

*Online International Conference on Health Humanities
focusing on the global threat of COVID-19 pandemic.*

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Presentation Abstract

COVID-19 and Learning to Be Human

The XXIV World Philosophy Congress in Beijing during August, 2018 had the general theme, "Learning to Be Human." Although this theme resonates with principles of both Confucian and classical Greek philosophy, at the time there were some who found the issue quaint, somehow superseded by modernity and science. As we find ourselves now in the midst of a global, pandemic health crisis, understanding what it means to be human is crucial to our hopes for the future. I want to look at two ethical challenges, surprisingly interlocked, to the future of humanity that are posed by the spread of the novel coronavirus and COVID-19: First is the use of medical AI to diagnose and then determine the necessary treatment protocol and appropriate therapy for those infected; Second, the identification of the virus as *caused* by an ethnic group and its cultural practices. In this presentation I will outline the traditional philosophical ideal of being human and then show how the growing use medical AI together with rising ethnic/cultural xenophobia threaten this ideal. Finally I will discuss how these apparently disparate phenomena are related and how the fear of COVID-19 might lead to the acceptance of troubling ethical standards.