CHAPTER SEVEN

CHRISTIANIZING FREUDIAN SUBLIMATION VIA JUNG: 
VYSHESLAVTSEV’S TURN TO C.G. JUNG

The Why and the How: Biographical Sketch of 
B.P. Vysheslavtsev

One of the most important thinkers of the Christian philosophical movement centered around the journal Put’ (Paris, 1925–1940), Boris Pavlovich Vysheslavtsev (1877–1954) was the Russian religious thinker most knowledgeable of and actively engaged with psychoanalytic thought in general and Jungian analytical psychology, in particular. Despite his signal importance for modern Russian religious thought, Vysheslavtsev is much less well known than the other Russian thinkers treated here, thus a brief biographical sketch is in order.287

Born in Moscow in 1877, he received his law degree from Moscow University in 1899. After a brief period of legal practice, he abandoned the Law to study legal philosophy under Professor Pavel Novgorodtsev, after which he was appointed Professor of Law at his Alma Mater. Receiving the Russian doctorate in 1908, he was sent to Germany to do further philosophical research. After periods in Berlin, Heidelberg and Paris, he settled at the University of Marburg where he defended his dissertation “The Ethics of Fichte” in 1914 (published in Moscow in Russian that same year). He received a Chair in the History of Political Thought at Moscow University in 1916, and taught philosophy simultaneously at the Moscow Commercial Institute.

Openly opposed to Marxism and the Bolshevik Revolution, he lost his professorship in 1917 and was expelled from Russia in 1922 in the

now famous group of intellectuals Lenin permitted to leave at that time. Along with Nikolai Berdyaev he re-opened The Academy of Religious Philosophy in Berlin in 1924 (closed down in Moscow by the Bolsheviks) which was relocated to Paris shortly thereafter. From 1925 he was Berdyaev’s right hand man as main co-editor of the journal *Put* (1925–1940), one of the most illustrious periodicals in the entire history of Russian journalism. Teaching moral philosophy at the St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris, Vysheslavtsev was a leader in the Russian Christian Student Movement and Christian ecumenical movements in general. In the latter capacity he traveled and lectured widely throughout Europe in the interwar period and met a host of leading intellectuals including André Malraux, Rudolph Otto, Max Scheler, Jacques Maritain, and most importantly, Carl Gustav Jung.

Vysheslavtsev was the editor and preparer of the second, third, and fourth volumes of Jung’s works translated into Russian, a project he took over from Russian Jungian Emily K. Medtner upon the latter’s death. In a letter to Medtner of February 9, 1936 he wrote: “There is something even beyond psychology that links me to Jung […] it lies in pure philosophy (in dialectics) and in a sense of the limits of psychology and anthropology. I would not want to speak about this publicly without talking to Jung about it first.” In 1937 he published an article “Zwei Wege der Erlosung” (Two Paths to Salvation) in Jung’s celebrated *Eranos Jahrbuch.*

Vysheslavtsev is the author of the most psychoanalytical Christian theory of creativity and therefore the pivotal figure in the fate of Freudian sublimation in Russian religious thought, whose contribution crowns and completes the tradition that we have set out here. Vysheslavtsev is pivotal firstly because he knew Freud, Jung, Adler, Rank, Baudouin and Coué better than almost all other Russians of a religious persuasion, saw the genius of their work and admired them. In his dialectic intellectual approach, he used traditional Orthodox Christianity with its defective theory of man as his thesis, the Freudian unconscious and Freudian sublimation as their antithesis, and then

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