

Russian Literature, Philosophy, and Religious Thought in a Time of Catastrophe**Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP), Lisbon****March 14–16, 2023**

UCP Research Center for Theology and Religious Studies (CITER)

UCP Research Center for Communication and Culture (CECC)

Northwestern University Research Initiative
for the Study of Russian Philosophy and Religious Thought

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the atrocities it has committed raise an urgent question for students of Russian culture: What does it mean to study Russian literature, philosophy, and religious thought in a time of catastrophe? Russian intellectual and cultural history is rich, diverse, and complex. There are illiberal, indeed toxic forces within in that have served and continue to serve the sinister purposes of enmity and violence, whether in the form of nationalism and other varieties of tribalism, imperialism and militarism, authoritarianism and autocracy, or, in general, the denial of human dignity, equality and freedom. But there are also liberal, life-affirming forces in Russian culture that defy violence, lift the human spirit, and serve the transcendent purposes of truth, the good, and beauty. They have produced the towering achievements of Russian arts, letters, and thought. Among these achievements is a deep tradition of religious-philosophical personalism, which advances a conception of reality centered in the absolute worth or sacredness of the person.

This symposium will foster discussion of the ideological roots and antecedents of today's authoritarianism and violence, together with reflection on the intellectual and spiritual resources within Russian literature, philosophy and religious thought for the defense of human dignity, human rights, and universal human values.

One of the goals of the Northwestern University Research Initiative is to integrate Russian cultural-philosophical studies in the Global North and South. To that end, we co-sponsored a conference at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Brazil, in November 2022: *Russian Literature and Philosophy: An International Symposium on Religion, Nationalism and Dissidence*. The Lisbon symposium in March 2023 will build on that effort. We invite participation in any form: papers, talking points, or conversation.