Ivan Soloviev's Reflections on Eros

Mikhail Epstein

The majority of readers will be unfamiliar with the name of Ivan Soloviev (1944–1984) unless the former students of one Moscow school, who will recall their prematurely deceased teacher, are among them. Although Ivan Igorevich taught Russian language and literature, his knowledge was encyclopedic, encompassing the most diverse spheres of world culture. He could easily compare the lyrical works of Pushkin, Goethe, and Byron, or the philosophical views of Plato, Nietzsche, and Freud. Quite often his lessons violated the boundaries of traditional scholarly disciplines, thereby provoking keen interest among his students, jealousy among his colleagues, and suspicion and hostility among the higher education officials.

Ivan Soloviev lived alone, spent his leisure time in libraries, thought intensively, and wrote abundantly. It was impossible to dream of publishing any of his works, as they would never have passed the stringent rules of censorship: they did not follow any Marxist precepts, nor were they constructed upon any approved ideological foundations. But his friends were freely given everything that came out of his old rattling typewriter, and they avidly devoured it and discussed it incessantly, as it somehow refreshed the stagnant atmosphere of the late Brezhnev era.

I have preserved some of the finished writings of Ivan Soloviev, as well as the rough drafts of the monumental production the author himself considered to be his definitive work. It was meant to be a kind of compendium of humanity's intellectual inquiries and digressions. One of the sections was tentatively titled "Eroticon, or The Panorama of Desire," from which the following fragments are taken. Their main theme is the
diversity of erotic experiences, which, in Soloviev's view, offers a "sensual epistemology," a means to intimate knowledge of the world.

An interesting peculiarity of Soloviev's reflections (especially in his last years) was a tendency to present them as someone else's thoughts; he tried to trace the genealogy of his ideas, to identify their ancestry and possible authorship. Soloviev shared Bakhtin's view of consciousness as a multitude of blending and dispersing voices, and he attempted to reveal the source of every one of them. That is why he signed his texts with various names, ranging from the great philosophers of antiquity to his contemporaries and closest friends. He would say on meeting one of them: "This is what you wrote yesterday," and hand him some freshly typed sheets signed with the interlocutor's name. I have accumulated a number of texts in my archive whose authorship Soloviev conferred upon me. Among the fragments here offered to the attention of the reader, the first is signed Buber—Feuerbach, the second ascribed to me, and only the last bears Ivan Soloviev's own name.²

TOWARD A THEORY OF CONTIGUITY

Sometimes I pictured in my dreams a harmonious system of human knowledge based on erotic experience; a theory of contiguity, in which the mystery and dignity of another being consist precisely in the fact that contiguity provides the basis for the comprehension of another world. Under this philosophy, pleasure would become a special, more complete and unusual form of rapprochement with The Other, and it would also become a skill with which we comprehend that which is external to us.

— Marguerite Yourcenar³

Who am I? Where do I stand? Who circumcised me? When was I baptized? Uncircumcised and unbaptized, I face the Lord: Thy will be done.

I am baptized in the waters of my mother's womb. I am circumcised at the base of my umbilical cord. I am Thine, Lord, I am baptized and circumcised by You.

The body is a temple: hallowed be Thy name in it. The world is a temple: Thy will be done in it.

Let us touch one another, thus making a weightless temple of Thy name. As a name is composed of letters, a temple is composed of touches. Where one touches another, there is Thy body, Lord.
The Lord reveals Himself in a touch. The beginning of theology is in the flesh. "Then saith he to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing'" (John 20:27). Doubting Thomas confirmed his faith through touching. Belief involves reaching one's finger—a feeling of contiguity.

Nothing is more sacred than touch with the flesh of another human being. The touch of a mother pitying her child. The touch of a husband and wife desiring intimacy. The touch of a doctor healing a patient. Flesh, in the flesh of another, seeks salvation, an exodus into life and immortality. Flesh, in itself, is mortal; immortal is that which emerges between oneself and another.

