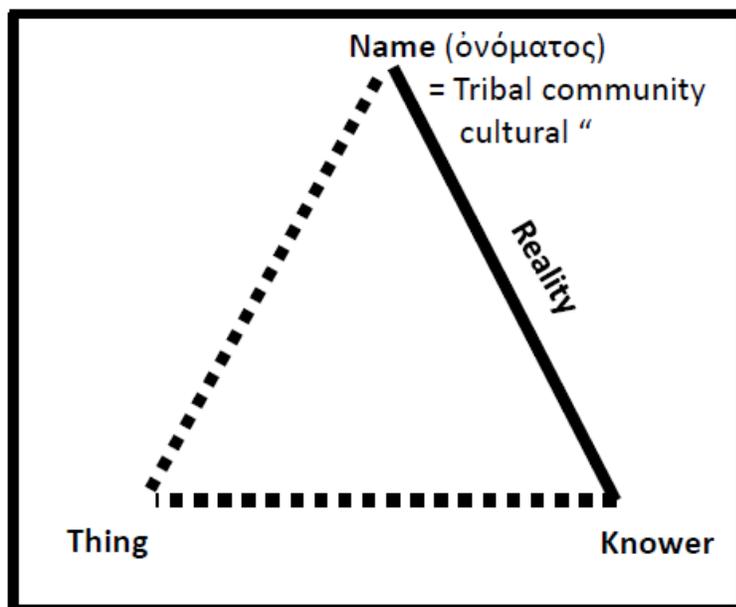


Daily Life with Christ. Love-6: Understanding the objective, universal, never-changing, eternal nature of love—Philosophy of Language: Ferdinand de Saussure and the linguistic community.

Basically, there are two options: Realism and Idealism. The Realist is directly connected to reality, which he then clothes with words. The Idealist is directly connected to words, which he then clothes with reality. Because the Realist is fundamentally and directly connected to reality as such, he is truly able to see all things as they are and appreciate the metaphysical reality of the true/good/beautiful of all beings.

In this series on love, we are examining the foundation of reality by examining how language/thinking works with reality. This lesson is the last lesson on the history of philosophy of language and consists of the Father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Note the following diagram of his view of how language is disconnected from reality as such (dotted lines):

Saussure's philosophy of language:



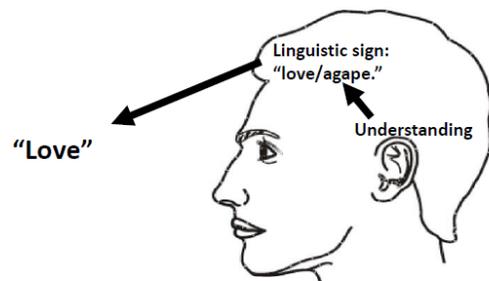
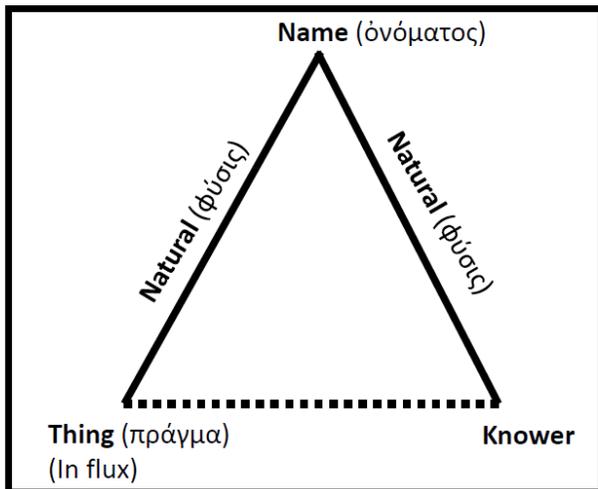
Notice how the knower begins with the word/name. The name, however, is defined by one's linguistic community. For example, if the extra-mental thing is a "cat," one's idea of a cat will come from one's linguistic community. This is called structuralism because the word "cat" is structurally connected to a lot of other words that one grew up with (feline, mammal, dictionaries, etc.). Given that all thoughts are in words (according to Saussure) and all words are gained from one's linguistic community (including dictionaries), then one's ideas will be shaped or even determined by the words and all of the associations with those words, rather than by the extra-mental thing. Consider how culture can totally redefine reality as per the current definitions of gender that have reached more than 60 different types.

As far as physical extra-mental object, one might respond, “but they see the cat.” According to de Saussure, that is irrelevant. It makes little to no difference, because the idea of cat, just like love, is determined by one’s linguistic community, which *then* is applied to the cat.

What can be said about a “cat” also applies to every other thing, including love. Love also has a metaphysical substance determined by a complex set of relations between one’s will and one’s intellect (proper knowledge and proper office of love) and one’s actions.

