

THE SYNONYMOUS RENDERING OF ARISTOTELIAN φιλέω WITH
ἀγαπάω IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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Introduction

A Roman Stoic from Carthage once asked, ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’. If the author of John’s Gospel had been in his audience, he certainly would have demurred, Augustine would have at least hemmed and Origen would have stamped in protest that he was, in fact, a resident of Jerusalem.¹ Readers have long connected Greek—especially Platonic—thought with the Fourth Gospel, both in terms of philosophical conceptualization and vocabulary. Readers have similarly compared Christ and Socrates.² But the Platonic predilection of the early Church and first-century

1. Incidentally, a reading of Tertullian’s works reveals that he does not object to the interrelation of philosophy and Christian faith. Rather, as a Roman, he objects to Greek philosophy. Dariusz Karłowicz, *Socrates and Other Saints: Early Christian Understandings of Reason and Philosophy* (trans. Artur Rosman; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017).

2. Several scholars have shown that a letter from the Syrian Stoic philosopher Mara bar Serapion from Antioch may be the first pagan comparison between Socrates and Jesus, assuming its first-century dating and source are accurate. Craig A. Evans, ‘Jesus: Sources and Self-Understanding’, in Paul K. Moser (ed.), *Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 27-40. For more recent work on the comparison of the last days of Jesus and Socrates, see George van Kooten, ‘The Last Days of Socrates and Christ: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo Read in Counterpoint with John’s Gospel’, in Anders Petersen and George van Kooten (eds.), *Religio-Philosophical Discussions in the*

Judaism³ has resulted in the historical neglect of how John weaves through his Gospel a less conspicuous dialogue between Aristotelian φίλος/φιλία/φιλέω and the Christian and Jewish emphasis on ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω. Reading these terms in John's Gospel as a dialogue with Aristotelian thought fits within John's purview of showing the harmony, in certain respects, between Greek philosophy and the Christ-event, but it also makes sense of the odd back and forth between Jesus and Peter at the end of the Gospel, in which they appear to use the terms ἀγαπάω and φιλέω interchangeably (Jn 21.15-19). In what follows, therefore, we explore this dialogue, and particularly how John revises Aristotle's view of unequal friendship (φιλία) by allowing for a greater degree of inequality between friends, his reconfiguration of divinization as the greatest good one should desire for a friend and how he subsumes φιλία under ἀγάπη.

This essay proceeds first by situating this discussion within preexisting research connecting the New Testament with the thought and work of Aristotle.

Aristotle in the New Testament and John

It is worthwhile to recall the evidence of Aristotelian influence on the New Testament and in John, particularly in order to substantiate the claims above. Incorporation of the philosopher in biblical interpretation, especially more recently, might be categorized as follows: structural, narrational and conceptual.

Mediterranean World: From Plato, through Jesus, to Late Antiquity (Ancient Philosophy and Religion, 1; Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 219-43.

3. Significantly, however, current research has shown that Philo's disagreements with Plato favor an Aristotelian correction. For example, 'the distinction between God as pure Intellect ... and the divine *Logos* as God's power active within the cosmos is the result of Aristotle's criticism of Plato's concept of a divine Demiurge'. Abraham P. Bos, 'Hagar and the Enkyllos Paideia in Philo of Alexandria', in Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten and J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten (eds.), *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham* (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 163-75 (167 n. 17). See also *idem*, 'Philo of Alexandria: A Platonist in the Image and Likeness of Aristotle', *SPhiloA* 10 (1998), pp. 66-86; A.P. Bos, 'Philo on God as "Archê Geneseôs"', *JJS* 60 (2009), pp. 32-47.

The exploration of Aristotle's structural influence in recent decades has concentrated on his *Rhetoric* and rhetorical interpretation, particularly of the Pauline corpus. This fits, however, within the broader cultural conversations and milieu of the Roman Empire in the first century, and, though critical to the field of rhetoric, Aristotle is simply one part of the collective rhetorical heritage that includes Cicero and the pedagogical systems of the ancient Mediterranean. At the same time, opinion remains divided on the degree to which Paul made use of or even knew Greco-Roman rhetoric, other than through a general cultural literacy.⁴

The narrational influence of Aristotle stems from his *Poetics* and has been taken up in the last several decades by studies looking at the organization of the Fourth Gospel as a story.⁵ Most recently, Nielsen has suggested that the author of John organizes his Gospel with the concept *δόξα/δοξάζειν* according to Aristotle's guidelines for 'tragedy'.⁶ The current trend indicates this trajectory of reading John with Aristotle is gaining traction in Johannine research.

A sample of conceptual relationships between Aristotle and the New Testament includes the well-known discussion of *Haustafeln* in Paul (esp. Eph. 5.22–6.9 and Col. 3.18–4.1; cf. 1 Pet. 2.18–37) and the developing research on the language of 'righteousness' and 'friendship' in Paul and the philosopher. Regarding the former, opinion has been divided over the

4. Stanley E. Porter, 'Ancient Literate Culture and Popular Rhetorical Knowledge', in Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer (eds.), *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 96–116.

5. R. Alan Culpepper, 'The Plot of John's Story of Jesus', *Int* 53 (1995), pp. 347–58; *idem*, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998); Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John* (BibInt, 93; Leiden: Brill, 2008); Jesper Nielsen, 'Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring: The Function of Jesus' Resurrection in the Fourth Gospel', in Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (eds.), *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (WUNT, 222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 177–208.

