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联合国教育、
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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of
World Philosophy Day**

21 November 2019

“*Philosophy is born of our astonishment about the world and our existence.*” There are many definitions of philosophy, but the one given by Arthur Schopenhauer in his masterpiece, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation) is perhaps among the most brilliant.

Thus, philosophy would be that perpetual pursuit of questioning, seeing the world not as a given, but as an unknown. Through its taste for paradoxes, through its constant questioning of prejudices, philosophy is therefore an invitation to think of the world in its richness and complexity.

This ability to amaze dates back to an ancient tradition which awoke over 3,000 years ago in China, the Middle East and Greece; but as ancient as it is, philosophical questioning has lost none of its relevance.

At a time when the radicality and speed of the great upheavals in the world sometimes confuse us, philosophy is immensely helpful. It allows us both to step back and to see further, to scan the horizon without losing sight of the present.

The artificial intelligence revolution, in particular, is a breeding ground for philosophical questioning. How to reconcile technology and humanity? How to create an ethics of science? These questions, which are traditional in the fields of scientific or ethical philosophy, are finding new resonance in the early twenty-first century.

Philosophy is a valuable tool for thinking about change; but it is also an approach that promotes dialogue and tolerance. To read the works of Chuang-Tzu, the father of Taoism, of Nāgārjuna, the virtuoso of Buddhist dialectics, of Avicenna, the physician and philosopher, of Moses Maimonides, the Talmudist philosopher, or of Hannah Arendt and Simone Weil, is to become aware of the universality of their questions

and to engage in an exercise conducive to openness, tolerance and *in fine* to peace among peoples.

For all these reasons, UNESCO has always been a friend of philosophy. UNESCO itself is an institution that implements a philosophical project – the philosophy of human rights, that of Emmanuel Kant or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. In a sense, it can thus be said that UNESCO, whose mandate reflects the universal vocation of philosophy, is itself a philosophy.

On this World Philosophy Day, UNESCO invites you, in turn, to experience this astonishment about the world and the environment and to unmask dogmas and prejudices; to discover, in short, the universality of the human condition.