

WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY: THE TRUTH ISN'T JUST OUT THERE; IT'S IN YOU

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At a time when we are increasingly in search of the light, for the good... perhaps Philosophy can offer answers.

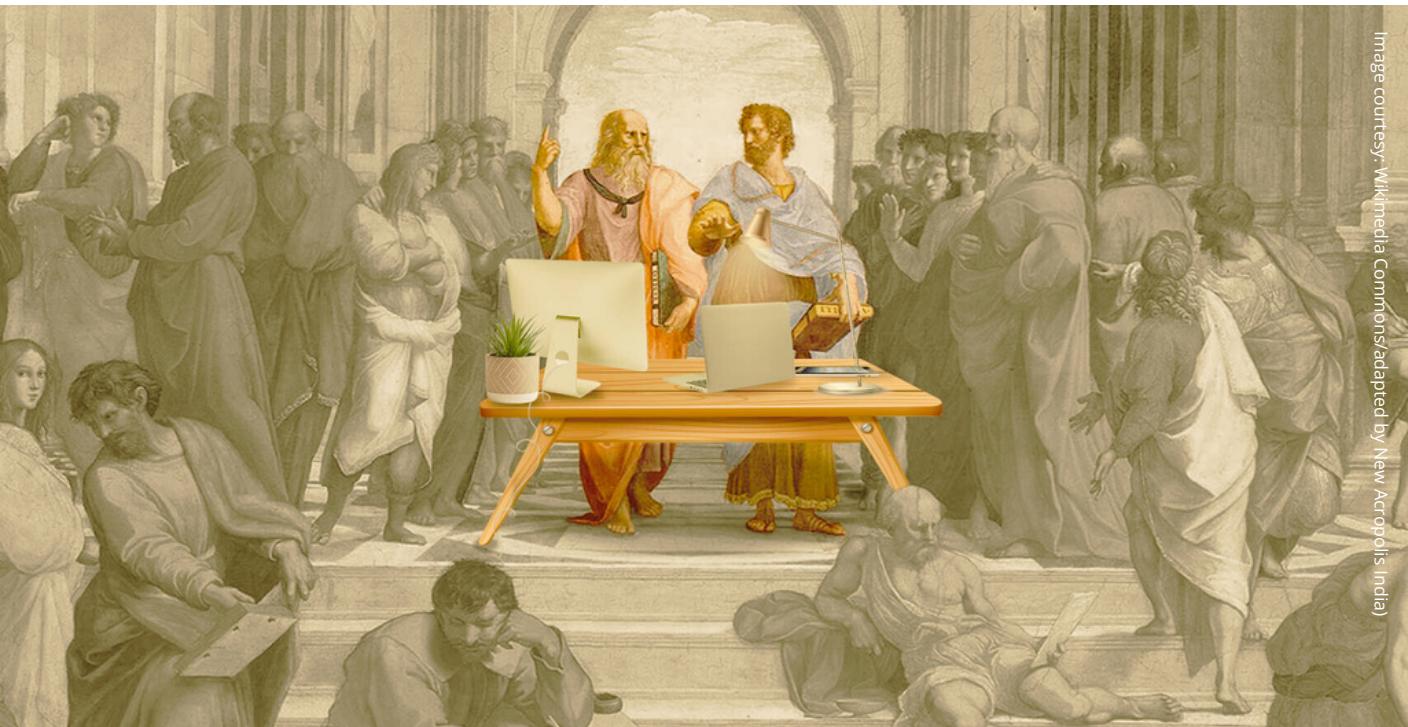
World Philosophy Day was initiated by UNESCO in 2002, as a means to revive the value and need for Philosophy in improving our world, by bettering ourselves. But can Philosophy really improve our world?

A famous anecdote about the origin of the term "philosophy" speaks of an admirer of the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras who once referred to him as "sophos" (wisdom). Pythagoras replied, "I am not sophos (wisdom); I am merely philo-sophos (lover of wisdom)!". At its core, Philosophy embodies love — a force that unites, one that pulls us to the essence of things. It is a yearning towards what is true and just, an ongoing pursuit of wisdom,

a way of life. A philosopher, therefore, as a seeker of wisdom aspires not only to understand it better, but to apply it, to live it, to become it.

Far from being an academic exercise of accumulating information about philosophers, Philosophy was always meant to be a path of investigation, of discovering our true nature, while simultaneously discovering deeper truths about life: Who am I? Is there a purpose to life?

It aims to draw from our universal human heritage, to learn from the wisdom of sages of the past, to discover the values and ideals that ancient civilisations aspired to live by, strived to preserve and pass down — in order to apply this timeless wisdom in our daily lives today and contribute to a better future.