6. Jesper Nielsen, 'The Narrative Structures of Glory and Glorification in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 56 (2010), pp. 343–66; for similar work with Mark's Gospel, see Norman A. Bert, 'Mark and Aristotle: The Christ Embodied as Tragic Hero', *CSR* 37 (2008), pp. 147–62.

primary source(s) of Paul's household regulations, with suggestions ranging from Aristotle,⁷ the Stoics (occasionally including Aristotle),⁸ the diverse forms of contemporary Judaism,⁹ the uniquely Christian invention,¹⁰ or even a combination of these elements.¹¹ As scholarship continues to unveil the complexity and interactions of the first-century Roman world, the last of these options has gained influence, especially given Aristotle's structural delineation of household relationships and four hundred years of hellenization of the Mediterranean.

Regarding the 'cultural literacy' mentioned above, some have extended this to the character of Paul's discussion of 'righteousness'. That is to say the concept of 'righteousness' is tempered by both his Jewish and Hellenistic (i.e. Aristotelian and Platonic) contexts. Similarly, the writing milieu of the New Testament has implications for understanding the first-century conversation about 'friendship'. Several have already made connections

7. David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981); *idem*, 'Household Codes,' in David Edward Aune (ed.), *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (Sources for Biblical Study, 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 25-50; James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 667; more recently, and as something of a cautious revival of Aristotle's 'influence', see Young Chul Whang, 'Paul's Letter Paraenesis', in Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (eds.), *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (PAST, 6; Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 253-68.

8. Martin Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon* (HNT, 12; Tübingen: Mohr, 1913); K. Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln: Ein Stück urchristliche Paränese* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1928).

9. James E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (FRLANT, 109; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), pp. 1-32. See Crouch for a comprehensive list of those who adopt his predecessors' position; William Lillie, 'The Pauline House-Tables', *ExpTim* 86 (1975), pp. 179-83; E. Schweizer, 'Die Weltlichkeit des Neuen Testaments: Die Haustafeln', in Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart and Rudolf Smend (eds.), *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie* (Festschrift Walther Zimmerli; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

10. K.H. Rengstorff, 'Die neutestamentlichen Mahnungen an die Frau, sich dem Manne unterzuordnen', in W.H. Foerster (ed.), *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum* (Witten: Luther, 1953), pp. 131-45.

11. D. Schroeder, 'Lists, Ethical', in Keith Crim (ed.), *IDBSup* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp. 546-47.

between Aristotle and Paul's concepts of 'friendship' in the Epistle to the Philippians¹² by showing, for example, how Paul deploys the terms φρόνησις and κοινωνία in a way that comports conceptually with Aristotle's definition of friendship. Currently, only Briones seems to have investigated the topic of divine friendship in the two ancient authors, to which Aristotle dedicates special attention in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,¹³ and which has some bearing on this article. Though some research suggests direct use of Aristotle's writings in the apostolic era,¹⁴ many indicators point to indirect dependence both within and without the New Testament.

It is at this juncture that the current essay finds itself. The author of John's Gospel's use of the φιλέω and ἀγαπάω lexical clusters and the interplay of these terms suggest a relationship between the Gospel author and Aristotle. The following section explores the use of these terms within Greek (and Roman) philosophical and Judeo-Christian contexts of the first century.

φιλέω and ἀγαπάω in Greek Philosophy

The reason for focusing on these two Greek word clusters for 'love', rather than the broader five terms in Greek thought (I omit ἔρωσ, στοργή, πρᾶγμα and their variations), is due to the fact that only φιλία/φιλέω and ἀγάπη/

12. John T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (NovTSup, 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996); *idem*, 'Paul and Friendship', in J. Paul Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003); John Fitzgerald, 'Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians', *Int* 61 (2007), pp. 284-96; Rainer Metzner, 'In aller Freundschaft: Ein frühchristlicher Fall freundschaftlicher Gemeinschaft (Phil 2.25-30)', *NTS* 48 (2002), pp. 111-31; Walter Hansen, 'Transformation of Relationships: Partnership, Citizenship, and Friendship in Philippi', in Gerald F. Hawthorne (ed.), *New Testament Greek and Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Gerald F. Hawthorne* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 181-204.

13. David E. Briones, 'Paul and Aristotle on Friendship', in Joseph R. Dodson and Andrew W. Pitts (eds.), *Paul and the Greco-Roman Philosophical Tradition* (LNTS, 527; London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 55-74.

14. Anton Hermann Chroust, 'A Fragment of Aristotle's On Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria, De Opificio Mundi I, 7', *DivThom* 77 (1974), pp. 224-35.

ἀγαπάω are featured in John (and the New Testament),¹⁵ and because Aristotle (and the Socratic legacy) concentrates on φιλία/φιλέω as the highest form of love that has some bearing on the discussion as these terms relate to John's Gospel.

The φιλία cluster is the preferred terminology for 'solicitous love of gods for men'¹⁶ and for intimate, reciprocal relationships among people, whether that be friendship, marriage or other relations along that spectrum within non-Jewish, Greek (especially philosophical) literature.¹⁷ In the same literature, the ἀγάπη cluster occurs at a significantly lower frequency and it lacks precision, ranging in meaning from 'satisfaction', to 'regard for another', to 'greet' or 'honor' and a host of other ideas. Rarely is it used synonymously with ἔρωσ or φιλία, and even then it is often for stylistic variation alongside these words, or on its own, where it lacks the power of either of those terms, especially in the Socratic legacy. In addition to this, whereas the nouns ἔρωσ or φιλία appear with great frequency in the pre-biblical Greek literature, the substantive ἀγάπη arrives late and is virtually absent from pagan works.¹⁸ The general preference for the φιλία, especially in discourse on friendship and love, is present in Aristotle, and it persists well into the Common Era in the works of Octavian's tutors Arius Didymus (*Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics*), Plutarch, who wrote much on the topic in his *Moralia* ('How to Tell Friend from a Flatterer' and 'On Having Many Friends'), Plotinus (*Enneads*), Alcinoüs (*Didaskalikos*) and Lucian (*Toxaris*). As an indication that the language of φιλία was still embedded in the cultural conversation of the Common Era, Lucian uses *Toxaris* to mock the sentimentality of philosophical φιλία. Even Philo of Alexandria, an exception to the Jewish preference for the ἀγάπη cluster, reflects a Stoic position (over against Epicureanism) on his religious casting of φιλία in the Torah and Judaism, especially with

