Day 8: Internalization

In Theory: The voices, expectations, and ways of being of early caregivers do not remain external but become part of the inner world in object relations theory within the psychodynamic tradition. Through processes such as introjection and identification, aspects of others become part of how the self is experienced from within. These internalized figures continue to shape self-experience long after the original relationships have changed. They can appear as self-criticism, self-reassurance, or as subtle standards that guide behavior without awareness. These persistent psychic traces establish an internal dialogue that can dictate our daily self-worth, making psychological growth dependent on our ability to distinguish our own true voice from these old, absorbed expectations.

In Experience: Someone criticizes their own work in words that once belonged to someone else. They experience this voice as their own judgment but it did not originate with them. Similar internal echoes shape how a person evaluates choices or organizes efforts, without awareness that these patterns were learned. These internalized voices carry ideas about success, morality, or belonging within a community.

In Thought: Not everything found when looking inward originated there. Some of what feels most personal, including the inner voice, was taken in from others.

In Print: Siegel, D. J. *The Developing Mind* (1999)

In Attention: Notice a critical thought and whose voice it carries.