Let all faiths, all knowledges, touch one another. For it is not fusion or mixture but touch that illuminates and vitalizes life's differences. A touch is desirable and frightening, like everything that is sacred, like the love of God and the fear of God. Nothing is more mystical than another's flesh, containing in itself the mystery of Otherness. One can neither penetrate nor escape this mystery but only touch it. A touch is a sign that I remain outside though contiguous.

Touch operates as a duality: it unites—and separates. It overcomes distance—and constitutes a border. When touching, we simultaneously establish the untouchableness of whatever our fingers approach. With a touch, we sculpt the image of the untouchable. Touch delivers us from both the sin of intrusion and the sin of separation. A touch posits what should be: the boundary. Otherness draws itself with our finger so that we dare not violate it. Holy is the flesh in its boundedness. And contiguity marks the line, the flesh, of this boundary, the site of separation-unity between all creatures. Contiguity keeps them from violence and saves them from loneliness.

Everyone who touches another feels touched. For the first time, she feels her own skin. For the first time, he comes to know the landscape of his surface, its protuberances, grooves, rough spots. Contiguity gives birth to two identities.

Thanks to contiguity, the world becomes more ardent. Two warmths, through touch, become fire. The exterior becomes the interior. What was the surface of one body becomes the heart of two. The boundary proves to be inside, an inner partition of the dual being. In the present state of the world, all things are defined and mediated by their surfaces, but
through touch they are interiorized, reappropriated by the core. The whole of existence, cast out by the primordial impulse to the externality of self-separation, stretching out its cold exteriors, then collapses, contracts through contiguity. Everything is inside. Although all physical surfaces remain as they were, they all cling to one another, and palpitate like one enormous heart.

How is a boundary established? How is a person shaped into a personality? Traditional religions’ answer: by iron and water. By circumcision and baptism.

Contiguity is baptism for the unbaptized, circumcision for the uncircumcised. The Lord sanctified the flesh of the world when he created us in the flesh and became flesh himself, in order that one’s flesh could be sanctified through another’s. Contiguity is the fulfillment of commandments, it contains the proscribed purity of water and the depth of the imprint.

ON THE TWO REVOLUTIONS

In the twentieth century, a social revolution took place in Russia, a sexual revolution in the West. But do they not have the same foundation? Any revolution is a reversal, that is, an overthrowing of the upper strata through an elevation of the lower. In the case of the social revolution, these are class extremes: the formerly oppressed strata become the “leading” and “guiding” forces, while the former ruling class is subjugated or exterminated. However, the same process is typical of the sexual revolution, though it is not the social strata that are reversed, but the categories of body and mind. Just as the proletariat comes to dominate the intellectuals, the instincts gain ascendancy over the intellect. The oppressed strata of the unconscious ignite the flames of mutiny, break the chains of super-ego, overthrow the tyrant suppressing the libido, and take possession of the whole person, the entire psychic State.

How many echoes there are between these two revolutions, how much resonance! Consider the fact that both of them arose in the wake of World War I, the war that stirred up all that is most ancient and predatory in human nature, that plunged society into the condition of the primordial horde, the primitive commune, which both Freud and Marx considered to be the prototype of a future emancipated humanity. The time of the Bolshevik Revolution and the civil war coincides with an era
in which Freudianism rapidly expanded throughout Western culture, an era characterized by literary revolutions ("stream-of-consciousness," dadaism, surrealism, "automatic writing"), political radicalism proceeding from a psychoanalytic basis, and "sexual revolution" itself (the Freudo-Marxist hybrid conceived by W. Reich). All sorts of chaotic, Dionysian forces were fermenting, releasing the dark impulses of a primordial vitality which, until that point, had been restrained by the bonds of civilization. The war proved to be worldwide in its scope precisely because it extended beyond immediate military actions: not only did state frontiers begin to crumble, but also those usually inviolable boundaries which lie inside single states (class struggle, civil war), or inside single persons (psychoanalytic and sexual revolution). This universal war spanned the 1920s and 30s, moving from the military realm to the socio-cultural, and then returning to the battle-fields as the Second World War.