15. The exceptions to this occur in 2 Tim. 3.2, which uses φίλαυτος pejoratively, and φιλόστοργος in Rom. 12.10.

16. Ethelbert Stauffer, 'Ἀγαπάω', *TDNT*, I, p. 36.

17. Gustav Stählin, 'Φιλέω', *TDNT*, IX, pp. 115-16.

18. Stauffer, 'Ἀγαπάω', I, pp. 36-37; W. Günther, 'Love', *NIDNTT*, II, pp. 539-40. On the rare occasion, ἀγαπάω refers to the favor of a god for a human (Dio Chrysostom, *1 Tars* 22), and in one instance, a second-century CE papyrus refers to Isis with the designation ἀγάπη (P.Oxy. 1380.109).

God.¹⁹ And Philo is especially relevant to this study as a near-contemporary Jew to the author of John, who makes intentional use of language regarding love within this cultural discourse.²⁰

See Table 1 below for the frequencies of the ἀγάπη and φιλία clusters in Aristotle alone. Note the significant increase in frequency of the φιλία cluster in the ethical works and *Rhetoric*, in which Aristotle dedicates particular attention to ‘friendship’.

Table 1: Occurrences of Terminology in Works by Aristotle

Texts	ἀγαπάω ²¹	φιλέω	φιλία	φίλος
<i>Metaphysics</i>	2	2	14	-
<i>Eth. nic.</i>	25	163	123	161
<i>Eth. eud.</i>	2	117	98	117
<i>Politics</i>	3	28	14	28
<i>Ath. Const.</i>	1	6	3	10
<i>Poetics</i>	-	2	3	2

19. For essays on these topics and more, see John T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (RBS, 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); for the developments of ‘friendship’ in Neoplatonism, see Michael Schramm, *Freundschaft im Neuplatonismus: Politisches Denken und Sozialphilosophie von Plotin bis Kaiser Julian* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 319; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013).

20. De Vogel dismisses the view that ἀγαπάω is ‘sacred’ in the New Testament, generally speaking, and suggests, depending on Joly’s research, that it was simply the more common term for ‘love’ during the composition of the LXX and in John’s day. While de Vogel may be correct regarding its lack of ‘sacredness’, unfortunately, the rest of the argument does not do justice to Joly’s own research on the preference for φιλέω in the papyri from the second century BCE forward, nor any other major lexicon that discusses these Greek terms, nor the philosophical preference for φιλέω in the examples I have provided from the Common Era, nor does de Vogel speak into John’s own relationship to the LXX and Greek philosophy. Cornelia J. de Vogel, ‘Greek Cosmic Love and the Christian Love of God: Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite and the Author of the Fourth Gospel’, *VC* 35 (1981), pp. 57-81 (61, 73-74); Robert Joly, *Le vocabulaire chrétien de l’amour est-il original? Φιλεῖν et Ἀγαπᾶν dans le grec Antique* (Brussels: Presses universitaires de Bruxelles, 1968).

21. Recall ἀγάπη is a late back-formation from ἀγαπάω, and there is no word comparable to φιλία with an ἀγαπα-root in the Greek literature.

<i>Economics</i>	1	-	-	-
<i>Virt. vit.</i>	-	1	-	-
<i>Rhetoric</i>	4	58	6	49

φιλέω and ἀγαπάω in Hellenistic Judaism

In the Hellenistic-Jewish and Christian literature, the situation is the reverse of the aforementioned Greek writings: the *ἀγάπη* cluster features much more prominently and with greater precision than the *φιλία* cluster. Beginning with Hellenistic Judaism, there is a decided preference for *ἀγάπη* as the ‘highest’ love, even to the degree that it is formulated against the Greek emphases on *ἔρωσ*, which had direct associations with the Greek pantheon and, therefore, the demonic, and *φιλία*, which is something of a nebulous term throughout the extant Jewish literature²² and the LXX.²³

Turning to this latter example, the authors of the LXX use *ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω* with relative frequency (290 times) to describe YHWH’s love for his people, the reciprocal love of his people for YHWH, and love between people, especially family and friends. *Φιλία/φιλέω*, however, occur much less frequently (68 times) in the LXX,²⁴ and with a range of meanings that include kissing, friendship, sexual intercourse and Aristotle’s use for ‘liking’ inanimate objects, such as food, which I discuss below. Interestingly, *φιλέω* and *ἀγαπάω* are both used to translate the same Hebrew term, *אָהַב*, in order to distinguish between YHWH’s love or reciprocal love and the other definitions provided by *φιλέω*. Only rarely do *φιλία/φιλέω* designate reciprocal, intimate love in the LXX.

Proverbs provides this exception by using the two sets of terms relatively interchangeably, and may have provided John with the biblical background for bringing *φιλέω* and *ἀγαπάω* together,²⁵ especially in Jesus’ final

22. See especially *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T. Reub.* 6.9; *T. Gad* 4.7, 5.2; *T. Benj.* 8.2).

23. Stauffer, ‘*Ἀγαπάω*’, *TDNT*, I, pp. 38-40.

24. Günther, ‘*Love*’, II, pp. 538-47.

25. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2nd edn, 1978), p. 584. What Barrett and others neglect to notice in this passage is

conversation with Peter (Jn 21.15-19), as we see in Prov. 8.17, when personified Wisdom cries out ‘I love (ἀγαπῶ) those who love (φιλοῦντας) me; and those who seek me will find me’. The LXX here translates that same Hebrew word, אָהַב, as both ἀγαπῶ and φιλοῦντας. Furthermore, in the context of Proverbs, this section also parallels John 1 and his introduction of the preexistent Word because Wisdom, according to Prov. 8.22-31, is ‘at the first, before the beginning of the earth’ (8.22) and the creative power of God. That is to say, this text gives John a biblical precedent for connecting Christian and Hellenistic ideas, but especially the Christian and Aristotelian emphases on the highest form of ‘love’.

