

EMMANUEL EYO'S 'JESUS CHRIST THE PHILOSOPHER: AN EXPOSÉ' AND THE MISSING LINK OF METAPHYSICS

John Gabriel Mendie

Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

E-mail: jgmendie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper recaps at first duty Eyo, Emmanuel Bassey's article on 'Jesus Christ the Philosopher: An Exposé' which he exposes different areas of philosophy where the teaching of Jesus Christ could be attributed. The work raises arguments in reaction to the neglect of Metaphysics as an important area of Jesus' philosophy. The author may have presumed that Metaphysics falls within the ambience of religion and theology and looks at Jesus as a historic person. The main concern of this paper therefore, is to examine the person and teachings of Jesus which are metaphysical. This paper further argued that the concept of metaphysics is promising as it studies the totality of reality, however, it is not error-proof as it has its inherent lacuna. In this paper I employ the methods of dialectic analysis and complementary fusion.

Keywords: *Jesus Christ, Philosopher, Metaphysics.*

INTRODUCTION

A curious friend asked, is Jesus a philosopher? Would He give a lecture in Calabar, or engage in a long Socratic dialog in Plato's Academy, or write some philosophical works? Obviously not. In another sense, Jesus is a philosopher, but this second sense is where Emmanuel Eyo brought forward the philosophical aspects of Jesus' thoughts in many areas of philosophy. Everyone has some "philosophy of life.", however, Jesus was a philosopher in a meaningful middle sense, the sense in which other notable figures like Plato, Aristotle, Mohammed were philosophers. His teachings were philosophical in nature. C.S. Lewis support this view and it is evident in his letter to Dom Bede Griffiths (191) (MacSwain & Ward 2010). Also, if we are considering a person as a reality, it is important to consider that being in totality. The metaphysical consideration is important because it endeavours us to know a thing as it is. Considering Jesus as a philosopher requires ultimately considering him not in part but in totality. Eyo indicated that his article "looks at Jesus as a historic person, exclusive of post-resurrection Jesus Christ which is fundamentally an issue of faith" (Eyo 2019: 1). However, this work does not intend to dwell on Jesus' philosophical style or method but about his philosophical substance, his philosophical answers as well as his metaphysics.

Jesus Christ The Philosopher

Simply, philosophy means "the love of wisdom," and wisdom, if we had it, would give us answers to at least these perennial questions: First, what is real in nature, especially, what is most real in nature? Second, how can we know what is real in nature, especially the most real of nature? Third, who are we, what is the nature and God? Fourth, how should we live, to be more real as our creator? These perennial questions are the questions about being, truth, self, and goodness. The branches of philosophy that explore these four questions are called: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Philosophical anthropology, and Ethics respectively. It could obviously be stated that everything is relative to metaphysics.

Jesus around the beginning of adolescence turned critical: he wanted to know not just the difference between realities around him but the difference between truth and falsehood. He became an epistemologist. And since the most interesting question of metaphysics is about ultimate reality, the most interesting question of epistemology is also about knowing

ultimate reality: how can he teach us the infinite wisdom of God? How can man know God? Or even that there is a God? Later on, Jesus also turn inward to discover His humanity through prayer. Then, he realized that this self that knows is fundamentally different from everything else in the universe because it alone can fail to be its true self, he then demands to discriminate not only between truth and falsehood but also between good and evil. We can be bad or good. Once he realized that, he taught us how we can become our true selves, our real selves, our good selves.

Jesus Christ as a philosopher have thought profoundly about these four questions for over two millennia. Philosophers have found answers that are adequate and universally acknowledged in the areas of religion, science, politics, leadership and a host of other human endeavours. With a pessimistic mindset, H. L. Mencken opines, "Philosophy consists largely of one philosopher arguing that all the others are meaningless. He usually proves it based on his conviction" (Scheideman 1972: 45). This mindset would provoke a Christian response thus: because the only adequate and final answer to all four great philosophical questions is Christ. The most philosophical writer in the Bible, John, notwithstanding began his Gospel by identifying Jesus with the Logos ("In the beginning was the Logos (word), and the Logos (word) was with God and the Logos (word) was God ...and the Logos (word) became flesh and dwelt among us") Jn. 1: 1;14. What is this Logos? Is it just a Greek word? Here are some of its meanings: the Logos means the Word of God, the Revelation of God, the Speech of God, the Wisdom of God, the Mind of God, the Truth of God, the Reason of God, and the Philosophy of God. Jesus is God's philosophy.

