

The subjects of the Balzan Prizes 2023

World Literature

In 1827 Goethe announced, rather prematurely, the end of national literatures and the beginning of a global one. His vision, with pretensions to cosmopolitanism, but firmly Eurocentric, was challenged during the 20th century, not least by the 1988 Balzan Prize winner René Étiemble.

The current approach is to examine global literature as a system that is not static, i.e., a sum of literatures expressing cultures or nations, but dynamic, in that it is positioned between cultures by challenging established identities. This dynamism is essentially represented by an ever-growing number of authors who have experienced and expressed in their works a condition of migration between cultures and languages, thus erasing a hierarchical relationship between a supposed centre and a supposed periphery. Research on global literature also examines the transnational circulation of texts in a global literary market accelerated by new media.

Human evolution: paleoanthropology

Developed in the 19th century, paleoanthropology, also known as 'human paleontology', pushes its observation of humans and their behaviour in the prehistoric past back to the early Palaeolithic period; it also relates to archaeology as far as the examination of the remains of humans and their activities well before protohistory. The discipline, which has evolved rapidly since the 1970s, is based on the discovery, identification and study of fossil remains of hominids in comparison with both fossil and living primates. Also benefiting, since the 2000s, from the contributions of paleogenetic, paleoanthropology, in addition to addressing the issue of the origins of man on a strictly scientific and non-religious level, has raised the theoretical question of the classification of the beings studied, which is fundamental from an epistemological point of view.

Human evolution: Ancient DNA and human evolution

On 16 November 1999 in Bern, while receiving the Balzan Prize for the Science of Human Origins, Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza predicted that the methods of genetic analysis then in place would bring revolutionary developments in the interpretation of human evolutionary history. Major scientific advances in DNA sequencing have made it possible to overcome major obstacles such as the rarity of ancient human DNA finds and their contamination. The sequencing, in 2010, of Neanderthal DNA, the identification of other hominid populations such as the Denisovians and their genetic relationships with modern humans are the most remarkable results of these advances, which, thanks to new techniques of retrieval and bioinformatic analysis, make it possible to extend research from the hybridisation and admixture of ancient hominids to their behaviour.

High-resolution images: from planetary to cosmic objects

Since Galileo's telescope, advances in astronomy and astrophysics have always coincided with the introduction of new and more precise instruments for observing celestial bodies. These advances in technology have also entailed a gradual refinement of methods for measuring and analysing cosmic phenomena and thus our understanding of the universe as a whole. In recent years, the ability to produce high-resolution images, with unprecedented sharpness and detail, has been so greatly enhanced that the range of phenomena and objects that can be visualised and analysed has expanded considerably, giving further impetus not only to astronomical observation proper, but also to fundamental physics and geophysics.

The Balzan Prize for Humanity, Peace and Fraternity among Peoples

The Balzan Prize for Humanity, Peace and Fraternity among Peoples is a special prize awarded at intervals of no less than three years. It is destined to a person or an organisation that has achieved distinction for outstanding humanitarian work.

The Prize 2023, the twelfth in the history of the Foundation, will be announced on 11 September, and in November, it will be presented to the winner during the awards ceremony in Bern.

This prize also has strong historical significance for the Balzan Foundation.

On 26 October **1962**, King Gustav Adolf of Sweden, on behalf of the **Nobel Foundation**, received the Balzan Prize for Humanity, Peace and Fraternity among Peoples from the hands of the President of the Italian Republic, Antonio Segni. It was the first awards ceremony in foundation history, and was held in Rome, in the Hall of the Horatii and the Curiatii in the Palazzo dei Conservatori.

On 11 May **1963**, again in Rome, **Pope John XXIII** entered the Quirinal Palace – the former papal palace – to take part in the Balzan Prize awards ceremony. It was the first time in centuries that the pontiff of the Catholic Church left the Vatican to enter a State institution. The ceremony was also John XXIII's last public engagement, as he died at the age of eighty-two shortly thereafter, on 3 June 1963.

On 1 March **1979**, **Mother Theresa of Calcutta** accepted her Balzan Prize from the hands of then President of the Italian Republic, Sandro Pertini. This was the first time that she received a great international award for her tireless missionary work.

Previous Prizewinners for Humanity, Peace and Fraternity among Peoples

1961	Nobel Foundation
1962	H.H. John XXIII
1978	Mother Teresa of Calcutta
1986	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR
1991	Abbé Pierre
1996	International Committee of the Red Cross, endeavours in Hospital in Afghanistan
2000	Abdul Sattar Edhi
2004	Community of Sant'Egidio - DREAM programme
2007	Karlheinz Böhm, Organisation Menschen für Menschen, Aid for Ethiopia
2014	Vivre en Famille
2018	Terre des hommes – Programme SIMSONE