φιλέω and ἀγαπάω in the New Testament

Bearing in mind these patterns for Greek and Hellenist-Jewish texts, John’s Gospel stands out as an oddity in terms of both stylometrics and usage. Looking at the stylometric data, ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω occur in a much higher number in John than in the other three Gospels—44 of the 78 times—and, along with 1 John, it accounts for 35 percent of the occurrences of these terms in the New Testament. At the same time, 13 books of the New Testament, including 1 John, use these words with greater frequency than John. The point with ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω, however, has less to do with its frequency, which is high for the Gospels, than it does with the attention John gives it and its relationship to φιλία/φιλέω.

Φιλέω and its related terms matter more statistically for this discussion, because they are less common in the New Testament. Yet, of the 25 occurrences of φιλέω, 13 appear in John’s Gospel. Including φίλος in the data brings the total up to 19 occurrences, which is comparable to the 17 occurrences of this language in Luke. Together these Gospels account for 65 percent of their usage in the New Testament.

On their own, these statistics seem to indicate little other than that they were words John happened to use. Furthermore, this frequency pattern of higher occurrences of ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω to φιλία/φιλέω in the New Testament is similar to the LXX. Bringing these sets together, however, renders John conspicuous, because the terms occur at a closer frequency than in the LXX

love’s connection with the Christology of John, especially between personified Wisdom and Logos.

or the rest of the New Testament. See Table 2 for a comparison of the LXX and the New Testament.

Table 2: Occurrences of Terminology in the LXX, John and the New Testament

	LXX	John	NT (exc. John)
ἀγαπάω	271	37	106
ἀγαπή	19	7	109
φιλέω	32	13	12
φιλία	36	0	1
φίλος	180 ²⁶	6	23

The data is not overwhelming, but it points in the direction of the Gospel author's purposeful selection of these terms. This likelihood increases as we compare John's usage of these terms, which I reserve for later in the discussion, and stylistic similarities between John and Aristotle, which receives attention next.

John and Aristotle in the Rhetorical Tradition

As admitted earlier, though there are several significant connections to the Platonic/Socratic tradition (e.g. discussion of ὁ λόγος; the parallels of Jesus' final discourse and *The Symposium*), stylistically John diverges from the dialectical approach by defining his term ἀγαπάω near the beginning of the Gospel: 'For God loved (ἠγάπησεν) the world in this way, that he gave his only Son. So that whoever believes in him might not die, but rather they might have eternal life' (Jn 3.16). This also happens to be the first mention of either ἀγαπάω or φιλέω in the Gospel. Defining terms more closely parallels the Greek rhetorical tradition of Aristotle, which initially defines a concept and elaborates it, rather than that of dialectic, which searches for meaning of an idea through discourse (e.g. 'justice' in *The Republic*; 'virtue' in *Meno*). So, John defines ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω at the beginning of his Gospel, in keeping with the rhetorical approach, yet he only introduces the concept

26. Significantly, 150 instances of φίλος come from the Maccabean and wisdom literature. The more 'hellenized' authors, including in the New Testament (e.g. Luke and John), use φίλος with higher frequency than alternative terminology.

from the divine-to-human perspective. Therefore, he unfolds the fullness of this concept and what the same terms mean for the human-to-divine perspective over the course of the Gospel.

Similarly, Aristotle introduces and defines φιλέω in *Rhetoric*: ‘We may describe (τὸ φιλεῖν) towards any one [*sic*] as wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these about.’²⁷ And at the beginning of book 8 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he describes φιλία as ‘a virtue, or [involving] virtue’²⁸ that, in its perfect form, seeks the good of the other and vice versa.²⁹ As Aristotle progresses in book 8, he comments on imperfect forms of φιλία that are based on usefulness and pleasure, but he observes how these are more easily dissolved and fall short of the shared virtue and altruism of perfect φιλία.³⁰ He also clarifies that one might ‘love’ (φιλέω) another person who does not return affection, or even an inanimate object, but this cannot be viewed as φιλία, which, even in the two poorer forms based on pleasure and usefulness, must be reciprocated.³¹ In other words, although φιλέω, like ‘love’ in common English parlance, is used in a variety of contexts, these simulacra are poor deviations from perfect, or true, love.

It is important to show, however, that the connection between Aristotelian thought and John is more than stylistic affinity, but that it relates also to content. To do so, I must show also that, though Plato (and others) wrote attentively on the topic of love/friendship, Aristotle diverges from his master at critical junctures that align him with John’s discussion of ‘love’ in ways that Plato does not.

27. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.4.66. See also 1.5.20 ‘We define a “friend” [ὁ φίλος] as one who will always try, for your sake, to do what he takes to be good for you. The man towards whom many feel thus has many friends; if these are worthy men, he has good friends [χρηστόφίλος].’ Assuming John engages with Aristotle’s idea of friendship, it is interesting to note that Aristotle ends his discussion on friendship here with a term that bears striking resemblance to χριστός + φίλος—a wordplay that may have fed into John’s conceptualization of love, but is, unfortunately, entering into the realms of intention and literacy to which we have no access.

28. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.1.

29. David Konstan, ‘Aristotle on Love and Friendship’, *ΣΧΟΛΗ* 2 (2008), pp. 207-212 (212).

30. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.3.

31. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.2.