Aristocracy and intelligentsia, artistry and intellect—all was sacrificed to the rebellious masses, the rebellious matter, identified as productive labor in Russia and as the delights of consumption in the West. This difference was prefigured in the very names glorified by the two revolutions: Marx means "hammer," Freud means "joy." The essential difference lies in the fact that the Russian Revolution appropriated society and the settlement of external class antagonism as its sphere, whereas the sphere of the Western revolution was predominantly the individual, the resolution of internal, psychological antagonism. However, victory in both cases belonged to the social and psychological lower strata that had been oppressed for centuries: to the proletariat constituting the physical power of society, and to the libido constituting the energetic potential of the individual. Thus Freud and Marx comprise the "joyful hammer," the "libidinous proletariat" of the new, inverted psycho-social organism-organization.

And yet, there is a flaw in this speculation. Was it really the proletariat who took power in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution? There was barely any proletariat left in a Russia ruined by WW I and civil war. It is only ideology that makes claims to "the dictatorship of the proletariat," "the power of workers and peasants," "the republic of the working people." Actually, the power shifted to ideology itself and to the omnipotent ideologists, that is, it leapt to the heretofore unattained upper level of mind and ideas. Before the Revolution, under the feudal system, the
aristocracy had ruled, — "blue blood," or "white bone," as they say in Russia; but blood and bone are still concrete, organic, while an idea is abstract, constructed. Later, under the capitalist system, money, profit, and calculation came to rule, but these are still connected to "base" matter, to the natural cycles of substances and the economic circulation of goods. At the very least, although abstract, money has a tangible referent; one can sell or buy something palpable, material, whose existence is not dependent on any ideology. So feudalism and capitalism are still bound to the material, to actual labor, much more than "the triumph of the laborer," as proclaimed by revolutionary ideology. The idea of labor is far more abstract than the reality of blood and riches. "Idea" constitutes the highest level in the hierarchy of generalizations: it alone claims to see and to subjugate the future, making far-reaching plans for the mastery of humanity. Only theoretically did the material lower strata gain victory in the Revolution; actually, it was theory itself which conquered the material realm. In this way, the rule of the upper "ideal" strata was not overturned, but rather ascended still higher — the Revolution was merely a springboard for this ascent to the kingdom of Ideas.

Is this not the same paradox inherent in the sexual revolution? No doubt manners and morals became more openly permissive, the libido expressed itself more liberally. But even before this happened, those who wished to sinned desperately, though only under cover of night, in brothels, in dens of iniquity, in the underground, in the innermost recesses of the unconscious. The sexual revolution did not cause any substantial changes in the libido itself; rather it brought the libido to the light of day, revealed it to the conscious mind. If, previously, a person had concealed his incestuous impulses from himself, now he permitted himself to indulge them according to the demands of a properly enlightened consciousness. Herein lies the question: was it "natural" instinct that prevailed, or was it consciousness that expanded its authority to include even the formerly inaccessible and innermost parts of body and soul? In essence, Freud, this Marx of sexual revolution, while claiming to relinquish priority to the libido, effectively raised consciousness to the level where it could enlighten the libido, make it transparent to rational self-understanding. The psychoanalytic challenge to consciousness: higher and farther. Think the once unthinkable!

For both Marx and Freud, the attempt to understand the material and
the unconscious became the means to their rational control. If, for Marx, the disastrous crises of an anarchic capitalist economy could be solved only by a planned socialist economy, then, for Freud, the diseases of psychic neuroses could be treated only by conscious recognition and the regulation of repressed impulses. What results, therefore, is, superconsciousness, a post-classic consciousness that embraces the once unconscious and uses it as an instrument for the expansion of consciousness. Therefore, the result of the sexual revolution frequently proved to be not so much the triumph of sex as the triumph of consciousness over sex. If, earlier, sex stubbornly hid itself in the pants, under the skirt, under the blanket, while still being spontaneously excitable and uncontrollably pleasant, now consciousness dragged it into the light in order to use it everywhere, in any position, for any purpose, be it commerce or revolution, be it the maintenance or the destruction of the status quo. . . . The orgasm itself, extracted from the spermatic ducts, became the conduit for political ideas, aesthetic trends, and economic profits. All these rational applications of sex, including its commercial and ideological exploitation and portrayal, can be called pornography.

