

# Bronislaw Baczko

**Honorary Professor at the Université de Genève**

## **2011 Balzan Prize for Enlightenment Studies**

*For his contribution to philosophical reflection dedicated to Rousseau's thought and to the study of the political and social consequences of the Enlightenment on the French Revolution.*

**Institution Administering Research Funds:** Université de Genève

**Adviser for the Balzan General Prize Committee:** Dominique Schnapper

## **A Critical Dictionary of Utopia in the Century of the Enlightenment**

There are a number of dictionaries devoted to the main utopian works and their authors, including meanings and literary topoi, in different eras. Specifically, there exist many works that identify, describe and analyze the corpus of works which constitute the European tradition of utopia. Texts, authors, patterns, themes and concepts have been presented in research of varying scope and focus. There will be no repetition of work already carried out, and no attempt to compete with relatively recent works, such as the *Encyclopedia of Utopia and Science Fiction* by Pierre Versins, *The Dictionary of Literary Utopias*, edited by Vita Fortunati and Raymond Trousson, or *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* by Alberto Manguel and Gianni Guadalupi.

What researchers and teachers lack, however, is a tool that will critically evaluate the main concepts connected to the idea of utopia and the whole literary production it has engendered, something that offers accurate definitions and detailed analyses. The purpose of Bronislaw Baczko's research project is to fill this gap with the publication of a collective reference work containing contributions from the most respected international scholars in the field. In carrying out this project, Bronislaw Baczko will work in tandem with his close associates Michel Porret, Professor of Modern History at the Université de Genève, and François Rosset, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the Université de Lausanne.

Several features fundamentally distinguish this endeavour. First, the tradition of utopia is not treated in its full temporal and historical scope. Research is firmly concentrated on the Enlightenment (taking a broad interpretation of its timeline – from the second half of the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century). This *Dictionnaire critique* is based on a particular approach to utopia, regarded as a model of thought and speech which underlay the profoundly reformist tendencies of the eighteenth century. From this perspective, utopia functions as both a symbol and base underpinning that immense and complex movement that has been termed the Enlightenment. It offers images, motifs, narrative sequences, a rich array of common spaces which could give a recognizable and transferable consistency to products of the imagination in all areas that have exercised the spirit of reform. In regard to this mode of forward and visionary thinking, the concept of utopia has served as an inspiration and provided its own form of language, that is to say, providing a vocabulary, grammar, rhetoric and poetics.

From this perspective, the articles in the *Dictionnaire critique* do not deal with works or authors singularly. Rather, separate entries deal with the abstract concepts that define the horizon of utopia: happiness, freedom, equality, etc. Entries selected for this dictionary can be defined as follows: they concern objects that exerted significant influence on the reformist thinking of the Enlightenment, building on the literary tradition, philosophical and political aspects of utopia. Approximately fifty entries have been put together, which should permit the fullest possible expression of this milieu.

The directors of the project do not intend to give a fixed definition of utopia which might serve as a common matrix for the articles. Rather than a model or a determined object, the concept of utopia around which the authors are invited to think can be regarded as a set of discursive and narrative embodiments that provide a multifaceted body to this prospective and reformist thought process. Thus, the authors are free to define the approach they deem most appropriate.

The ambition is to publish a work edited with utmost care, enriched with an important iconography. The dictionary will consist of approximately sixty entries, written by forty-five different academics, and including the following: Amérique; Amour; Anciens et modernes; Anti-utopie; Architecture; Arts; Bible; Corps humain; Crime, Justice, Droit de punir; Droits de l'homme; Economie; Education; Esclavage; État; Famille – Enfant; Femme; Fêtes; Formes littéraires de l'utopie; Géographie; Guerre et Paix; Historiographie de l'utopie des Lumières; Illustration; Jardins; Langue;

Livres et bibliothèques; Loi; Lumières; Luxe; Machines de communication; Mal; Mathématiques et géométrie; Missions; Moeurs; Mort; Nature; Origines; Paradis; Pauvreté; Paysage; Perfectibilité; Philosophe – Homme de lettres; Pirates, Piraterie; Polices – Ordre public; Origines; Population – Démographie; Propriété; Régime politique – Institutions; Religion; Révolution (av. 1789); Révolution Française; Santé; Sauvage; Savant; Sciences et Techniques; Sexualité; Sujet – Citoyen; Temps; Utopie; Ville; Voyage.

