)

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“I was disheartened because I was fully conscious of the reality of my lived truth—I was his litmus test and my body knew it first.” (189)

Excerpt 2: Me Too Movement. “Yellin ‘Me Too.’” October 9, 2018. <https://metoomvmt.org/2018/10/09/yellin-me-too/>.

“I hardly knew him, and hadn’t spoken three sentences to him before he did that. A few weeks later, I saw him at a basketball game, and he tried to joke around with me and lightly, maybe even kindly, put his hand on my arm. I shocked him, and myself, when I quickly pulled my arm away, looked him straight in the eye, and said, “Don’t you ever touch me again.” My body knew, way before my mind or heart did.”

Excerpt 3: Mitchell, Colleen. “On Loss You Can Never Get Back and a Grief Your Body Won’t Forget.” *For Every Mom* (blog), September 9, 2016. <https://forevermom.com/faith/cellular-memory-grief-colleen-mitchell/>.

“And I found the reason for the feeling of everything being too loud, too fast, too demanding but not wanting to sit still and silent either had an explanation.

“Oh gosh,” I told her. “It’s almost May. I just realized it. It is like my body knew it was May before my brain did.””

Appendix B

Above, I argued that bodily memories consist of memories that not introspectable but nonetheless capable of being A-conscious. I now want to address the nature of bodily memories as it relates to the episodic versus semantic memory distinction.

Each of the narratives, as I have presented them, contain niA-conscious memories that are episodic in nature. Is there something to bodily memories that make it such that episodic and only episodic memories (as opposed to semantic memories) are eligible?

Certainly, there are cases of insight that involve semantic memories. Consider the following:

Supermarket: I am at the supermarket, and I need to buy coconut milk. Though I had “forgotten” the fact that I need the coconut milk, I drift over to the “international” aisle. I am confused as to why I went to this aisle, until suddenly: “Aha!” I say, “I need coconut milk.”

In this case, there is an insight experience (the “aha!” moment): the realization that I need coconut milk. The knowledge that I need coconut milk is also A-conscious, insofar as it is serving as a premise for deliberation (“I need coconut milk, coconut milk is considered international at Harris Teeter, thus I should go to the international aisle”) and guiding my action (me physically walking to the international aisle). This A-conscious state was not introspectable, as evidenced by my confusion upon arriving in the aisle. Thus, it seems that **Supermarket** meets all the criteria necessary for a bodily memory (a niA-conscious memory). Certainly, though, it seems that there is something different about the experiences of **Supermarket** and the narratives. Does this mean that there is an additional criterion for a bodily memory, namely that its content be episodic?

I argue that it is not the case there is an episodic requirement to be a bodily memory. Rather, I argue that the difference lies in the P-conscious experiences of **Supermarket** and the

narratives. In **Supermarket**, the P-conscious element is merely the experience of insight, the experience of suddenly remembering. However, in the Narratives, there are multiple P-conscious elements. There is, still, the P-conscious element deriving from the experience of insight. But there are also P-conscious elements that are related to the content of the memory itself—the P-conscious elements that perhaps were part of the episode itself (e.g. pain, or fear) or the P-conscious elements that derive from the realization that these episodes happened to oneself (e.g. in **Excerpt One**), to name a few. So, what separates the niA-conscious memories labeled bodily memories from the niA-conscious memories not labeled bodily memories might simply be the latter's lack of import or impact due to its relatively minimal P-conscious features.

Thus, there is a *de facto* requirement that a bodily memory be episodic, due to episodic memories having greater potential for P-conscious impact. However, I want to leave open the possibility of semantic memories that have strong P-conscious features, and thus bodily memories that are semantic in nature. Consider Rowlands' presentation of how an episodic memory could lose the presence of self in memory and degenerate into a semantic memory of the same event. Could this still serve as the content for a bodily memory?

The aforementioned form of semantic memory arose through the degeneration of an episodic memory. A further question might regard a purely semantic memory that had no episodic intermediate, and whether it might serve as the content for a bodily memory. The first point is to ask whether there is such thing as a traumatic memory that is *exclusively semantic*. It is difficult to answer this question, as trauma is highly subjective and personal. One potential thought experiment is as follows:

Midazolam: Midazolam is a sedative that prevents one from encoding any new memories but does not prevent one from feeling pain. (It is for this reason it is also paired with a local anesthetic for minor surgeries.) One is administered this drug, and while under its influence, suffers some sort of violation by the

provider.⁴² Months later, this person receives a letter from a trusted source giving an account of what occurred in clear but unemotional terms.

Certainly, this person experienced trauma. It's not immediately clear, though, what kind of memory of the trauma the victim possesses. Is the memory an episodic memory of reading the letter? Semantic memory of the letter's content? If the latter, is it the semantic memory that is doing the "work" of the trauma, or is it the mental representation of its content (the imagining of what occurred, as described by the letter)?

Altogether, there are many questions that require answering—though it is not clear to me how they could be investigated ethically—about what types of memory may represent traumatic content and do traumatic work. The answer to whether or not bodily memories may include semantic memories rests on these answers. However, for now, I am inclined to say bodily memories include memories with significant P-conscious features which include episodic memories while leaving the door open to semantic memories as well.

⁴² Regrettably, this is not a hypothetical example. There are abhorrent, and tragically recent, cases of healthcare providers doing such horrible deeds to patients. This was the initial motivation for this thesis: what happens to trauma when we cannot remember?

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