Thus, social and sexual revolution intersect. “Ideology and pornography are twin-sisters.” Both claim the priority of the social and biological lower strata: the working classes, the sexual organs. On the socialist banners, a mighty working hand; in the capitalist ads, a mighty model’s body. In both cases, the texture of the body is sensually and sensationally exposed. However, these forms of extreme materiality are nothing but “eidoses”: ideas and images. They are instruments of power for the superconsciousness. The classic, pre-revolutionary (both sexually and socially) consciousness still separated itself from material life and eschewed the extremes of spontaneity, striving for the Spiritual, the Sublime, the Good and the True. Then came the revolution — essentially not social or sexual, but mental: superconsciousness overthrew the immature classic consciousness by means of the material, in order to raise itself above the material, all the while making it a tool of supremacy.

The scenes of ardent labor. The scenes of inspired lechery. Two forms of abstraction: “ideo” and “porno.” Labor turned into “logy”; lechery turned into “graphy” — such is the quintessence of material life, extracted for the benefit of thinking and the pleasure of writing.
Helenology

(An attempt at the construction of a new science)

1. Helenology, unlike most other sciences, is the science of only one person, henceforth designated as Helen.

2. The sciences about one person, such as Shakespearology, Napoleonology, Pushkinology, Marxology, and so forth, study the contribution of the given person to history, literature, social thought, and so forth. Unlike all of these outstanding people, who are interesting for what they have done, Helen is interesting for what she is.

3. As much as Being in itself is higher than its separate accomplishments, so Helenology is higher than Napoleonology, Marxology, and other disciplines devoted to the unique achievements of a single individual, since it is devoted to the very existence of the unique. Helenology studies not what Helen has achieved or how she has expressed herself, but what she is by herself, regardless of any historical or aesthetic manifestations, in the simple depth of her immanence. Helenology is the first independent science about one single being who startles us by the very fact that she is, not by what she has become or could have been.

4. In Aristotle’s opinion, the source of every cognition is wonder. “For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize. . . . And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant . . .” Therefore, the most important sciences emerge from the greatest sensations of wonder. Doubtless, Helen amazes people who meet her much more than molecules or gases or numbers, the wonder of which gave rise to the hard sciences: physics, chemistry, mathematics. One would have to possess very little sensitivity not to be astonished by Helen after seeing her once; and, after seeing her twice, not to elaborate this wonder into an entire system of cognition corresponding to the complexity of the subject.

5. If judged by the strength of its generative impulse, Helenology must gradually outstrip all other sciences and become predominant, integrating their uncoordinated efforts. Physics, mathematics, history, literary criticism — all of these sciences are interesting and instructive, mostly because they help us to understand various aspects of the world in which Helen could appear. For none who ever saw this world was surprised with it to the degree that one is amazed with Helen. Thus, Helenology becomes the avant-garde of all scientific development.
6. Each science begins with certain intuitions and ends by synthesizing them into a system of concepts that holistically renders its subject. In this case, we are to connect the following notions that provide a glimpse of the internal and the external worlds of Helen:

