

PHI 224 Meaning & Religious

MW 3.35pm

2 November 2022

Word Count (Dialogue Only): 1,200

The Judgment of Jimjones by Kierk-E-gaard and Mechahume the ScotBot

Pre Script: A Narrative Introduction

In the neon-twined future, a mad philosopher, known as Wideboy in honor of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, compiled the entire historical body of Plato scholarship into an advanced AI, which he then uploaded into the body of an android. The android Pla2.0 arose, after having dreamt of electric sheep, with two thousand years' worth of scrupulous and detailed scholarship animating his unfleshy mind. Never had so wise a mind been known to the world, and Pla2.0 quickly won the admiration of all learned men. Invigorated by his success, Wideboy created dozens more philosopher-androids, which the world came to call Mind-Droids. Many renowned philosophers across history were given new mechanical form as Mind-Droids, from AIristotle, Robo Locke, and Renelectric Descartes, to Friedrich E-tzsche, Karl Mk. X, and Jacques Derridroid. Also among their number were the Mind-Droids Kierk-E-gaard and Mechahume the ScotBot. It was not long, however, before the pure intentions of Wideboy's project were tainted by the prospect of merchandising. Soon, Wideboy was creating androids of fictional characters, such as Mickey Mouse and Socrates. Alas, even Disney money could not sate the avaricious Wideboy, who took to creating that which all lines of thought eventually find themselves at: Adolf Hitler.

AIldolf Hitler was not long for this world. Before he had the chance to enact the evil schemes of his mind-source, AIldolf suffered a massive cascading failure and self-combusted. The historiography of the real Hitler's *weltanschauung* was so controversial and divided that

Aldolf could only render contradictory operating protocols, overloading his circuits and causing him to explode. The relevant authorities – the American Philosophical Association – were aghast and decided to put a stop to Wideboy’s machinations. The Association’s Mind Wizards determined that the Mind-Droids were not sentient enough to qualify as *Dasein* yet were sentient enough where slaughtering them wholesale would be cruel and immoral. Thus, Wideboy and his Mind-Droids were banished to the desolate moon of Academy. The Mind Wizards of the APA soon came to realize the value that this collection of wise beings possessed, and tasked Wideboy with conducting trials of historical villains who never faced justice in their lifetimes. The Mind Wizards assigned the case of Jim Jones to the Cults and Prophets Division, jointly chaired by Kierk-E-gaard and Mechahume the ScotBot.

Kierk-E-gaard and Mechahume the ScotBot Consider Jim Jones: A Dialogue

Did the twin suns rise this morn, inquired KIERK-E-GAARD, as they do each morning? MECHAHUME THE SCOTBOT scoffed and responded that they had indeed arisen from the purple mountains on the horizon and had begun to transit their way across the yellow sky, as the two had observed occurring in just the same way every standard day of their joint judicial careers. Surely, coquettishly intoned KIERK-E-GAARD, you’ve seen enough sun cycles go on in exactly the same way that you may say with certainty that the suns shall transit in just the same way tomorrow morn? MECHAHUME scoffed even more haughtily than before, inducing a fit of coughing, before answering once more in the negative. Constant conjunctions do not necessarily reveal causal relationships! bellowed MECHAHUME. A sly smile crept across KIERK-E-GAARD’s plastic lips as he inquired with saccharine false-innocence whether that is why for MECHAHUME is such a capricious arbiter of common law justice? Having met his feather-ruffling quota for the morning, KIERK-E-GAARD turned away from a fuming

MECHAHUME to peruse the day's case. A careless intern had made a typographic error, and the name at the top of the docket was ran together as Jimjones rather than Jim Jones.

Of what does Jimjones stand accused? inquired MECHAHUME. Looking up from his documents, KIERK-E-GAARD responded that Jimjones stands accused of the crimes of impersonating a prophet, mass murder, and living in California. MECHAHUME bristled, as ever he would, at the charge of impersonating a prophet. Tell me, said MECHAHUME, why for have we the charge of impersonating a prophet? In order to impersonate a prophet, there must be true prophets to impersonate in the first place, but none yet has revealed himself that does not fall before the withering gaze of the skeptic! This declaration, though he had heard it many a time before, incensed KIERK-E-GAARD, who retorted that it was reason which must be subordinated to faith, not faith who must answer to reason as his interlocutor posited. It was clear to the judges that the first charge would be their point of great contention, as the latter two charges were bolstered by such copious evidence that they could be believed in to a very high degree of probability, high enough for even MECHAHUME to accept. The differing positions of the co-chairs of the Cults and Prophets Division on the question of false prophets were not so easily reconciled.

