Day 10: Defense Mechanisms

In Theory: Defense mechanisms in the psychodynamic tradition, first articulated by Sigmund Freud and later systematized by Anna Freud, are unconscious processes that protect the mind from experiences that feel too painful or overwhelming to bear directly. They operate automatically and reorganize experience so that it can be managed without collapse. What cannot be tolerated in its original form is altered, displaced, or kept out of awareness in order to preserve psychological stability. These processes are not deliberate and are often necessary for continuity of functioning. They are part of ordinary mental life and not in themselves signs of pathology, but over time they shape what a person is able to recognize in themselves and in others.

In Experience: A person raised in a home where anger was dangerous learns to avoid anger. By adulthood they may experience depression, exhaustion, or a quiet emptiness. Fear may become constant vigilance or an inability to relax. Sadness may appear as emotional numbness or withdrawal. In more dramatic forms, the same process can produce sudden shifts in mood, bodily symptoms, or overall detachment.

In Thought: What is avoided may be as revealing as what is engaged with. What is kept at a distance has its own significance.

In Print: Goleman, D. *Vital Lies, Simple Truths* (1985)

In Attention: Notice a subject reliably avoided.