Plato and Aristotle on 'Love' and 'Friendship'

Though numerous Greek authors write on the topic of *φιλία* (rendered in translations as either 'love' or 'friendship'), none do so with the same precision as Plato and Aristotle, except those in their legacy.³² In Plato, dedicated attention to *φιλία* (and *ἔρως*) appears primarily in *Lysis* and the *Symposium*, with further, significant development in the *Phaedrus* and *Alcibiades I*.³³ *Lysis* and *Alcibiades I* particularly develop the notion of *ἔρως* with *φιλία* (Plato ignores the previous Greek distinction between these two terms)³⁴ as a form of virtuous seeking of the other and their good (though 'erotic' friendship may also take a negative form).³⁵

For the most part, however, Plato focuses on *φιλία* as 'a form of attraction grounded on a resemblance according to virtue'³⁶ in which those who have virtues in common are drawn to one another in interpersonal friendships, and which also provides the foundation for his understanding of civic friendship.³⁷ To this point, even though the two philosophers differ in style of presentation, we see that Aristotle largely agrees with Plato. Aristotle views *φιλία* as a virtue, but also the 'moral horizon' in which all other virtues operate and are fulfilled, and that this is the best form of love.³⁸ Suzanne Stern-Gillet expands on this:

Primary, or virtue, friendship ... constitutes a source of high self-realization for virtuous persons. Firstly, it affords them a semi-theoretical

32. In the Common Era, Plotinus and Alcinous are unsurprising in their platonic visions of *φιλία*. In the Latin tradition, Cicero has an interest in 'friendship' only insofar as it relates to the harmony of the city—a pragmatic paraphrase of Aristotle.

33. Kevin Corrigan, *Love, Friendship, Beauty, and the Good: Plato, Aristotle, and the Later Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), p. 36.

34. Dimitri El Murr, 'Philia in Plato', in Gary M. Gurtler and Suzanne Stern-Gillet (eds.), *Ancient and Medieval Concepts of Friendship* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), pp. 3-34 (3).

35. Corrigan, *Love, Friendship, Beauty*, pp. 36-37.

36. El Murr, 'Philia in Plato', p. 5.

37. El Murr, 'Philia in Plato', p. 27; John von Heyking, *Form of Politics: Aristotle and Plato on Friendship* (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas, 66; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), pp. 9, 27.

38. von Heyking, *Form of Politics*, p. 55.

insight into the nature of the moral life. Through the process of making another self they gain not only an awareness of themselves qua morally actualized, but also a deeper insight into the nature and variety of moral experience. Secondly, to the extent that it meets their inherently social need to give and to receive from others, virtue friendship contributes to render excellent persons as self-sufficient as humanly possible.³⁹

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses perfect *φιλία* at length as affection, reciprocity, virtue and seeking the other's good⁴⁰ as the common goal of shared life (and intellects) within the context of a friendship amongst equals (e.g. class or station).⁴¹ In chapter 7 of book 8, however, he distinguishes himself from Plato, when he turns to consider what quality and characteristics of friendship might exist between unequals (e.g. parents and children, older and younger, rulers and subjects), including in cases where one of the friends is elevated to a position that disrupts the previous equality. This change is important because, in addition to seeking the good of each other according to human nature, both friends must also seek the good of the other in terms of their social standing. He first notes that strict equality is primary in friendships, and that great disparity in 'virtue, vice, wealth, or anything else' usually means individuals can expect no longer to be friends.⁴² Then, he employs the gods as his example of the extreme case: they excel in all good things and, Aristotle implies here, that they cannot be friends with their subjects. What follows this is worth quoting at length because of the connections that might be drawn between his argument and the farewell discourse of Jesus:

39. Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (SUNY Series in Ancient Greek Philosophy; Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 147.

40. Lorraine Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 50.

41. Pangle, *Aristotle*, p. 50; von Heyking, *Form of Politics*, p. 35; El Murr, 'Philia in Plato', p. 4.

42. 'Although primary friendship is a moral good of the highest order, we thus conclude, it is not a goal at which most people can realistically aim. Not only do the many stand little chance of achieving it, even when they can conceive of it, but even the virtuous may be prevented from achieving it by contingent factors.' Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, p. 148.

There is no exact line of demarcation in such cases to indicate up to what point <of inequality> men can still be friends. The friendship can remain even when much is taken away, but when one partner is separated from the other, as in the case of divinity, it can remain no longer. *This raises the question whether or not we wish our friends the greatest of all goods, namely, to be gods.* For <if that wish were fulfilled,> they would no longer be our friends, and, since friends are something good, we would have lost this good. Accordingly, if our assertion is correct that a man wishes his friend's good for his friend's sake, the friend would have to remain as he was. Consequently, one will wish the greatest good for his friend as a human being. But perhaps not all the greatest goods, for each man wishes for his own good most of all.⁴³

At this point, the connection between John and Aristotle moves beyond linguistic similarity to conceptual and structural similarities. No contemporary author speaks of friendship in these terms, Plato included. We turn to John's Gospel to see how Jesus responds to these contentions regarding unequal friendships and goodness, and how he brings together Jewish and Hellenistic emphases on *ἀγαπάω* and *φιλέω*, respectively.

