§ Armstrong vs. Descartes

Descartes: Consciousness is the essence of mentality.

Armstrong: (Anti-Cartesian)
1. The mental includes both consciousness and unconsciousness.
2. Consciousness is the cream on the cake of mentality, a special and sophisticated development of mentality.

Freud’s picture:
Qs:
___ What mental states are you currently conscious of?
___ Are you conscious of your perceptions, sensations, emotions, desires, thoughts, beliefs, motives, etc.?
___ How do you tell which mental states you are conscious of?

§ Total Unconscious:
(i) A totally unconscious man has a mind and the mind is in various states.
___ He does not lack knowledge and beliefs.
___ He may be credited with memories and skills.
___ He may be credited with likes and dislikes, attitudes and emotions, current desires and current aims and purposes. He may be said to have certain traits of character and temperament. He may be said to be in certain moods.....
(ii) The mental states of a totally unconscious person are thus "causally quiescent":
___ knowledge and beliefs may be said to be causally quiescent while they are not producing any mental effect in the person.]
But:
___ He does not perceive, has no sensations, feelings, or pangs of desire.
___ He cannot think, contemplate, or engage in any sort of deliberation.

* A first attempt of definition of ‘consciousness’:
___ If there is mental activity occurring in the mind, if something mental is actually happening, then that mind is not totally unconscious. It is therefore conscious.

§ Different Kinds of Consciousness

1. [Minimal Consciousness]
___ a single faint sensation; not totally unconscious.

Examples: someone wakes up knowing the solution to a math problem; ... (find other examples)

2. [Perceptual Consciousness]
___ Consciousness of what is currently going on in one's environment and in one's body.

(Perceptual consciousness entails minimal consciousness, but minimal consciousness does not entail perceptual consciousness.)

[The case of a long-distance truck driver: having 1 & 2, but lacks 3.]
___ After driving for long periods, particularly at night, it is possible to “come to” and realize that for some time past one has been driving without being aware of what one has been doing. ... There was minimal consciousness and perceptual consciousness. But something else is lacking: consciousness in the most interesting sense of the world.]
3. [Introspective Consciousness]

This third sort of consciousness is a late evolutionary development. I think it is an additional form of perception, or, it is something that resembles perception. But unlike sense-perception, it is not directed toward our current environment and/or our current bodily state. It is perception of the mental. Such “inner” perception is traditionally called introspection, or introspective awareness. (p. 724)

§ On Introspection
___ It is a form of "inner" perception; perception of the mental.
___ It is thus a perception-like awareness of current states and activities in our own mind.

Features:
___ (i) It is not all-knowing: It is not a total awareness of the current states and activities of our mind.
___ (ii) It is not indubitable: It may fail to respond to the mental reality of which it is a consciousness.
___ (iii) It is private: Each of us perceives current states and activities in our own minds and that of nobody else.
    * This privacy, however, is contingent only. We can imagine that somebody else should have the same direct consciousness of my mental states and activities that I enjoy.
    ==> [Question: Is this possibility conceivable?]
___ (iv) It is causal: The mental objects of introspection act within our mind so as to produce our introspective awareness of these states.
    ==> [Question: How do we explain the causality between mental objects and our introspective awareness?]
___ (v) It is consciousness of the self.
    ___ We learn to organize what we introspect as being states of, and activities in, a single continuing entity: our self.

§ Types of Introspective Consciousness

(i) reflex introspective awareness
___ only a watching brief with respect to our mental states

(ii) "introspection proper"
___ careful scrutinizing of our mental states, with a heightened awareness of so doing

* It is a plausible hypothesis that the latter will normally involve not only introspective awareness of mental states and activities but also introspective awareness of that introspective awareness.
§ Armstrong's Thesis:

Self-Consciousness = Introspective consciousness = Inner perception of our mental activities [HOP: higher-order perception of the mental state]

Q: What is the biological function of introspective consciousness?
Armstrong: It is to sophisticate our mental process in the interests of more sophisticated action.

§ Armstrong’s argument:

I. From Introspection to Consciousness of the Self

1. Introspective consciousness’s function is to sophisticate our mental process in the interests of more sophisticated action.
2. Inner perception makes the sophistication of our mental processes possible in the following way: if we have a faculty that can make us aware of current mental states and activities, then it will be much easier to achieve integration of the states and activities, to get them working together in the complex and sophisticated ways necessary to achieve complex and sophisticated ends.
3. Iff introspection is the instrument of mental integration, then it is natural that what is perceived by that consciousness should be assumed to be something unitary.
4. This unitary thing is what we perceive to be our self.
5. Hence, introspection naturally gives rise to the notion of the self.
6. Therefore, introspective awareness is introspective awareness of the self.

II. From Introspective Awareness to Event Memory

1. Unless mental activity is monitored by introspective consciousness, it is not remembered to have occurred (no event-memory).
2. Thus, without introspective consciousness, there would be little or no memory of the past history of the self.
3. Thus, without introspective consciousness, we would not be aware that we existed -- our self would not be self to itself, nor would we be aware of what the particular history of that self had been, even its very recent history.
4. Therefore, in introspective consciousness lies the foundation for consciousness of the self.

Discussion:
___ What is the connection between introspection and self-consciousness?