

Daily Life with Christ. Love-7: Understanding the objective, universal, never-changing, eternal nature of love—Philosophy of Language: The Failure of the Linguistic Turn (New Testament refutation of agape-word foundationalism).



Once philosophy turned away from Aristotelean-Thomistic metaphysics for objectivity, it lost all means to account for correspondence truth—objective correspondence between the mind and the extra-mental thing in the world. After Descartes severed the mind from the external world, by starting with the mind (“I think therefore I exist”), philosophy has frantically looked for some solid and indubitable ground for objective reality.

After repeated failures, philosophy turn to what is known as the Linguistic Turn. This was the attempt to ground ultimate reality is language as such. However, this has been an unmitigated disaster for philosophers and Bible students.

What is most unfortunate is that many well-meaning Bible churches have absorbed the Linguistic Turn and continue to follow this failed, subjective methodology. It is unfortunate that many God-loving, virtuous, wonderful believers continue to try to build reality on words rather than reality as such. It is one thing if a Christian does not care about Truth to be deceived, it is quite another for believers who are serious about their Bibles and truth to be caught up into this failed non-realist methodology.

One reason I followed a certain pastor for many decades was because he taught me that because he knew the original languages of Scripture, he can guarantee objectivity. Moreover, he said that Greek was a technical language that guarantees absolute objectivity. Whether he realized it or not, this is demonstrably false. The only way one can gain objectivity is through direct abstraction as instantiated in Aristotelean-Thomistic metaphysics, for it is the only system wherein the object of knowledge and the knower become one. It is the only system wherein meaning comes from the object of knowledge rather than words (see previous lessons on semantic triangles).

Let's take a look at the word for love in the New Testament. Is it true that the New Testament Greek is so technical that it exclusively uses one word (stem) for love, like ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω (agape/agapao), for the highest love, solely for licit love, only for spiritual love? No! Can one base ultimate reality of love on the word (ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω)? No! Take a look at a few examples of how varied this one word for love (ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω) is in the New Testament: (1) love only for those who love you (Matt 5:46); (2) love for money/materialism (Matt 6:24), (3) great love for God (Lk 7:47), God's love for man (Jn 3:16), man's love for darkness (Jn 3:19), love to be admired by others (Jn 12:43), love for Jesus Christ (Jn 14:15), love for fellow believers (Jn 15:12), love for Christ's coming (2 Tim. 4:8), and love for the evil world (2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Jn 2:15). It is apparent that one cannot build reality on words. The same Greek word is used for all kinds of different loves—even for illicit love. The truth is that the words in the New Testament Greek function just like they do today. Do we not use the English word "love" in the same way as we find the use of *agape* in the New Testament? Why is that?

In the next lesson, we will look at love in the Old Testament and see how that the same word used for loving God with all of one's heart is used for loving food, sex, and even for an evil sexual lust that lead to rape.

In sum, believers need to be able to connect with objective reality to obtain objective meaning of such things as love as well as a host of other realities, which is impossible by the Linguistic Turn. As long as one defines reality with words, he is a subjective idealist. One either clothes beings with words (realist) or clothes words with beings (idealist). And the only way to objectively clothe beings with words is to start with beings and the only way to do that is with Aristotelean-Thomistic metaphysics.

Life in His Grace, Love, and Truth,

Pastor Don