

Daily Life with Christ. Love-1: Understanding the objective, universal, never-changing, eternal nature of love—Philosophy of Language and Cratylus (part 1).

How can love be objective, universal, and eternal? It seems like meanings of love are as varied as human beings on our planet. How can love mean just one thing, refer to one objective ultimate reality, in light of the fact that there are all kinds of love. There is licit love for God, family, friends, and all human beings. There is also illicit love for evil, darkness, and sin. As a matter of fact, the same word for love is used in the Bible in the original languages for God's love for man, man's love for God, and man's love for darkness and evil *in the same context*:

John 3:16-19 For God so loved (ἠγάπησεν, from *agapao*) the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. . . . And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved (ἠγάπησαν, from *agapao*) darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

2 Timothy 4:8-10 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved (ἠγαπήκοσιν, from *agapao*) His appearing. . . . for Demas has forsaken me, having loved (ἀγαπήσας, from *agapao*) this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica-- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

One of the most rampant errors, due to the pernicious influences of modern philosophy of language, within Christianity is in false views of how language works with reality. The common practice of looking up a Greek or Hebrew word in the Bible and building reality on these words is unbiblical, anti-intellectual, Platonic, and operates in the world of idealism. Untold number of Christians with their lexicons espouse Platonic views of language that are demonstrably false. The result is that Bible-believing, conservative Christians end up defining love according to their denomination, ranging from a relaxed mental attitude to an emotional or ecstatic feeling. While this understandable for pagans (non-Christians), there is no excuse for this in conservative Christianity—especially given the fact that in the Bible love is the root, hinge, and fruit of any and all virtue.

This study of love will be exhaustive. We will examine love (both natural and supernatural) directly and objectively: its metaphysical, linguistic, personal, and ultimate reality. We need to start with the history of philosophy of language to understand how our talk about love relates to objective reality.

To understand how language works with reality, we need to examine the history of how we got in the mess that we find ourselves in—in our beloved Bible-believing, exegetically-oriented Christianity. We begin our study of the history of philosophy of language with Cratylus, an ancient Athenian philosopher from the 5th century B.C. (For more details, from a reliable source, on Cratylus, see <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/plato-cratylus/>).

In the next article, I will provide more details on Cratylus’ philosophy of language, which is an absolute failure, yet the common philosophical method of Bible-believing churches (including my own exegetical background). For now, I would like for you to think about these two illustrations below of Cratylean philosophy of language. Note how in the first figure, the knower is connected with a word/name (which is defined by a linguistic community) rather than the thing in the world. So, in this case, the person would base the meaning of love on the word and not reality as such. Note in the second figure how understanding is not directly related to the object in the world, but with the word (linguistic sign). Think about how subjective and idealistic this is. Think about how the person is not directly connected with reality as such. Reality is just about the word, not the reality as such. Because of this methodology, well-meaning Christian exegetes build all kinds of mental constructs that are but figments of the imagination rather than on reality as such. Surely, this is no way to understand reality as such and certainly no way to exegete God’s holy and inerrant Word. May God deliver us from Cratyleanism, which stands in the way of our true understanding of love as such.

Figure 1: Cratylean Triangle of Reference

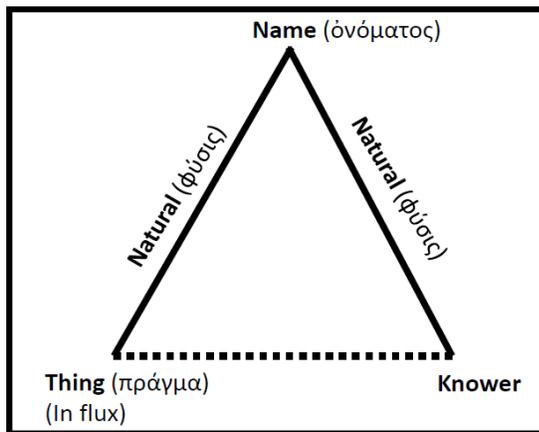
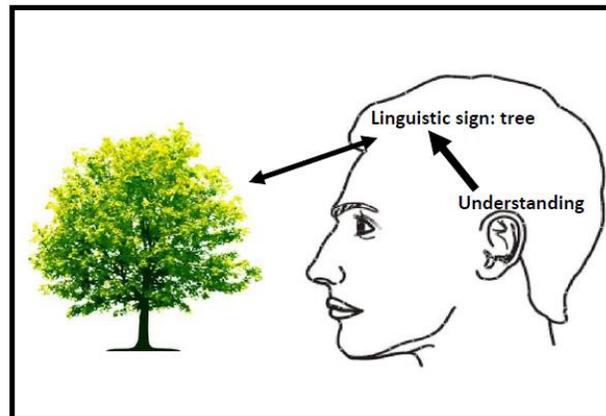


Figure 2: Cratylean View of Language and Reality



For His Glory,

Pastor Don