Jesus' Farewell Discourse: Integrating φιλέω and ἀγαπάω

At first glance, John appears to use *ἀγάπη* and *φιλία* clusters haphazardly or interchangeably; that is to say, with little theological or philosophical distinction. Examples of *ἀγαπάω* include: God loves the world (3.16); the people love the darkness (3.19); the Father loves the Son (3.35; 10.17; 17.24, 26); Jesus loves Lazarus and his sisters (11.5); Jesus loves his own (13.1; 15.9); the disciple whom Jesus loved (13.23; 19.26; 21.7, 20); the disciples are commanded to love (13.34; 15.12); Jesus queries whether the disciples

43. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.7. Italics mine. The underlying Greek reads: ἀκριβῆς μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις οὐκ ἔστιν ὀρισμός, ἕως τίνος οἱ φίλοι: πολλῶν γὰρ ἀφαιρουμένων ἔτι μένει, πολὺ δὲ χωρισθέντος, οἷον τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐκέτι. ὅθεν καὶ ἀπορεῖται, μή ποτ' οὐ βούλονται οἱ φίλοι τοῖς φίλοις τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν, οἷον θεοῦ εἶναι: οὐ γὰρ ἔτι φίλοι ἔσονται αὐτοῖς, οὐδὲ δὴ ἀγαθὰ: οἱ γὰρ φίλοι ἀγαθὰ. εἰ δὴ καλῶς εἴρηται ὅτι ὁ φίλος τῷ φίλῳ βούλεται τὰ ἀγαθὰ ἐκείνου ἕνεκα, μένειν ἂν δεῖο οἷός ποτ' ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνος: ἀνθρώπῳ δὴ ὄντι βουλήσεται τὰ μέγιστα ἀγαθὰ. ἴσως δ' οὐ πάντα: αὐτῷ γὰρ μάλιστα ἕκαστος βούλεται τὰ ἀγαθὰ. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.4.

love him (14.15, 21, 23, 24, 28); the Father will love those who keep Jesus' commands (14.21, 23; 17.23); and Jesus' inquiry as to whether Peter loves him (21.15, 16). The examples of φιλέω are similar: the Father loves the Son (5.20); Jesus loves Lazarus (11.3, 36); the Father loves the disciples (16.27); the disciples loved Jesus (16.27); the disciple whom Jesus loved (20.2); and Jesus' inquiry as to whether Peter loves him (21.15, 16).⁴⁴ What ought the reader make of this data? I suggest that John deploys this apparently synonymous usage purposefully in dialogue with Aristotelian thought.

The connection of these terms receives clarification in the farewell discourse (Jn 14–17), where Jesus brings together the linguistic sets I have been discussing initially in 15.13, providing an interplay of the two concepts, μείζονα ταύτης ἀγάπην οὐδεὶς ἔχει, ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῆ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ ('Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends'). The greatest 'friendship,' φιλία, entails sacrificial love, ἀγάπη, for the other—seeking their good through the giving of one's life.⁴⁵ Not only does John bring the two terms together, but he also foreshadows the death of Jesus. Though it is the greatest demonstration of love, it would also, under normal, human circumstances, and from an Aristotelian perspective, terminate the friendship altogether. Yet John casts the saying in a different light, because it presages the dying and rising, or the full 'divinization', of Jesus in his human nature and thereby hints at the possibility of friendship between divinity and humanity.

Shortly after this, John extends the argument and circumvents Aristotle's limitations of unequal friendships when Jesus elevates the disciples to the level of φίλοι by pronouncing them so, and through recognition of their knowledge of the divine will—ὁμοῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἃ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν. οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους, ὅτι ὁ δοῦλος οὐκ οἶδεν τί ποιεῖ αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος· ὑμᾶς δὲ εἶρηκα φίλους, ὅτι πάντα ἃ ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐγνώρισα ὑμῖν (Jn 15.14-15; 'You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know

44. Bernard offers the earliest comprehensive list of synonymous usage of these terms throughout the Gospel, which has served as the touchstone for rejecting any significance in John's choice of φιλία or ἀγάπη. John Henry Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (ICC, 20; 2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), II, pp. 703-704.

45. This also raises questions for Pilate, who chooses to hand over Jesus for crucifixion rather than lose his designation as 'friend (φίλος) of Caesar' (Jn 19.12).

what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you'). John's preexistent, divine Logos says this to his *servants*, and thereby moves them up the relational and social ladder in a pattern exactly the opposite of how Aristotle describes φίλοι and φιλία in an unequal relationship, and he completely revises what Aristotle had claimed to be impossible: to remain friends with someone who is or 'becomes' a deity.

A final statement from Jesus in this discourse brings John's confrontation with Aristotle's idea of friendship to its consummation. With the entirety of the farewell discourse alluding to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus tells his φίλοι 'It is *better* for you that I go away' (Jn 16.7). Recall the conclusion to Aristotle's comments on unequal friendship—'This raises the question whether or not we wish our friends the greatest of all goods, namely, to be gods'—at the end of which he concludes, no, this is not good for φιλία. Again, John reverses Aristotle's claim when Jesus claims his going away, i.e. the divinization of his human nature, is *better* for his φίλοι.⁴⁶

It is important to note, however, that, whereas Aristotle speaks of 'the good' in terms of ἀγαθός, John speaks of the situation being 'better' for the disciples with the verb συμφέρω. The argument of this article, however, is not that John is an Aristotelian, nor even that he has read Aristotle. The purpose is to show that John is aware of Aristotle's general view of φιλία as it has to do with the relationship between deity and humanity, and that he seeks to both revise it and connect it with the Jewish and Christian tradition of preference for ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω. That John uses συμφέρω instead of ἀγαθός is negligible because, conceptually, the point he is making fits with the progression of Aristotle's discourse about φιλία, though he reaches the opposite conclusion: the 'divinization' of Jesus is, without question, the greatest good for his φίλοι. It brings about 'knowledge' of God, eternal life, peace

