

PREFACE TO J. J. PUTNAM'S ADDRESSES ON PSYCHO-ANALYSIS - (1921)

The editor of this series must feel a special satisfaction in being able to issue as its opening volume this collection of the psycho-analytical writings of Professor James J. Putnam, the distinguished neurologist of Harvard University. Professor Putnam, who died in 1918 at the age of seventy-two, was not only the first American to interest himself in psycho-analysis, but soon became its most decided supporter and its most influential representative in America. In consequence of the established reputation which he had gained through his activities as a teacher, as well as through his important work in the domain of organic nervous disease, and thanks to the universal respect which his personality enjoyed, he was able to do perhaps more than anyone for the spread of psycho-analysis in his own country, and was able to protect it from aspersions which, on the other side of the Atlantic no less than this, would inevitably have been cast upon it. But all such reproaches were bound to be silenced when a man of Putnam's lofty ethical standards and moral rectitude had ranged himself among the supporters of the new science and of the therapeutics based upon it.

The papers here collected into a single volume, which were written by Putnam between 1909 and the end of his life, give a good picture of his relations to psycho-analysis. They show how he was at first occupied in correcting a provisional judgement which was based on insufficient knowledge; how he then accepted the essence of analysis, recognized its capacity for throwing a clear light upon the origin of human imperfections and failings, and how he was struck by the prospect of contributing towards the improvement of humanity along analytical lines; how he then became convinced by his own activities as a physician as to the truth of most of the psycho-analytical conclusions and postulates, and then in his turn bore witness to the fact that the physician who makes use of analysis understands far more about the sufferings of his patients and can do far more for them than was possible with the earlier methods of treatment; and finally how he began to extend beyond the limits of analysis, demanding that as a science it should be linked on to a particular philosophical system, and that its practice should be openly associated with a particular set of ethical doctrines.

So it is not to be wondered at that a mind with such pre-eminently ethical and philosophical tendencies as Putnam's should have desired, after he had plunged deep into psycho-analysis, to establish the closest relation between it and the aims which lay nearest his heart. But his enthusiasm, so admirable in a man of his advanced age, did not succeed in carrying others along with him. Younger people remained cooler. It was especially Ferenczi who expressed the opposite view. The decisive reason for the rejection of Putnam's proposals was the doubt as to which of the countless philosophical systems should be accepted, since they all seemed to rest on an equally insecure basis, and since everything had up till then been sacrificed for the sake of the relative certainty of the results of psycho-analysis. It seemed more prudent to wait, and to discover whether a particular attitude towards life might be forced upon us with all the weight of necessity by analytical investigation itself.

It is our duty to express our thanks to the author's widow, Mrs. Putnam, for her assistance with the manuscripts, with the copyrights, and with financial support, without all of which the publication of this volume would have been impossible. No English manuscripts were forthcoming in the case of the papers numbered VI, VII, and X. They have been translated into English by Dr. Katherine Jones from the German text which originated from Putnam himself.

This volume will keep fresh in analytical circles the memory of the friend whose loss we so profoundly deplore. May it be the first of a series of publications which shall serve the end of furthering the understanding and application of psychoanalysis among those who speak the English tongue - an end to which James J. Putnam dedicated the last ten years of his fruitful life.

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