The development of the project will involve graduate students from the École doctorale interdisciplinaire dix-huitiémiste of the Université de Genève, Université de Lausanne, Université de Neuchâtel, Université de Fribourg, Universität Bern. Workshops will be organized with the authors of the relevant articles and an international symposium on the subject of utopia, in collaboration with the Université de Genève and the Université de Lausanne, will be held to accompany publication at the end of the project.

The work of managing the project, drafting the articles, the overall elaboration of the index and bibliography, as well as the illustrations, will be entrusted to a coordinator appointed for a period of two years. Thus far, thirty-eight articles out of the fifty-nine in the editorial plan have been received, and publication of the work by Les éditions Georg of Geneva is planned for 2015.

### **Researchers:**

Bronislaw Baczko, Michel Porret, François Rosset – Directors of the project  
Mirjana Farkas – Coordinator

Academics engaged in the project :

Jean-Christophe Abramovici (Université de Paris IV); Bronislaw Baczko (Université de Genève); Vincent Barras (Université de Lausanne); Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire (Université de Nice); Ugo Bellagamba (Université de Nice); Marc-André Bernier (Université du Québec); Marie-Françoise Bosquet (Université de La Réunion); Fabrice Brandli (Université de Genève); Joël Castonguay-Bélangier (University of British Columbia); Marco Cicchini (Université de Genève); Yves Citton (Université de Grenoble III); Deborah Cohen (Université d'Aix-Marseille); Julie Doyon (Université de Paris XIII); Jean Ehrard (Université de Clermont-Ferrand); Jérôme Ferrand (Université de Grenoble III); Vincenzo Ferrone (Università di Torino); Laurence Fontaine (CNRS); Vita Fortunati (Università di Bologna); Jean-Marie

Goulemot (Université de Tours); Antoine Hatzenberger (CNRS, Institut français d’Égypte); Audrey Higelin-Fusté (Université de Grenoble III); Girolamo Imbruglia (Università degli Studi di Napoli «l’Orientale»); Claire Jaquier (Université de Neuchâtel); Catherine Larrère (Université de Paris I); John Christian Laursen (University of Riverside); Antoine Lilti (ENS, Paris); Stéphane Lojkine (Université d’Aix-Marseille); Marco Marcacci (independant researcher, Bellinzona); Jean-Clément Martin (Université de Paris I); Didier Masseur (Université de Tours); Helder Mendes Baiao (Université de Lausanne); Anne-Marie Mercier-Faivre (Université de Lyon I); Christian Michel (Université de Lausanne); Vincent Milliot (Université de Caen); Adrien Paschoud (Université de Lausanne); Giovanni Paoletti (Università di Pisa); Thierry Paquot (Université de Paris XII); Paul Pelckmans (Universiteit Antwerpen); Krzysztof Pomian (CNRS, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Poland); Michel Porret (Université de Genève); Jean-Michel Racault (Université de la Réunion); Claude Reichler (Université de Lausanne); Jean-Marc Rohrbasser (INED, Institut National d’Etudes démographiques); François Rosset (Université de Lausanne); Stéphanie Roza (Université de Paris I); Martin Rueff (Université de Genève); Pierre Serna (Université de Paris I); Gabriella Silvestrini (Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale «Amedeo Avogadro»); Stéphane Van Damme (Institut Universitaire Européen, Florence); Nathalie Vuillemin (Université de Neuchâtel); Ghislain Waterlot (Université de Genève); Przemyslaw Witkowski (Université de Montpellier III).