46. There are two instances where Plato and Aristotle correlate ἀγαπάω with φιλία or φιλέω, both of which use ἀγαπάω to explain the concepts of φιλία or φιλέω (not to identify them with ἀγαπάω). In the *Lysis*, τὰ δὴ τοιαῦτα πῶς ἂν ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀγαπηθείη, μηδεμίαν ἐπικουρίαν ἀλλήλοις ἔχοντα; ἔστιν ὅπως; οὐκ ἔστιν. ὁ δὲ μὴ ἀγαπᾷτο, πῶς φίλον; οὐδαμῶς. ἀλλὰ δὴ ὁ μὲν ὅμοιος τῷ ὁμοίῳ οὐ φίλος; ὁ δὲ ἀγαθός τῷ ἀγαθῷ καθ' ὅσον ἀγαθός, οὐ καθ' ὅσον ὅμοιος, φίλος ἂν εἴη; See Plato, *Lys.* 166.215a. Aristotle suggests τὸ δὲ φιλεῖσθαι ἀγαπᾶσθαι ἔστιν αὐτὸν δι' αὐτόν ('and to be loved is to be cherished for one's own sake'). Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.11. The wider contexts of these sections have no bearing on the argument of this article.

with the Deity, the presence of the Holy Spirit, etc. Also, *συμφέρω* is only used three times in John (11.50; 16.7; 18.14), and on each occasion in reference to Jesus' death being good for others, which keeps this term within the context of the John-Aristotle discourse. It is even possible that John avoids the language of *ἀγαθός* so that Jesus' sacrifice is not perceived as an offering to an *ἀγαθός δαίμων*, a household pagan spirit associated with snakes⁴⁷—two items not viewed positively within Judaism.

It is essential for John, as the author who bridges Jewish and Hellenistic thought, to bring together their respective preferences for *ἀγάπη* and *φιλία* as the author of Proverbs has. As noted, Greek and Roman philosophers frequently discussed love/friendship. Yet John follows Aristotle's particular arrangement of the discussion. Aristotle is surely right that perfect *φιλία* is a virtue that entails a reciprocal relationship of seeking good for the other. At the same time, Aristotle has incorrectly determined that friendship with a deity is impossible. Added to this, the philosopher suggests that, in case of friendships between unequals, 'affection [*φιλίαις*], too, must be proportionate: the better and more useful partner should receive more affection than he gives, and similarly for the superior partner in each case. For, when the affection is proportionate to the merit of each partner, there is some sense of equality between them.'⁴⁸ In harmonizing these terms held together by the author of Proverbs, John shows, again, that Aristotle's contention has been overturned in the Christ-event. Not only has the deity come near and pronounced his servants to be *φίλοι*, but the deity—both God the Son and God the Father—gives more *ἀγάπη* and *φιλία* than it is ever possible for his *φίλοι* to reciprocate. And this does not bring out Aristotle's need for equilibrium: the affection of God for his *φίλοι* is clearly greater than their affection for him, as Jn 3.16 makes clear, though Jesus, as the superior friend, provides the opportunity for his *φίλοι* to demonstrate affection through obedience to his commands in 15.14, and he also lays out the path for true reciprocation in Jn 15.13: 'Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his

47. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3rd edn, 2003), p. 178.

48. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.7. The underlying Greek reads: *ἀνάλογον δ' ἐν πάσαις ταῖς καθ' ὑπεροχὴν οὐσαις φιλίαις καὶ τὴν φίλησιν δεῖ γίνεσθαι, οἷον τὸν ἀμείνω μᾶλλον φιλεῖσθαι ἢ φιλεῖν, καὶ τὸν ὠφελιμώτερον, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον ὁμοίως: ὅταν γὰρ κατ' ἀξίαν ἢ φίλησις γίνηται, τότε γίνεται πῶς ἰσότης.*

life for his friends.’ This verse leads us to the closing chapter of John and the consummation of this interplay of love.

Jesus and Peter: ἀγαπάω and φιλέω

When it comes to research on ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in John’s Gospel, the most ink has surely been dedicated to the final conversation between Jesus and Peter.⁴⁹ Twice Jesus asks Peter ‘do you love (ἀγαπᾷς) me?’ (21.15, 16) and twice Peter responds ‘Yes Lord; you know I love (φιλῶ) you’ (21.15, 16). On the third occasion, however, Jesus switches the verb to the same that Peter has used: ‘Simon son of John, do you love (φιλεῖς) me?’ (21.17) and Peter responds the same way he has before: ‘You know I love (φιλῶ) you’ (21.17). Scholars have offered a variety of suggestions as to why Peter repeatedly responds to ἀγαπάω with φιλέω, and why Jesus varies in the last instance. For example: ἀγαπάω, self-sacrificing love, is a greater commitment than Peter can make, so φιλέω is a response of friendship rather than love, and Jesus responds to this by condescending to Peter’s level;⁵⁰ Jesus lets Peter take the lead and he agrees with him: ‘You do not love (ἀγαπάω) me’; the emphasis is really on the absence of ‘more than these’ in Peter’s response, and he modestly refuses to pass judgment on his companions;⁵¹ or even that the Peter’s use of φιλέω is complementary to ἀγαπάω, in the same way as the terms ‘feeding’ and ‘tending’ in the same passage are different yet complementary.⁵² Anecdotal explanations abound. Most modern commentators,⁵³ however, accept that these terms are synonymous throughout

49. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC, 36; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), pp. 404-406.

50. A popular sentiment taken from the differentiations made in C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), chapters 4 and 6.

51. Rudolf K. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. George R. Beasley-Murray; The Johannine Monograph Series; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 711-12.

52. Grant R. Osborne, ‘John 21: Test Case for History and Redaction in the Resurrection Narratives’, in R.T. France and David Wenham (eds.), *Gospel Perspectives. II. Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), pp. 293-328 (308-309).