Jesus' Metaphysics

The fact we must know about Jesus to understand his metaphysics is that He was of a Jewish background. What does this have to do with metaphysics? Perhaps, this paper would probe for understanding on the influence of Judaism on Jesus' metaphysics. Jesus knew the crucial answer to the crucial question of metaphysics. The ultimate truth of metaphysics, the nature of ultimate reality, reality at its most real, was not the unknowable mystery to the Jews that it was to all the pagan tribes, nations, and religions around them. This was not because the Jews were smarter than anyone else. It could be said that the Ultimate Reality, for reasons known only to Himself, had chosen to reveal Himself to them in a form no one else could do. In fact, He had revealed to them His name. And that name was "I AM." (Ex.3:13-15). Ultimate Reality was one, and that it was infinite; but they did not know that its name was "I." On the contrary, most of them taught that the "I," or "ego" ("ego" is simply the Latin word for "I"), that is, our sense of unique, irreducible, distinct, individual personhood, was the ultimate illusion and the great obstacle to supreme enlightenment.

Let us consider another unique Jewish belief: that the divine Will is perfectly good and righteous and holy and just. God is the only god we cannot bribe. And since that is the character of Ultimate Reality, and since in order to be truly real we must conform to the character of Ultimate Reality. Also, morality flows from metaphysics because goodness flows from God (Batnitzky 2003). This, Peter admonishes in his first epistle: "You must be holy because I the Lord your God am holy." (1:16) Kreeft Peter (2007) in his reaction stated that the consequences of the Jewish metaphysics for ethics have been world shaking. The whole world got a Jewish mother, a Jewish conscience, because the world got the Jewish Father. This divine goodness is not just perfect, it is more than perfect. It spills out beyond itself like sunlight. It is agape, generosity, altruism, self-giving, self-sacrificial love. God seeks this divine union with Man, God seeks a relationship with Man. "Your God shall

become your Husband,” says Isaiah (54:5). From the viewpoint of the purely rational philosopher, the most surprising thing about the Jewish concept of God is not that God is one, or perfect, or good, or even loving, but that God, the infinite being, has a character as demonstrated in the Gospel of Matthew (5:48).

The ultimate reality as understood by the Jews and made available to us as consequences of this metaphysics for morality are so encompassing to be grasp since love transcends into ultimate reality. This morality (as distinct from legalistic or pragmatic or political morality) is grounded in metaphysics. By this fact it could further be stated that Christ revolutionized metaphysics by revealing not just love but the metaphysics of love, the fact that love is the essence of God; that love is, in the last analysis, “the way it is” “God is love.” (I John 4:8).