So, what wisdom can we glean from the philosophers of the past?

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself. ~ Rumi

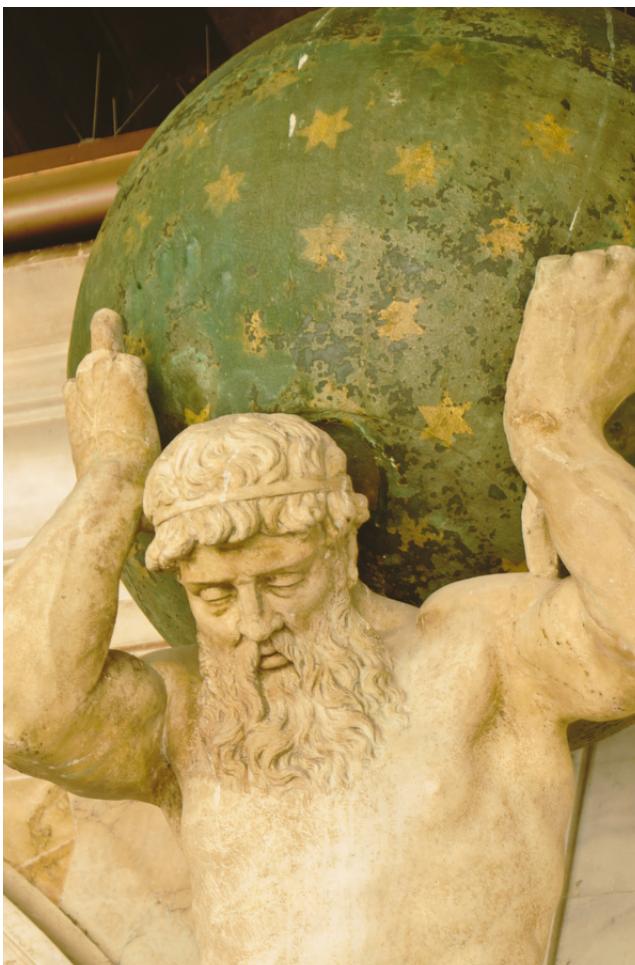
We need to look inward to bring about change before pointing fingers. With incredible advancements, we can communicate across the globe in seconds, even travel to space — yet we struggle to live in harmony with our neighbours, and we perhaps don't know how to live in harmony with our planet. Can we change the world around us, before adjusting our own attitudes, aspirations and what we value as human beings? Philosophy is the practice of always starting with ourselves - to address challenges and look internally for solutions. It is to bring harmony, tolerance, and understanding within us before we can expect others, nations, or our world to follow suit.

**To live a life of virtue, match up your thoughts, words and deeds.
~ Epictetus**

Philosophy is not mere contemplation, or good ideas and intentions. It necessitates action. We live in a world where information is at our fingertips, where we can access books and quotes by philosophers in seconds, yet this knowledge doesn't seem to make us wiser, or more content. Philosophy is an active practice - of investigating truth,

beauty, justice and goodness. It is to allow the works of those who dedicated their lives towards this quest, to become our own through our personal experiences.

To better ourselves, to become more consistent and able to follow through with what we understand is right in the smallest of choices — despite the circumstances, or discomfort — demands time and effort. Just like developing any skill, it requires dedication, practice, and persistence, to not only imagine a stronger, brighter and more dependable version of the self, but to actively construct ourselves in this light, and to see this as our contribution or offering.



To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right.

~ Confucius

Philosophy is to begin to discover the unbreakable connection between the individual and the whole. As we delve deeper into discovering who we truly are, it can provide a clearer direction on how we can live better, more in tune with ourselves, and consequently with life at large. In our times today, marked by increasing intolerance, ecological imbalances, and growing uncertainty, ancient wisdom — from Krishna's words to Arjuna at the brink of the battle of Kurukshetra, to Plato's allegory of the chariot of the horses — inspires us to revive our ethical axis as human beings.

Before reforming systems and policies, a return to our roots may be in order. Rediscovering and practicing human values — courage in the face of fear, tolerance in the face of ignorance, strength in the face of weakness, generosity in the face of selfishness... isn't this what our world needs, what those around us need, the strength and stability that we ourselves need? This is Philosophy in action — to strengthen the light within us, to bring out what makes us human — and this is an everyday practice that perhaps we need now more than ever.

With the spirit of Diwali, and the 17th anniversary of the New Acropolis School of Philosophy in India (North), through which we have been introduced to these treasures of our collective human wisdom, we wish us all to learn to discover and nurture the light that lies within us, and to allow it to shine and triumph over the darkness — both within ourselves and in our world. ◎◎◎