53. Of the pre-modern interpreters, even in the Greek Fathers, little to nothing is said about the difference in terminology. In the Latin and Platonic tradition,

John's Gospel and that John uses an array of synonyms in these verses (e.g. 'lamb' and 'sheep'; 'feed' and 'tend'), so it is purely a stylistic phenomenon, rather than having any narrational or theological import.⁵⁴

It seems, framed within the discussion of the relationship between John and Aristotle on the issue of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω, that this last group of commentators is partially correct. The words ἀγαπάω and φιλέω are synonymous, but only because John has made them so as Wisdom does in Proverbs 8. The closing chapter of the Gospel, then, serves as a conclusion to John's dialogue with Aristotle, as Jesus and Peter alternate in the use of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω. Jesus' use of φιλέω like Peter is not a condescension to Peter's level, but an equating of the two terms as it has been borne out over the Gospel—the highest philosophical love is divinized and made truly what it is meant to be by ἀγάπη. What follows only substantiates this claim. Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress

Augustine observes that Jesus switches from *Diligis me* to *Amas me*, using *amare* like Peter, and he concludes that the terms are synonymous. Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo. 123*. Thomas Aquinas, who comments on both John's Gospel and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, follows Augustine's interpretation in the former and says nothing connecting Aristotle to John in the latter. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John. II. Chapters 8–21* (trans. Fabian R. Larcher; Albany: Magi, 1998), p. 2622; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. C.I. Litzinger; Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), II, 1607-38; for other early church readings of this passage, see Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea* (trans. John Henry Newman; Oxford: James Parker, 1874), VI, pp. 620-23.

54. See, for example, Barrett, *St. John*, p. 584; Beasley-Murray, *John*, pp. 404-406; F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 404-405; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), p. 596; Andrew Lincoln, *Gospel According to St John* (BNTC; London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp. 517-18; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP, 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), pp. 405-6; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 665-66; Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (NTL; Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2015), pp. 441-43; Ben Witherington, III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. 356; in his shorter commentary, Brown does not even discuss the different Greek terms. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1988), pp. 102-103.

yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (*This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God*)’ (Jn 21.18-19). The final sentence is an allusion to Jn 15.13, the key verse that brings together φίλοι and ἀγάπη: ‘Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.’ It foreshadows the quality of the death of Peter—he will give his life for his φίλος, Jesus. Therefore, Jesus’ use of φιλέω in the final question he puts to Peter is a way of identifying it with ἀγαπάω, of φιλία with ἀγάπη.

Conclusion

Johannine (evangelistic?) sympathies to the diversity of his readers by way of vocabulary choice have long been known through research on the *Logos*-hymn. From the time of Heraclitus, λόγος assumed a widely-diverse range of significant meanings in philosophical writings and in Jewish thinkers who engaged with them (i.e. Philo).⁵⁵ For the author of John’s Gospel, this meant a potential polyvalent play in choosing the word λόγος for his prologue. The author might have chosen ‘law’ or ‘wisdom’ or even ‘the Son’ instead of ‘word’, but λόγος brings to it a blended richness of at least five interpretive trajectories from Platonic (formal cause and transcendent mind), Stoic (internal cause or expression and the rational principle that pervades all reality), Neoplatonic (the first emanation from the One), Hebrew biblical (creative expression of divine Wisdom) and Targumic thought (a circumlocution of the tetragrammaton or an expression of the theology of the ‘I am’ statement).⁵⁶ And though the author clearly aligns himself with Hebrew thinking insofar as the opening verse echoes back to Genesis 1 and the creative Word, the prologue nevertheless employs a word with a religio-philosophical range that would have resonated with many readers (e.g. λόγος as creative cause, metaphysical ground and/or reason sustaining the cosmos) and allowed them to participate in grasping what John is attempting to do

55. B. Klappert, ‘Λόγος’, *NIDNTT*, III, pp. 1116-17.

56. John McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1–4* (ed. Graham Stanton; ICC; London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), pp. 7-9; Martin McNamara, *Targum and New Testament: Collected Essays* (WUNT, 279; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 439-49.

with such a word—to disclose a Christian understanding and refinement of the concept of λόγος. This effort fits within the broader cultural conversation about the idea of λόγος, and a similar attempt is underway with regard to ἀγάπη and φιλία.

As an evangelist to a culturally diverse first-century community, John has to revise Aristotle because two conceptions of the greatest form of love are in play in Hellenistic Judaism and Greek philosophical thought: ἀγάπη and φιλία. Proverbs 8.17 brings these terms together seamlessly and John follows the author's lead. Taken straight from Aristotle, φιλία/φιλέω is in agreement with ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω insofar as it is a virtue entailing the reciprocal seeking of the good of the other. Yet Aristotle could not account for the Christ-event, or even the revelation of YHWH's love for Israel in the LXX. Therefore, John has to temper φιλία/φιλέω by revising its meaning in relation to Jn 3.16. This occurs chiefly in the farewell discourse, as John addresses the various problems Aristotle has raised regarding unequal friendships, especially wishing the greatest good for a friend: divinization. He completes the revision of Aristotle's φιλέω by the final chapter of the Gospel in which Jesus' use of φιλέω is not a condescension to the language of Peter, but rather, it is a confirmation that the highest, Aristotelian love remains, though it must be understood in light of the Christ-event. Furthermore, if John is the Gospel of 'Wisdom', and Jesus speaks as Wisdom (mirroring Sir. 4.11-13, Wisdom of Solomon and Prov. 8) in John 13-17,⁵⁷ it would make sense that John would want to incorporate and redeem Gentile thought that has exhibited 'love' for Wisdom.

Love is not just the greatest human good, but also the nature of reality as it proceeds from the creative λόγος. John manages to maintain the contact between Athens and Jerusalem, without surrendering the claims of the latter to the former, and in a manner reminiscent of both Isaiah and the Apocalypse of John—'They will bring into [the city of God] the glory and the honor of the nations' (Rev. 21.26).

57. Witherington, III, *John's Wisdom*, pp. 24-27.