

THE INNER WORLD MAP

A quick field guide to what humans think is going on inside us

“Know thyself”

- inscribed at the Temple of Delphi, attributed to the early Greek philosophers, over two thousand years before psychology had a name.



Humans have always sensed there's a world in here as real as the one out there - we've just mapped it differently depending on the age we lived in. Here are a few of the maps:

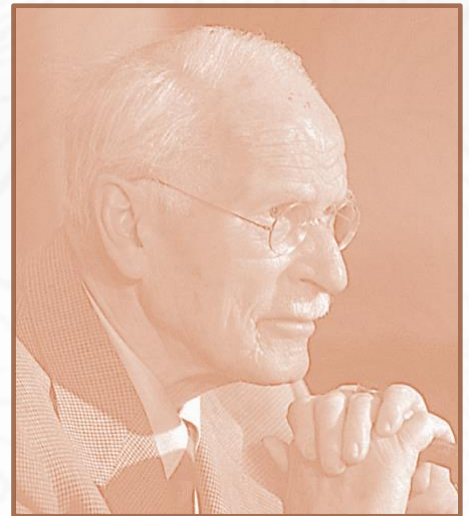
THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW

Descartes (17th c.) - split mind from body. The thinking self (“I think, therefore I am”) as separate from mere matter - a split that still shapes how the West talks about “mental” vs. “physical” health today.

Freud (early 1900s) - proposed a hidden layer beneath conscious awareness: the unconscious. Much of what drives us, he argued, we can't see directly - only its effects.

Jung (early-mid 1900s) - went further: beneath the personal unconscious lies a collective one, populated by archetypes - patterns as old as story itself, showing up in dream, myth, and behaviour across every culture.

IFS - Internal Family Systems (Schwartz, 1980s-present) - the model I use in practice. Proposes the psyche isn't one voice but many - “parts” - each with a role, often protective, formed to handle something once too much to face alone. Beneath the parts: a core Self, calm and whole, that doesn't need fixing.



THE PERENNIAL VIEW

Long before psychology, most traditions described an inner landscape too - using different language but often pointing at similar terrain: a surface self and a deeper self; a multiplicity of impulses to be understood, not obeyed; a “truer” self beneath the noise. Plato's image of the cave - mistaking shadows on a wall for reality - is one of the oldest versions of this same idea: what we take to be the whole of ourselves is often just what's visible, not what's underneath.

TWO TOOLS FOR READING THE TERRAIN

Symbol & myth - a way of speaking about what's too large or slippery for literal language. When something in you responds to a story, an image, or a myth, it's often pointing at real territory.

Dreams - not mystical, just nightly access. A natural, low-cost way the inner world already tries to speak, whether or not we're listening.

ONE WAY TO START

Notice a pattern that keeps repeating in your life - a reaction, a relationship dynamic, a recurring feeling. Don't explain it yet. Just notice it as a marker on the map.

If you'd like a guide for this terrain, I work with men and couples navigating exactly this.

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