

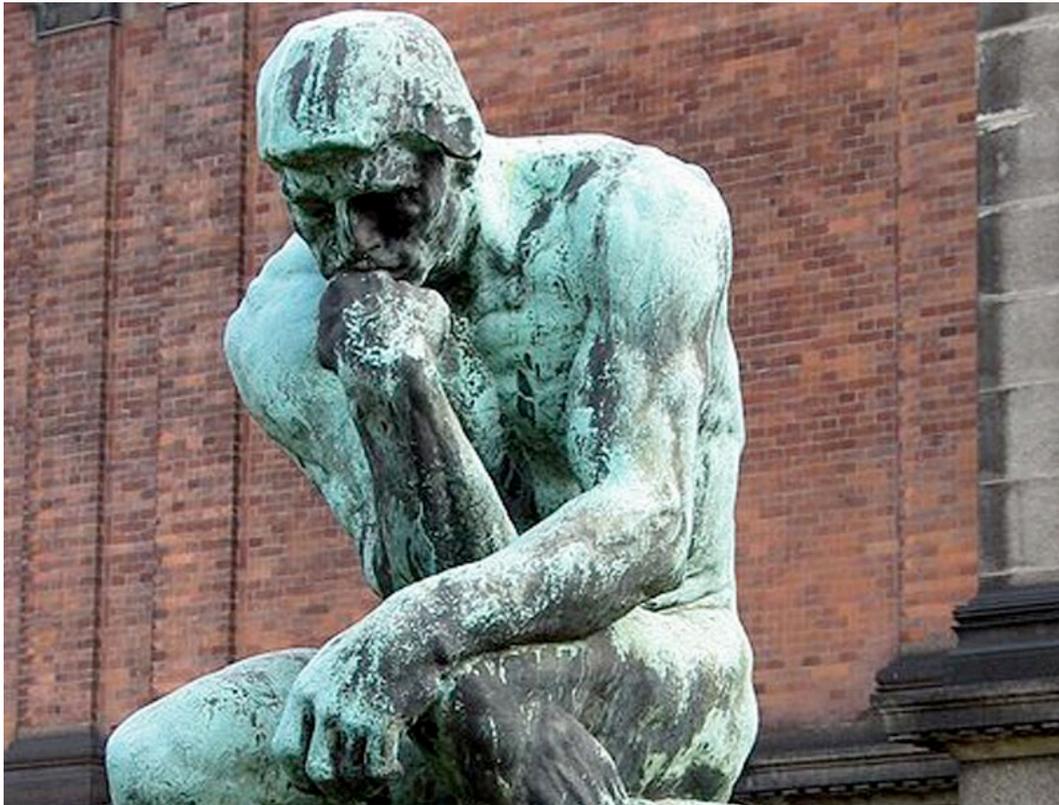


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## **Philosophy can benefit society, aid search for peace and development – UN official**



World Philosophy Day 2011 will take place on 17 November at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Sculpture "The Thinker" by Auguste Rodin

17 November 2011 –

Philosophy, the exercise of critical thought and freedom of expression, is vital in the search for lasting responses to the challenges of peace and development, a top United Nations official stated as the world body marked this year's World Philosophy Day.

“The practice of philosophy is a process benefiting the whole of society. It helps to build bridges between peoples and cultures and heightens demand for quality education for all,” said Irina

Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

“Philosophy encourages respect for cultural diversity, exchanging opinions and sharing the benefits of science, which are the conditions for genuine debate,” she added in her [message](#) for the Day, which has been celebrated every third Thursday of November since 2002.

Ms. Bokova pointed to the dramatic changes that have been sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East this year as people took to the streets demanding fundamental freedoms and spurring revolutions that brought down decades-old regimes.

“The extraordinary exuberance of the Arab Spring invites each one of us, whether participants in or spectators of these events, to ponder the meaning of history, social justice, gender equality and fundamental freedoms.”

She also noted that several large-scale disasters, particularly the earthquake followed by a tsunami and nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan, have emphasized the powerful relevance of questions on the place of humans in nature.

“All of these events call on us to bolster our efforts to provide everyone, the young and the less young alike, with the means for understanding our rapidly changing societies,” said Ms. Bokova.

UNESCO wishes to “rally the whole human sciences community to whet their appetite for philosophy,” even among the very young, she stated, adding that initiatives for children’s philosophical practice offer real opportunities for educational progress and deserve attention.

The Day is being celebrated with a number of events taking place at the agency’s Paris headquarters, as well as events around the world, including symposia, book fairs, children’s philosophy workshops and debates.

Among the events in Paris is the Third Assembly of the International Network of Women Philosophers, which was founded in 2007 under the auspices of UNESCO. During the conference, the first issue of the online Women Philosophers’ Journal will be launched.

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