Day 1: The Unconscious

In Theory: Psychodynamic theory begins with the single unsettling proposition that much of what drives us is not available to awareness. Sigmund Freud called this the unconscious. It is not a special feature of certain minds but a component of human existence itself that everyone has and lives within. Feelings we cannot tolerate, memories that are too charged, and wishes that conflict with who we believe ourselves to be remain active outside awareness. They continue to shape how we think, feel, and relate to the world and to others. The mind in this view does not fully know itself, and what we know of ourselves is always incomplete. Within this foundational psychodynamic framework, our conscious understanding of the self is limited.

In Experience: A person finds themselves irritable in certain moments or in certain relationships. They attribute it to stress, to logistics, to circumstance. But the feeling has a familiarity that circumstance does not fully account for. Something is being stirred that is not yet in view, something that does not belong only to the present situation but is activated by it.

In Thought: Experience may not be fully accounted for by what is consciously known. What drives a feeling or a reaction may be operating outside awareness.

In Print: Freud, S. A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (1917)

In Attention: Notice a feeling that arrives without an obvious cause.