

## Presentation

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The first World Humanities Forum took place in Busan, Republic of Korea, from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011. It brought together academics, writers and humanists from around the world under the general theme of ‘Universalism in a Multicultural World.’

Convened through the joint initiative of the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the City of Busan, and UNESCO in cooperation with the National Research Foundation of Korea and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, this wide-ranging gathering had a double objective. On the one hand, it purposed to demonstrate an international process of cooperation and even of progressive integration between the different branches of the human and social sciences. The world is witnessing today a proliferation of initiatives, meetings, colloquia and joint research programmes which all aim to promote scholarly partnerships that are inter-disciplinary, or as we prefer to describe them in the journal which was that of Roger Caillois, trans-disciplinary partnerships. The Busan Forum amply fitted such a scholarly dynamic, one which we consider will be decisive for the future of research in our respective disciplines.

On the other hand it was also deemed essential to reinforce the presence (others would go as far as to say the visibility) of the human sciences in the public domain. Such was the second objective of the World Humanities Forum: it represented an opportunity to bring the attention of the Korean public, and more generally of the scholarly world on an international scale, to the part that humanist thought can play in facing the ever-new problems that confront our world. The theme adopted for the Forum reflected this outlook. While being sufficiently comprehensive to allow for broad-ranging participation, it also very precisely distinguished the two opposite poles in relation to which contributing speakers were invited to address their contributions, these being the tension between the universality of reason on the one hand and the diversity of histories on the other. Participants were urged to measure the rational opening up of philosophical thought against the yardstick of the traditions, religions, literatures and, in general, the cultures which have taken form over the course of history and the breadth of the planet.

This issue of *Diogenes* brings together a selection of the contributions to this debate. In doing so we are responding to a request from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO which expressed the wish that the discussions initiated in Busan should be prolonged through the pages of a publication which was both international in reach and open to the whole of the human and social sciences. We were particularly delighted to note how a considerable coherence of theme emerged across the diversity of approaches adopted by the presenters and across the multiplicity of their disciplinary competencies. The dynamic interaction between the realm of the universal and the diverse solid social and historical realities is seen by the light of the different disciplines, by that of texts often widely distant in time and space, and through complementary cultural references. This collection of learned reflections opens with a presentation by the Nobel Laureate for Literature J.M.G. Le Clézio.

The articles included were chosen by the editors of *Diogenes* who bear the whole responsibility for the choice. Before inviting our authors to share their communications, we would like to express our grateful thanks to Dr. Han Goo Lee of the National Research Foundation of Korea, as well as to Dr Taeck-soo Chun, General Secretary of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO for the high degree of interest they have shown in regard to this publication and the support that they have brought to its realization.