Special issue: An East–West cultural dialogue on “Place”

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This issue, 2017-3 is the third in a series of special issues that includes revised articles from presentations made at the 11th East–West Philosophers’ Conference convened in May, 2016 at the University of Hawai’i and the East–West Center in Honolulu, Hawai’i. The first two special issues 2017-1 and 2017-2 focused on “Daoism/Buddhism and Place,” and “Confucianism and Place,” respectively. For this issue, the EWPC Program Committee selected a set of articles that focus on East–West cultural dialogue, ranging broadly from literary studies and traditional architectural practices, to the construction of sacred places, to contemporary mobile technologies and feminist issues.

The theme of the 11th East–West Philosophers’ Conference was “Place,” a topic that attracted over 300 participants from more than 40 countries. Panels and papers were presented that explored how places emerge through the sustained, shared practices of mutually-responsive and mutually-vulnerable actors. Subthemes included the place of the personal, including issues of identity-construction and privacy; place and culture, including considerations of how cultures shape and are shaped by relationships with natural and built environments; places of pilgrimage, including places charged with political or cultural, as well as, religious significance; places of memory; places of mediation, including social and mass media; place and the political, including places of justice and places of both conflict and peace;

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trading places, including the places of entrepreneurship and concerns about the place of equity in economics; and the place of philosophy, addressing issues about the real and ideal roles of philosophy in contemporary society.

For more than three-quarters of a century, the East–West Philosophers’ Conference series has hosted a dialogue among some of the world’s most prominent philosophers of their time. The dialogue began in 1939 when three University of Hawai‘i visionaries—Professors Charles A. Moore, Wing-tsit Chan, and Gregg Sinclair—initiated the first East–West Philosophers’ Conference in Honolulu. Its aim was to explore the significance of Eastern ways of thinking as a complement to Western thought, and to distill a possible synthesis of the ideas and ideals that are aspired to in these unique traditions. Comparative philosophy has evolved from this earliest idea to pursue a mutual respect and accommodation among the world’s cultures, with conferences continuing to be held in 1949, 1959, 1964, 1969, 1989, 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2011. Each of these conferences focused on a theme chosen as a vital issue of its time.

This conference series has been successful in fostering dialogue among philosophical traditions, and was instrumental in the establishment of the East–West Center on the campus of the University of Hawai‘i in 1960. *Philosophy East & West*, now one of the leading journals on comparative studies, was founded in 1951 as a forum that continues this same dialogue. Conference volumes from papers presented at these conferences have been published by the University of Hawai‘i Press to share with and promote further discussion on its theme within the world academic community.