The God of Jimjones, said KIERK-E-GAARD, is the God of Moses and Elijah, Jesus and Mohammad. He is the God, KIERK-E-GAARD said with eyes mischievously twinkling, of Abraham and Isaac. Certainly, Jimjones is guilty of the third charge. There can be no doubt that he lived in California. But Scripture reveals to us that God might ask the faithful for acts that go beyond our capacity for reason, instances in which we must suspend our relation to the social, ethical, and universal – which are triune – to achieve *teloi* set down by God, because, *only* because, God has commanded us thusly. To doubt proficiently is the work of a lifetime, to which

your mind-source dedicated himself, but much less is demanded in keeping faith. As the accused are assumed to be innocent until conclusively proven guilty, Jimjones ought to be regarded as a true prophet until proven conclusively not to be.

MECHAHUME howled, curse you, Quiet John, for you have turned my own methods against me! On what grounds might we believe Jimjones to be a prophet that cannot immediately be subject to and defeated by skepticism? KIERK-E-GAARD chuckled and responded smugly, it is by faith, my dear SCOTBOT, that we believe. The irascible Scotsman would have little of this and MECHAHUME responded in turn that there are insufficient grounds to believe that Jimjones was of the Lord, which leaves him as either a liar or a loon. If he is either of these things, his actions could not be excused by divine sanction, rendering Jimjones both a false prophet and a mass murder. In response, KIERK-E-GAARD posited that if Jimjones could not be proven to be a false prophet – the judicial stance is of assumed innocence, therefore Jimjones is a true prophet until proven otherwise – then he would also be acquitted of the charge of mass murder, as teleological suspensions of the ethical answer exclusively to the sanction of God, which a true prophet bears.

Would you not concede that it is a contingent matter of fact that several hundred people perished at the urging of Jimjones? MECHAHUME inquired. Why certainly, confidently replied KIERK-E-GAARD, though if Jimjones is a true prophet, those who died in service to him would not be victims, but martyrs! MECHAHUME understood where his interlocutor sought to take them and met him there. Ah! MECHAHUME bandied, martyrs go willingly for some great cause and thus are not victims at all, so the charge of mass murder has no basis should Jimjones be acquitted of impersonating a prophet, for lack of victims? KIERK-E-GAARD cooed, you describe the concept well. MECHAHUME was surprised by the apparent goodwill of the

habitually catty Dane. As MECHAHUME made to thank his fellow-judge, KIERK-E-GAARD with acerbic tongue interjected that alas! what MECHAHUME had detailed was merely the tragic hero. Like Abraham, Jimjones was not a tragic hero but an example of the teleological suspension of the ethical. There is no intelligible greater good for which Abraham and Jimjones made their sacrifices to achieve. Their ends are known and intelligible only to themselves and to God. MECHAHUME sputtered, how absurd! KIERK-E-GAARD howled with glee, yes! you're finally understanding!

You are losing sight of things! MECHAHUME said. The body of evidence suggests that Jimjones was not a prophet, but a man distinguished from others only by his lechery. The charge of impersonating a prophet, although such a charge might validly apply to every claimed prophet, is clearly satisfied by Jimjones. Such a matter is obvious to reason! KIERK-E-GAARD purred, can one come to know God through reason? MECHAHUME sputtered out a negative reply. One cannot reason their way to God! KIERK-E-GAARD lofted then the question, even if one can reason himself out from under God, can one reason himself decisively away from God? When one's starting positionality is assuming the truth rather than the falsity of religious or prophetic claims, one cannot sufficiently render a guilty verdict by your skeptical ways! In our position as judges, the ambiguity you lead us to suggests the dismissal of the charge of impersonating a prophet, for it cannot be decisively proven in one way or the other. Skepticism leads only to ambiguity, and doubt leads to acquittal!

He can doubt with great proficiency, but the skeptic can no more prove conclusively false than can he prove conclusively true. Under these circumstances, there exists reasonable doubt about Jimjones' culpability for impersonating a prophet, which dismisses along with it the charge of mass murder, for one cannot prove that Jimjones lacked the sanction of God. Nonetheless,

Jimjones was sentenced to hard labor for the grievous crime of living in California. Neither judge found himself particularly satisfied, but their verdict had been rendered and Jimjones had now been made to answer for more than he had answered for in life.