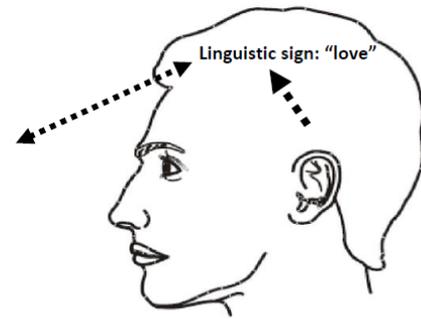
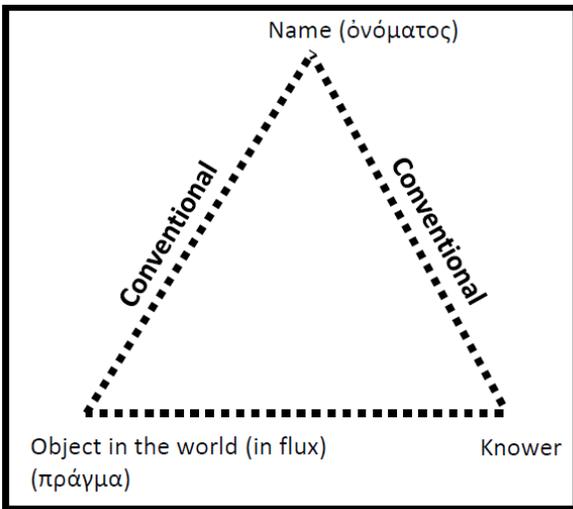
In closing out our study of the 5 semantic triangles, let us review each one according to the questions of “what is love.” The first one we looked at was Cratylean. If you asked a Cratylean, “What is love?” he would look up the word from which he would get a meaning and then apply it to extra-mental reality. Note how he is not directly learning about love based on reality. The broken line in the semantic triangle shows there is no direct connection to reality as such. The direct unbroken line is between him and the name and the name and the thing in the world. The problem with this is not only that he is not directly connected with reality, he is at core an idealist. He is also in the land of objectivity, because as he looks up the word for “love” there are a multitude of meanings (even in the original New Testament Greek). On what basis is he going to choose. In sum, the Cratylean will say, he knows love by the study and exegesis of the words—not reality as such.

Figure 1: Cratylean Triangle of Reference



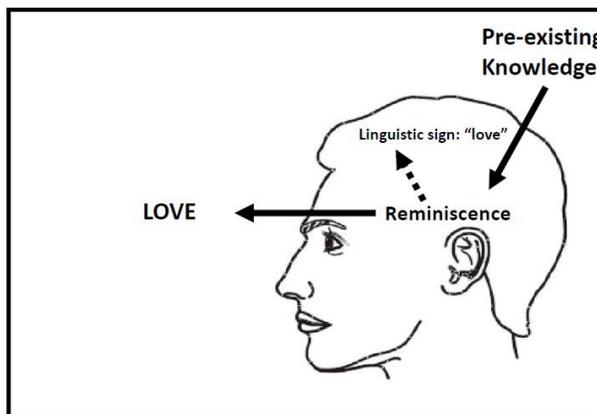
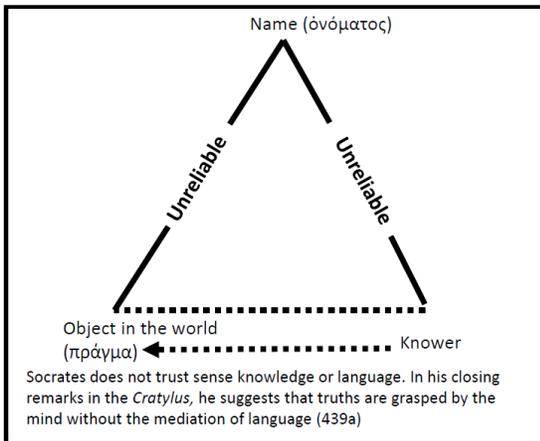
The second philosophy of language we noted was by Hermogenes. The dotted lines means there is no direct or solid connection. All reality in this model is conventional due to all things in flux. We can call anything anything we want because everything is in a constant state of flux.