(a) the azure and green tint of her eyes framed by their generally grey color;
(b) an attachment to a dog named Aka;
(c) strange knocks at night in her apartment, especially when the moon is full;
(d) the desire to work as a nurse in a retirement home;
(e) a narrow social circle along with the readiness to make new acquaintances easily;
(f) an aversion to the subway and to wearing hats;
(g) a belief in star signs, and also a strong, but not always compliant sense of destiny;
(h) a need to re-read Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* periodically, and a love for Tsvetaeva’s poems;¹⁰
(i) an abundance of daily projects to change her way of life: from moving to another apartment to moving to another country;
(j) a wish to be at the seashore when she is only at the river bank;
(k) a special interest in the writer Fyodor Sologub and in the concept of the demonic in his works;¹¹
(l) a sense of the absence of her own personality and of the inexplicability of her own actions;
(m) the mysterious relationship of inner closeness and outer alienation for the subject named I . . .¹²

(z) an uncertainty that, in the world, there could be found even one man who is ready to sacrifice, for her, anything, anything at all, for example, his life.

7. Doubtless, all the above-mentioned features converge only in the singular entity in the world who is called Helen, and only because of her do they acquire general meaning and interconnection. Never, nowhere and in no one else could the dog Aka and the writer Salinger, the wish to find herself on the seashore and the desire to work as a nurse in a retirement home, conjoin and comprise one whole in which these diverse phenomena unite in the most unexpected and wondrous way, inspiring further investigation.
In Helen, a new reality unknown to previous sciences is revealed, where one American writer is closer to a mutt than to any other American writer, and a subway trip is closer to wearing a hat than to taking a trip in any other vehicle. This enigmatic reality, inexplicable through other scientific methods, demands a special philosophical-poetical approach and the creation of a new science satisfying the most rigid criteria of singularity. Zoology and literary criticism, medicine and geography — at the intersection of these disciplines, Helenology arises, which is not reducible to any of them.

8. Helenology is an integral area of scientific knowledge which, in its ascension to the Singular, uses the results of generalizing sciences, but is not limited by them, because Helen is incommensurably superior to any generalization, being exclusive of all rules and the rule for all exclusions. In the development of Helenology, the main contributions are made by her intimates and acquaintances as they deepen their knowledge of her. Gradually, a new social milieu of interprofessional communication is taking shape, a milieu which unites physicists and mathematicians, linguists and art historians, psychologists and sociologists, astrologers and navigators, all those who, through their particular paths, approach the enigma of Helen and find in Helenology the unifying thread of universal knowledge about the world.

9. The goal of Helenology is not only to expand our general knowledge about the universe, but also to introduce methods and criteria, elaborated in the study of Helen, into other disciplines. Since Helen is interesting by herself, other disciplines cannot avoid reflecting this interest as they exemplify and expand upon features of Helen's personality. For example, architects cannot help but be interested in Helen's sharply negative attitude to subways. Futurologists must inevitably pay attention to the multiplicity of shifting scenarios of the future which is especially characteristic of Helen, but also of all humanity. Landscape architects will doubtless be interested in Helen's view on the skyscape of clouds and their influence on the earthly landscape, a view that she allows herself to share, in part, with I . . . Whether Helen's master's thesis contributes significantly to Sologub studies or not, Helenology will make a powerful impact on the development of this minor discipline. Helen's particular interest in the study of Fyodor Sologub is deeply characteristic of his artistic conception of the demonic and opens the possibility of new metaphysical, psychological, mythological, and other approaches to this prob-
lem in accordance with the integral character of Helenology. For further research, the following themes are particularly recommended: "Aka and the Image of the Dog in Works of Sologub"; "The Combination of Green, Blue and Grey in the Symbolism of Sologub"; "Nedotykomka (nether-creature) and the Moon in Works of Sologub, in Connection with the Night Knocks in Helen's Apartment," and so on.

10. The importance of the above-mentioned points (section 6) is self-evident:

(a) For the development of painting and art criticism;
(b) For new theoretical insights in the study of canines, especially in the exploration of mongrels;
(c) For empirical substantiation of occult knowledge;
(d) For the development of gerontology and medical deontology.

And so forth and so on.

In truth, Helenology is capable of enriching all sciences, because Helen contains an inexplicable enigma that underlies all of them; this enigma does not itself become more decipherable, but aids in deciphering the enigmas of other disciplines.

