

CONCEPT NOTE

WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 18-19 NOVEMBER 2021 IN ZIMBABWE



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VENUE: ARRUPE JESUIT UNIVERSITY, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Theme: Africa in the COVID-19 pandemic epoch: Philosophical considerations.

Conference Summary

This is a two-day international conference to be held as part of the 2021 World Philosophy Day commemorations. The conference brings together researchers in universities across all disciplines, policy-makers and local and international organizations, to discuss ethical issues confronting Africa during this trying era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has exposed our vulnerabilities and calls us to reconsider some our actions, our priorities and our approaches to life challenges. The role of philosophy in times such as these cannot be doubted. Philosophy, according to UNESCO, has opened the door for new concepts and innovative ideas, laying the foundations of critical thinking, independence and creativity across cultures for many centuries.

The pandemic calls upon us to open our minds to new ideas and rethink our actions. Reflection on contemporary society's problems and unanswered questions were always at the heart of philosophical analysis and thinking. It is in this spirit that this conference is organized to reflect on moral problems emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. Views from the international community of scholars, including scholars from beyond Africa, are welcome.

Background

The world is continuously threatened with life menacing pandemic, witnessing a continuous growing mortality rate. By the first week of July this year (2021) worldwide an estimate of 185,456,631 cases, 4,010,642 deaths, and 169,790,122 recoveries has been recorded globally. In Africa alone 5,731,000 cases and 146,000 deaths were recorded the same period. In Zimbabwe also witnessed 54 014 cases and 1,911 deaths, while at least 1,361,210 doses of COVID 19 vaccine, assuming every person needs two doses that implies vaccines were enough to inoculate about 4.6% of the country's total population. Increasing in COVID 19 mutation and its growing impact on global economies, further endanger human survival and disrupts education especially in rural areas. This virus has kept virologists, epidemiologists and even politicians among others busier and more uncertain than ever before in many past decades. Throughout 2020, a number of vaccines have been introduced and risk preventive measures have also focused on minimizing the spread of the COVID 19. A number of platforms have been established towards finding a common mitigation to the pandemic; "the legality and ethical considerations in COVID 19 vaccination; fair, equitable and timely allocation of vaccines in Africa; the call by UNESCO for governments to consider the COVID 19 as a global common good as well as the Africa Centre for Disease Control framework's *Ubuntu* principle and its application to the immunization campaign, were matters of much debate by both experts and ethicists among others. The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, fundamentally recognizes the importance of protecting every natural person universally; including the marginalized against any form of risk. In particular protection against pandemics is articulated under SDG number 3 that speaks to the issues of good health and human well-being. Through SDGs states, donors and international agencies commit to the continuity of education, health, protection and job creation during the ongoing pandemic. On that basis, the chief concern of this year's conference is to look into the ethical considerations that have been

aroused as the result of the nature of global vaccine distribution and COVID-19 preventive measures in Africa among other issues from the Ubuntu perspective.

Objectives of the conference

The conference will focus on three broad set of objectives which are to:

- Demonstrate the benefits of collective action towards achieving clear and positive outcomes of containing the pandemic.
- Assess progress and develop plans for accelerating implementation of global, regional and national commitments towards containing the pandemic.
- Explore the future of harmonious societies, ethical implications and dilemmas that may arise as the result of the nature of vaccine distribution and associated implementation of risk mitigation measures

In particular, the conference aims to:

- Create a constituency of actors that can take action (collectively and individually) around a number of key objectives and priorities relative to human protection against the pandemic.
- Discuss concrete steps, gaps and recommendations on key priorities, including ensuring that: human life protection is always a priority; people have access to appropriate health and care.
- Explore innovative solutions and exchanges of promising practices.
- Explore opportunities for action and mobilization to influence the global compacts.
- Bring in the experience of national and regional initiatives
- Ensure that innovative and impactful good practices are discussed and shared between key actors operating nationally, regionally and globally.
- Make the connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Sub Themes of the conference

The conference will focus on the following key areas with philosophical implications and considerations;

- Home-grown solutions to combat COVID -19 in Africa
- Preventive measures
- Vaccine trials
- Pandemic variants and waves

- Waves and variants naming
- Vaccines multiplicity
- Pandemic information and misinformation
- Global conspiracies and metaphysics
- Religion and global pandemic
- Religious belief and COVID 19 vaccination program
- Pandemic and cyberspace
- Political, social, moral and economic implications of the pandemic
- Human life beyond the pandemic
- Ubuntu (ethics), vaccine distribution and scarce medical resource
- Education and pandemic

Participants

The conference will include the participation of students, universities, higher and tertiary education colleges, individuals, civil society organizations, both humanitarian, developmental and human rights-focused; donors; the private sector; government representatives; researchers; practitioners; UN agencies such as WHO and UNESCO; and Africa Centre for Disease Control

Format of the conference

The conference will aim at balancing panel discussions with interactive parallel sections and opportunities for maximizing interaction between participants on cyberspace. Physical participation will be determined by the situation of COVID-19 in November 2021; in addition those attending physically might be required to fill in forms for logistical purposes.

The conference structure includes:

1. Plenary sessions/interactive panels with Question &Answers from the floor:
 - a. A plenary session on Day 1 focusing on the global context in relation to the pandemic, with panelists from UN agencies; key experts; civil society, academicians and state representatives
 - b. An inter-generational dialogue on Day 1 during which young people can discuss the challenges and opportunities arising from the pandemic era with senior representatives from various agencies

- c. A plenary session on Day 2 on collective action and influencing the global compacts
2. Thematic sessions on the priority themes on Day 1 to discuss challenges, gaps and recommendations related to integration of ethical focused goals, targets and indicators in the global compacts
3. Innovative solutions sessions on Day 2 to discuss examples of promising and innovative practices

NB: Some parallel sessions will follow the above listed sessions

We are invited to send an abstract of not more than **500** words on the above themes to worldphilosophyday@aju.ac.zw not later than **31 August 2021**. You have to send your abstract on or before the abstract submission deadline.

- After submission the receipt of the abstract will be acknowledged via an email within three working days.
- Outcome on submitted Abstracts is expected not later than 20 **September 2021**.
- The primary language of the conference is English, but there is a possibility that, if anyone wants to use any other language other than English, it should be communicated in time, so that translation logistics will be arranged prior to the conference.
- We encourage you to send an informative abstract (complete abstract) which is a compendious summary of the paper's substance including its background, purpose, methodology, results, and conclusion, together with your brief biography.

• Full papers for all accepted abstracts should be submitted by the 31st of October 2021

- In your abstract, indicate whether you would want to be considered as one of the reviewers for the papers submitted for the conference
- All papers will go through a thorough blind review process prior to the conference, so that only minor adjustments will be made after the conference to include feedback from participants if necessary.
- All accepted papers will get a confirmation of acceptance and will be published by a reputable publisher after a blind peer reviewing.

Important dates

- Submission deadline for Abstracts: **August 31, 2021**
- Notification of acceptance/rejection: **September 20, 2021**
- Submission of final papers: **October 31, 2021**
- The conference: **November 18 – 19, 2021**

Email: worldphilosophyday@aju.ac.zw

Website: www.aju.ac.zw/worldphilosophyday

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