

Rachel Lesser

University of California, Berkeley

Understanding Intimacy in the *Iliad*:

A Re-evaluation of the Core Meaning of *Philos* and Its Derivatives

Scholars have struggled to understand the etymology and core definition of the *phil-* root in light of its many instantiations and contexts of use in epic poetry. This paper theorizes that *phil-* words in the *Iliad* denote relationships (interpersonal or otherwise) characterized primarily by shared identity, rather than by love or friendship.

Pironti 2007: 46-53 has convincingly demonstrated that in epic diction φιλότης, in combination with εὐνηθῆναι, μίγνυμι, δάμνημι, or ὑποδάμνημι represents sexual intercourse, without a principal emotional connotation of love or tenderness. Building upon Pironti's work, I argue that the context of sexual desire helps to define φιλότης as physical union. In the *Iliad* (3.441-446; 14.314-51), φιλότης clearly appears as the goal of Paris' and Zeus' ἔρος and ἵμερος. If we understand ἔρος and ἵμερος to represent an acute experience of separation from the beloved, desire's aim and antidote is oneness—signified in its sexual aspect by φιλότης.

This explanation of φιλότης suggests togetherness or intimacy as the primary meaning of the *phil-* root in the *Iliad*. Applying the adjective φίλος or verb φιλέω to another person would thus indicate that the person is regarded as a part of one's identity group (with common interests), either as a family member, spouse, friend, fellow-soldier, retainer, or ally. The emotional implications of these unities—whether love or friendship—must be secondary meanings. The 'possessive' use of φίλος for a body-part or other material object or idea (e.g. 'homecoming') would designate how that thing can be closely identified with the person in question. I therefore contend that the *phil-* root is best understood first as a marker of cohesion and affinity, and only secondarily as an indication of good feeling.

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