11. Each phenomenon contains something helenesque, therefore while wandering around a crowded city or an endless forest, in any condition or on various occasions, one is tempted to pronounce Helen's name, relating it...

... to the cloud, because it is completely helenesque;
... to the grass, because it is green like Helen's eyes;
... to the lake, because it shimmers like Helen's eyes;
... to the ant, because once Helen compared her everyday life with its;
... to the tree, because it bows from the wind and branches abundantly like Helen's fate;
... to the asphalt, because Helen often peers at it, wandering with head bent;
... to the tramway, because on a similar tramway, Helen once went to visit someone;
... and to any passerby, because he, as a simple human, might chance to see Helen and wonder at her, but is likely devoid of this capacity.
All helenesque phenomena, like Helen herself, comprise the subject matter of Helenology, which studies, in her person, the entire world in its most profound and mysterious hypostasis. The Helenological aspect of all things implies their possible, though unattainable, perfection: to be close to Helen and necessary for her.

12. One of the fundamental notions of Helenology is the chastity of play or the purity of temptation, which are manifest in such contradictory phenomena as . . .

. . . the greenness of the forest and the blueness of the sky, which are mediated by the transparent grey, dimly glittering air;
. . . heightened egocentrism without egoism: ego in everything, but nothing for the ego;
. . . a firm character with a complacent will, which is fascinated by everything yet subjugated by nothing;
. . . an aspiration to burden herself with useful work and a tendency to easily neglect labor and utility of any kind;
. . . a capricious meandering pattern of conversation in which sentences say less than words, words less than pauses, but still more meaningful are: (1) steps, (2) looks, (3) touches, (4) the state of nature, (5) smells, (6) recollections, (7) seasons, (8) the location of the clouds, (9) surrounding objects, (10) unspoken thoughts, (11) wishes kept secret, (12) wishes uncovered, and so on.

13. The point is that each feature in Helen is revealed to the degree that it contrasts with another, as some specialists believe. Other specialists hold that Helen is a meek, faithful, and loving being who has not yet awakened from the dream of pre-existences, and thus experiences, at the same time, all stages of the organic development of personality: larva, cocoon, and butterfly. It is premature to separate these stages of larva-ingenuous, cocoon-coquette, and butterfly-princess, but what is evident is their continuing metamorphosis, leading to the formation of a winged soul. A third group of specialists sees the specificity of the phenomenon in its early charm which leads to a fixation on the infantile stages of development. In spite of this struggle within various schools of Helenology, all specialists coincide in the opinion that knowledge, as the process of confluence between subject and object, is still unattainable for them;
and the same wonder that so excites their minds proves to be the unsurpassable obstacle to knowledge.

14. Recently, among Helenologists, one awful heresy arose, which was condemned and expelled from the mainstream of the science. According to this heterodox dogma, Helen is love, and nothing but love, and since the subject and object of knowledge must eventually coincide, then Helenology is nothing but the growing love for Helen, the highest of all possible acts of knowledge.

15. However, all these heretics do not provide a single convincing argument that Helen is love. The absence of arguments is justified by the hypothesis that the manifestation of this secret quality of Helen can proceed only from her. The greatest duty of those persisting in heresy is to wait patiently for this manifestation, which will confirm the validity of their faith.

16. What is argument in science is sacrifice in faith, and there is nothing to be added to it, since I have reached point Z.13