Metaphysics Of Jesus As Flowing Into His Morality

Anyone who ignores, doubts, or waters down that historical fact of Jesus cannot possibly understand Jesus’ philosophy viz; our notion that the divine Will is perfectly good and righteous and holy and just. God is the only god free from corruption in human terms. And since that is the character of Ultimate Reality, then the meaning of life is to be holy, to be a saint. Morality flows from metaphysics because goodness flows from God. “You must be perfect because I the Lord your God am perfect.” (1 Peter 1:16) The connection is repeated like a liturgical formula in the Torah. Unlike the gods of the polytheists and pantheists, God has no dark side. This injunction serves man the reasons for coexistence with the dealings of other men in the society. To this end, there are consequences to the Jewish metaphysics for ethics whose effects shapes the world and reasoning (Dell’Utri 2017). Scholars may not have suspected the possibility of such intimacy that existed between Jesus’ metaphysics and ethics, even with their finite, anthropomorphic gods: that is, the relationship scripture calls “faith,” or fidelity (Akpanika 2015; Duke 2016; Akpanika 2018). And pagans may not have understood the deeper meaning and terror of “sin” either, for sin is seemingly the tool through which that relationship is ended. Let us put it this way that sin is to faith what infidelity is to marriage. Following from the Jewish tradition we could infer here that Jesus, the Jew, took sin much more seriously than any pagan possibly could, and why He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save us from it (Steinsland 1990). Then, taking a leap from the viewpoint of the purely rational philosopher, the most surprising thing about the Jewish concept of God is not that God is one, or perfect, or good, or even loving, but that God, the infinite being, has a character. He is infinitely holy, infinitely righteous, infinitely just, infinitely loving, and so on. In quest for the Ultimate perfection, which is metaphysical, Jesus discriminates between good and evil, and demands we do the same, both in thought and in life. The scriptures record this Jesus’ role to follow when it states: “You must be perfect as My Father in Heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) Philosophers, Elders of the laws and Religious Jews before Jesus had already learned from their own prophets most of these startling truths about God and thus about Ultimate Reality, and thus about metaphysics. All Jesus did was to show what they already knew, namely, the quest for the Ultimate reality which is an All perfect and just God. He did not show them a new God or teach a new concept of God or a new attribute of God, but He gave them a new deed of God, the greatest of all divine deeds, the Incarnation, and in it the redemption by His divine suffering, death, and resurrection. In another metaphysical demonstration of his philosophy is the view that the Father and the Son are the same God, for “he who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). It could be further express thus, “Like father, like son.” Jesus was not God represented but God presented, God made maximally present, God known by sight and even

touch as well as by faith (Duke & Okafor 2020). This is to say that we discern the presence of God through our human faculty of reason and sight respectively. It could further be illustrated that Heaven had come to earth. It was not a new concept of Heaven but a new presence of Heaven.

Jesus' New Name For God And The Metaphysical Implications

From the beginning and in the scripture, there are names that tells us of the importance those names confer on the owners. These names confer metaphysical meanings to the holders and the situations it addresses (TruthUnity Ministries 2014). The name Jesus called God was an even more startling one than the one God had revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Through Moses the Jews and other scholars had learned that God is simply I AM, the one, eternal, perfect, unique, utterly real Person. A metaphysical identity on the person of God in the philosophy of Jesus. Now Jesus called this Person a name no one had ever dreamed or dared to use: "Father." This name could be understood differently: God was Jesus' Father by nature in eternity and our Father by adoption in time and this implies a metaphysical mind to grapple with. And Jesus went even further to bring down his teaching to our understanding. His word was "Abba"—not just "Father" but "Daddy," the intimate term used by a child, or even a baby. The infinitely transcendent One was now and for the rest of time and eternity also the infinitely intimate One. This God was only existing in the realms of the forms as Plato stated. This inaccessible God became so accessible through the person of Jesus. He made accessible not just His spirit but His blood. His saving words of power were not, like a philosopher's, "This is my mind" but "This is My Body." (Matthew 26:26) This metaphysical identity was further explicated in the gospel of John. The first sentence of his Gospel said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory." (John 1:1) Further probe into this metaphysical identity of Jesus can be simplified thus: "this word of God (Jesus) which was from the beginning became that which we have looked upon and touched with our hands."

