

To the members of the Steering Committee of FISP.

Dear fellow philosophers, colleagues, and friends,

As every year, the World Philosophy Day marks a favorable occasion to share our views about the current role and status of our discipline.

An economist friend recently asked me what philosophers actually do today. Descriptively, this is not a hard question to answer. Of course, we spend most of our time reading, teaching, writing, and lecturing. Yet we also know that philosophy matters not only because it allows us to maintain our jobs as scholars, but because its concerns far exceed academic duties.

A peculiar air seems to pervade our world these days. Conflict seems to be omnipresent, manifesting itself in discourses of discrimination and intolerance, in wars, prejudice, exclusion, in fences and walls, and increasingly in the displacement of people across the continents. Regardless of how we may feel about the status quo, as philosophers we are still required to reflect on how philosophy can help us to efficiently deal with this conflict-ridden world.

Despite our different approaches to philosophy and our affiliations with different spiritual traditions, most of us would not refuse to recognize philosophical potential as a meaningful social and cultural drive, for it enables us to make sense of precisely the social and cultural complexity of our world. Philosophy, and the humanities at large, still can and indeed do help us cultivate the ability to merge our cultural roots into a larger citizenship by expanding the boundaries of our selves. They empower us to learn to feel familiar in a world wider than merely our own, to attempt to approach human conflicts in a dialogic way, and to understand controversies in their human and cultural complexity rather than in a simplified one-sidedness.

Because of its educative capacity, philosophy has a distinctive role in orienting the cultural and social choices around us. This may explain why many leading countries in the world are currently pouring considerable resources into philosophical education and research. A particularly admirable case worth mentioning here is represented by the successful effort of the Mexican philosophical community to have philosophical and gender education included among the constitutional rights of their country.

The World Philosophy Day is certainly a fortunate opportunity to reflect together on how our ideas travel across cultures. May this Day be a constructive opportunity for thinking of ourselves as parts of a larger interplay of cultures, heritages, and civilizations.

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President of FISP