NOTES

1. (Editor) This work of Epstein's, written under the name of Ivan Soloviev, contains many conscious allusions and references to the legacy of the greatest Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900). Vladimir Soloviev was the founder of the philosophy of “total-unity,” later adopted by many other Russian thinkers. In the twentieth century, one of its outcomes, ecumenism, became an increasingly influential movement for the reunification of all Christian churches and denominations. Vladimir Soloviev was also the founder of Sophiology, the doctrine about Sophia, the feminine hypostasis of Godhead, the divine wisdom, and the “soul of the universe.” The poetry of Vladimir Soloviev and his followers, Russian symbolists such as Alexander Blok, describes the mystical encounters of the lyric hero with Sophia, personified in the image of Beautiful Lady. According to Vladimir Soloviev, sexual love is the means to overcome individualism and to unite the masculinism and feminine elements as the prototype of the desired total-unity. Vladimir Soloviev developed many aspects of Platonic philosophy, in particular the theme of ideal love, which ascends from the beloved woman to God; however, Soloviev does not oppose the world of Ideas to the material world, but confesses a “religious materialism” that unites Platonism with the Christian notion of the holiness and divine justification of the flesh. “Ivan Soloviev's Reflections on Eros,” in particular the fragments on contiguity and Helenology, offer “serious parodies” of the cherished conceptions of Vladimir Solo-
view and locate them in the intellectual context of the end of the twentieth century.


3. (M.E.) Ivan Soloviev took these words from the French writer's novel Mémories d'Hadrien (1951) as an epigraph for his "Theory of Contiguity."

4. (I.S.) Incidentally, "Lenin" means "laziness," but it occurred much later that laziness took possession of the world of Vladimir (which means in Russian "the master of the world").

5. (M.E.) In Russian, both words are feminine. Further, this is a parodic paraphrase from Mayakovsky's poem "Lenin": "Lenin and the Party are twin-brothers." This expression was one of the most famous ideological clichés of the Soviet epoch.

6. (M.E.) The Soviet emblem of the crossed hammer and sickle, symbolizing the union of the worker and the peasant, can also be interpreted as a symbol of male and female sexual union since it frankly presents the phallic hammer entering the half-circle of the sickle.

7. (I.S.) Superconsciousness has followed the instruction given by Niccolo Machiavelli to the Prince: "you assist at the destruction of one by the aid of another who, if he had been wise, would have saved him; and conquering, as it is impossible that he shouldn't with your assistance, he remains at your discretion" (The Prince, in Great Books of the Western World [New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952], vol. 23, 32). Superconsciousness destroyed the classic consciousness with the aid of economic and biological materialism, so that material life itself remained a defenseless victim at the discretion of superconsciousness. Since Machiavellianism is considered to be a prototype of totalitarian strategy in the twentieth century, the Prince may also be regarded as a symbol of superconsciousness.

8. (M.E.) This fragment is one of the last ones completed by Ivan Soloviev not long before his death. As to the strict thesis-like form, the explanation can be found in another of Soloviev's papers: "Form must oppose content, and the more passionate the one the more impassive the other" ("Style as failure").


10. (M.E.) Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941), Russian poet and essayist, the author of very passionate lyrical verses, where fury and sarcasm are mixed with gentle confessions.

11. (M.E.) Fyodor Sologub (1863–1927), Russian novelist and poet, close to the symbolists and skilled in the presentation of the morbid and perverse aspects of an "evil" reality, the author of the novel The Petty Demon (1907).

12. (M.E.) We exclude here those paragraphs — (n) to (y) — that deal with the intimate sides of the lives of I. and Helen. As to the relationship of the unique and the universal in the name of Helen, one can cite here a judgment of Ivan Soloviev about the great Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev: "He created
his Sophiology, a doctrine about eternal femininity and God's wisdom, only because all his life he was in love with Sophia Petrovna Khitrov. Sophiology is the doctrine of this Sophia."

13. (M.E.) In Russian, \( i \) is both the personal pronoun \( I \) and the last letter of the alphabet. See point Z in Section 16.

The following remark from Ivan Soloviev's article "The Semiotics of Silence" may be illuminating: "\( I \) is the only linguistic sign in which the speaker also becomes the referent. The coincidence of the subject and the object overcomes the duality of sign (signifying/signified) and thus abolishes the very foundations of speech. Therefore, the word "I" is not a sign in the traditional sense, it is rather a border between sign and non-sign, the transition from speech to silence."