Jesus' Metaphysics Of Love

In the art of poetry, the audience are accustomed to see poets principally occupied with describing the love of the sexes. This, as a rule, is the leading idea of every dramatic work, be it tragic or comic, romantic or classic, regardless of its origin. The contrast could be referred to the idea of love made manifest in the teachings and life of Jesus. This metaphysical probing into the demonstration of love by Jesus is exemplified with His relationship with God and mankind (Eugen Rogobete 1997). This fellowship was captured by John in his first epistle thus: "So that you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:3) Thus, the practical payoff of the metaphysical paradox of the Incarnation is the religious opportunity of fellowship, or intimacy, with Ultimate Reality (Pohoata 2015). This is the most radical solution to the fundamental problem of metaphysics: how to know Being. Being ("AM") turned out to be also Person ("I") and knowing turned out to be marrying! The object of metaphysics proposes to the metaphysician. Christ is the ultimate revelation of God, or ultimate reality, of the deepest secret of metaphysics. Man's metaphysical quest finds its final earthly fulfillment at Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, where the world saw the most dramatic event in history: Death and Life dueling in miraculous combat. To the scandal of scholars who might feel I delve into theology rather than philosophy, its fair to admit here that God's answer to our metaphysical quest is not a concept or a mythic symbol but that deed. Man's

metaphysical quest will find its terminus within the nature of this ultimate reality through the crucifix when viewed through the rational mindset of a philosopher. There is more metaphysical wisdom in that simple gaze of the simple rational mind as in the highest mystical experiences of the sage or guru, and more than in the finest philosophical systems of a Plato or an Aristotle. They may have known the experience of Being or the concept of Being, but the religious child sees Being's face replicated in the religious symbols and signs which is metaphysical and through the rational faculty. Sartre, in *No Exit*, shows how apparently impossible this is: for me to know you is for me to know all the things that make you not lovable, he argues, and for me to love you is for me to love an ideal, a dream, a fantasy of my own (Solomon 2006).

Sanctity of love as revealed in the life of Christ serves as a tool to understanding the metaphysics of love. Gabriel Marcel is right when he says that "sanctity is the true introduction to ontology" (Whistler 2019: 712). Marcel's saying refutes some scholar's habit of separating metaphysics and sanctity into very separate compartments. On the one hand, metaphysics is supposed to be objective and impersonal. But the ultimate object of metaphysics, the ultimate being, ultimate reality, is a Person. His name is "I AM." On the other hand, sanctity is supposed to be subjective and psychological. But the ultimate point of being a saint is to be real, to be Godlike, to conform to and thus reveal the ultimate nature of objective reality. Another way to see the connection between metaphysics and sanctity is by remembering two of the names of God: God is love (agape) and God is also Necessary Being, the Unchangeable Way Things Are, the Utterly Real, Ultimate Reality. In the context of this work ultimate reality is agape love personified in the teachings of Jesus. To this end, the object of metaphysics is the object of sanctity. Still another formulation: To succeed at metaphysics we must know the utterly real; to know the utterly real we must love; to love is to be a saint; therefore, to succeed at understanding Jesus' metaphysics is to apply the faculty of reason devoid of religious sentiment.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, it is taken for granted that efforts have been put to examine essentially how Jesus Christ could be conceived as a philosopher. Ontology, or metaphysics, is the science of being. On this paradigm, Jesus Christ could be adjudged to be a philosopher. Let us go through that again, this time emphasizing the central role of Christ. And our clearest understanding of being, or reality, must come from the most real being, not from the less real. The nature of being is the nature of God, for all being is defined by God, the Creator of all being. For instance, all being is good because God is good and all being is either the Creator, who is supremely good, or a creature created by the Creator, and therefore also loving. God reveals Himself in His Logos, His eternal Word, His Mind. This is the eternal Christ. Jesus is His human name; Logos is His eternal name; it is the same Person. God the Father holds nothing back in expressing His whole self in God the Son. But we do not know God directly, as an object, for His name is not "IT IS" (object) but "I AM" (subject). And we too are subjects "I's", not objects, since we are created in His image. God the Son became a man, and gave us the final, definitive, perfect revelation of God, and therefore of Being. Thus, it is personhood, or I-ness, that is the key, or door, or window, to metaphysics. But personhood, like being, is analogical. It is a matter of degree. We are more or less authentic, more or less real. Atoms are not as real as souls, and human souls are not as real as God. The most real human persons are saints. Saints are little Christs. We see Christ through the saints. Saints are windows who let through more of the light of Christ, which is the light of the

Father, which is the light of Being. That is why saints are the windows to being, and why the study of sanctity is the key to metaphysics of Jesus.

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