Hermogenes’ philosophy of language

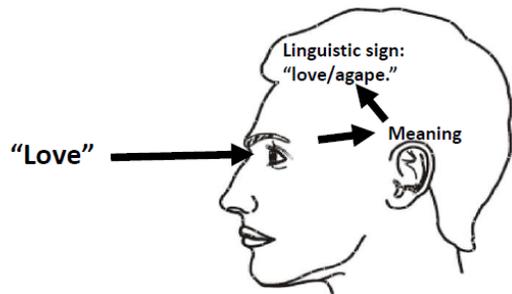
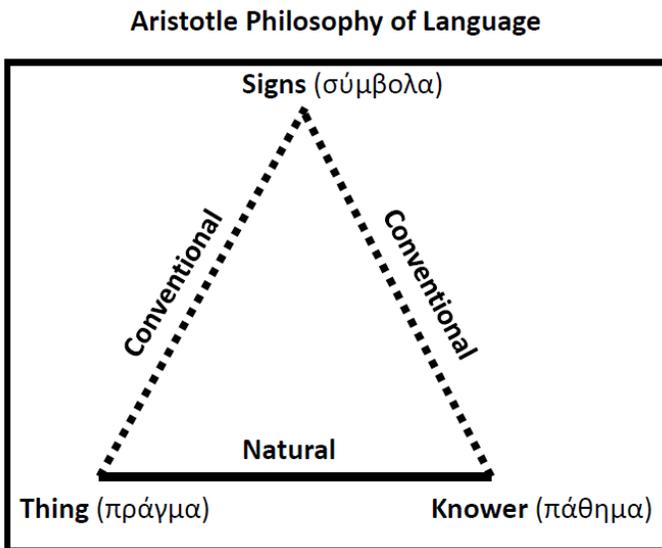


The third philosophy of language we studied was by Socrates. Socrates would say we know love, and all universals (like catness), because these ideas are innate. He would say we got this knowledge in a previous life. Presuppositionalists (Reformed church) would say we have these innate ideas from God—not from reality as such (whether then illuminated or not).

Socratic philosophy of language.

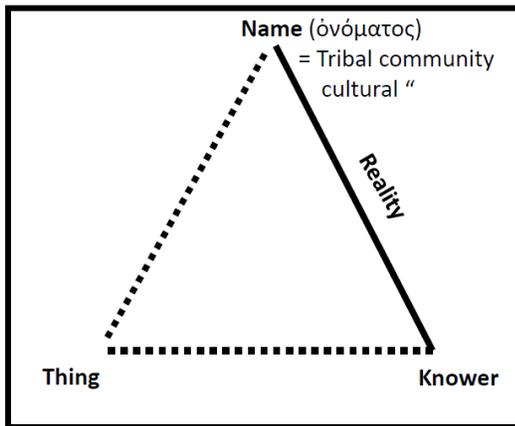


The fourth view we noted was by Aristotle. We will go into details of his view at a later time. He would say we know love by directly perceiving love. The Thomistic view would include divine illumination of love (elevation of love to supernatural level). It should be noted that all of the words God gives us in Scripture are finite terms based on our understanding of them in this finite world. Yet, everything about God is transcendent. In sum, there is no univocal language with reference to God and man. This is the only view that defines love based on its reality obtained by direct abstractions—the God-given mind’s ability to abstract universal essences.

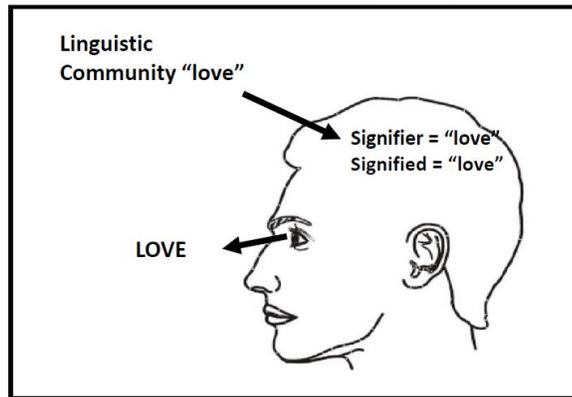


The fifth view is that of Saussure. If Cratylean is a problem in many Bible churches as per platonic word study methods, Saussure's view is the problem with contemporary culture. The difference is that the Cratylean would examine the word's etymology whereas the Saussurean view would take the word as it is defined by contemporary culture. If one asked a Saussurean where does he get his view of love, he would say because that is how it is accepted by his linguistic community (his tribe).

Saussure's philosophy of language.



Saussure's View of Language and Reality



In all of the above, there are only two options. One either starts with thought or beings in our representations of reality as such. We either get the meaning based on the beings of things or by words as defined by culture, etymology, or self. We are either encompassing beings with thought or thought with being. Only by direct orientation to being can one hope to obtain correspondence truth directly and enjoy all beings as true/good/beautiful directly. Moreover, only the Realist can see God as the continuing existential cause of all beings:

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

One simply cannot “clearly” see the invisible attributes of God in Idealism because of the lenses of words prevent one from directly seeing beings as such. It is unfortunate that many Christians cannot clearly see God's eternal power and Godhead (as per the above passage) because their first orientation is to words rather than reality as such. My prayer is to help believers see more clearly by recognizing and removing false philosophies that cloud our ability to see God and all of the true/good/beauty He has placed around us.

Life in His Grace, Love, and Truth,

Pastor Don