CHARIS IN HOMER AND THE HOMERIC HYMNS

by Mary Scott
(University of the Witwatersrand)

Charis is a word about which misconceptions exist. It is semantically and etymologically related to the English word 'charity' and this has caused many preconceptions and prejudices to be read into the early usages of this word. To reach an idea of the basic sense involved in charis, it is necessary to examine all instances and attempt to discover what feature they have in common, what aspect of the situation has caused the Greeks to use a single word to apply to apparently diverse circumstances. This cannot fail to shed some light on the commonly emphasized usages, namely those referring to an exchange of favours.

Perhaps the best possible introduction to any study of the word charis is given by the words of Grimal: "... tout bien considéré, la grâce (charis) n'est-elle pas, avant tout, l'ineffable?" However, while this limitation is accepted, something of its meaning and implication can perhaps be extracted.

It has been suggested that charis derives from an Indo-European root ‘ghar’ meaning ‘brightness, splendour,’ or from a root ‘ghar’ implying ‘joy, delight.’

When one considers a word from the philological standpoint, it is valuable to keep in mind a comment made by L.R. Palmer. "A word has two aspects: sound and meaning. It is easy enough to detect phonetic resemblances between words, but the semantic idea must be established independently by rigorous and objective analysis of the contexts in which the word occurs. In fact, the semantic leg is by far the more important of the two which support an etymology." 4

The postulated ‘ghar,’ ‘brightness’ derivation of charis should be examined with this caveat in mind. It would then be found that, whereas some occurrences of this word fit in admirably with this derivation, it does not cover them all. Since another sense can be found for charis which has no connection semantically with this postulated root and which does in fact cover all instances, it becomes clear that this root must be rejected.

There is a possibility that an examination of the functions of the goddesses, the Charites or Graces, might shed some light on the meaning of charis, but it does not turn out to be so. The Charites must have been originally chthonic deities. Many features show this, especially when one takes note of the name given to the Charites in their cult worship. Probably they were originally two in number. In Athens, their names were Hegemone and Auxo, and in other places, the Charites were honoured also under the names Karpo and Thaleia or Thallo. These names must, it seems, bear relation to the chthonic functions of the Charites as goddesses of vegetation, Auxo referring to growth, Thaleia to...
flowering, Karpo to harvesting and, possibly, Hegemone to growth in the sense of “leading forth” the vegetation into the light of day. However, another possibility exists here. Hegemone may be explained as a parallel to Hermes, the psychopompos or diaktoros, the “leader of souls” with whom the Charites are often associated. The Charites, in the Iliad and Odyssey, are the attendants of Aphrodite. A Charis appears in Iliad 18.382–89 as the wife of Hephaistos, a position which, in Odyssey 8.266ff., is filled by Aphrodite herself. In Homeric Hymns 5.95–6, Anchises, confronted by the goddess of love herself, asks if she is one of the Charites. The Charites, then are associated with vegetation functions and with the goddess of sexual love. They were associated also with Hermes, who is linked with them in cult worship in Attika, Olympia and Tegea, and mentioned in conjunction with them by Plutarch and Aristophanes. It is possible that this association is, as Zielinski suggested, a relic of the chthonic function of both these gods, in particular of the function of guiding the souls of the dead. But it is also possible that their association is parallel to that with Aphrodite, and that the Charites are again linked with sexual love.

By the time of Pindar, the Charites are the goddesses who preside over festivities and dancing and are adopted as patronesses of Pindar’s own poetry. They are goddesses of pleasure and delight of all types.

It is possible to find a connecting link in this feeling of joy. It could be identified in not only human celebrations but also in the springing vitality of the functions of nature, generation and growth. At a period when, in all likelihood, people were unable to distinguish (a) an emotion, (b) that which roused the emotion in them, and (c) the appearance of one who experienced the emotion, joy could be felt as the vital force in life since these functions rouse delight in the beholder. The word charis is related to the verb chariō, ‘I rejoice, am glad,’ and it seems, then, that the basic emotion involved in charis is one of joy or pleasure, deriving from a root ‘ghar’ implying joy. It will be found, in fact, through an examination of usages of the word charis and related words, that charis can best be explained as ‘a source of pleasure,’ ‘that which gives pleasure,’ and this will involve the feeling of pleasure itself and the appearance, feature or quality which produces this pleasure. The word is clearly untranslatable into English and no such attempt will be made.

The word charis and related words are used in the Iliad and Odyssey in various contexts. An important usage is that when charis is used of physical appearance to express physical beauty or charm. It occurs in both Iliad and Odyssey in this sense. Physical beauty is something which is a pleasure to behold and thus charis is used to describe it, in terms of its effect on the beholder. It is unlikely, as has been mentioned above, that the Homeric Greek would have felt the need, even if he had been able, to distinguish between the beauty itself and its effect on the viewer, since the sight itself and the emotion evoked would be simultaneous.
Thus, though for the sake of exactitude, charis here may be described as 'a source of pleasure,' for the Homeric Greek it would be registered simply as 'pleasure.' He is most unlikely also to have made any distinction between 'a sensation of pleasure' and 'pleasure in itself': (what Plato would refer to as auto to).

The effect of beauty on the beholder is a force whose power is obvious and immediate, yet its source is always inscrutable for the Homeric Greek and the emotion always has something of the numinous about it. For this reason, it is only natural that, in Homer, the gift of this charis to human beings comes directly from the gods. Before Odysseus returns with Nausikaa to the court of the Phaiekians, just as a skilled worker puts a film of gold around his silver-work, so Athene pours charis over the head and shoulders of Odysseus (Od.6.232ff.), and the same words are used when she prepares him to meet Penelope in their final confrontation (Od.23.159–621). As a result of the former transformation, Odysseus sat

"shining with beauty and charites; and the girl gazed in wonder."  

Od.6.237

Kallos beauty, is a more objective description of his appearance and charites expresses an untranslatable amalgum of the physical attribute and the effect on the admiring girl — though it must be emphasized again that this distinction would not be present in the mind of a Homeric Greek.

The results of Hera's efforts at adorning herself in order to seduce Zeus are summed up in the words “and much charis shone from her” (Il.14.183), and the same words describe a necklace in the Odyssey (18.298). The verb ‘shone’ is purely physically descriptive and charis relates to this appearance and its emotive effect.

The connection between charis, pleasure, and kallos, beauty, may be expressed in a more circuitous way. When Penelope plans to go down and drive the suitors so wild with desire for her that they will promise her precious gifts in order to win her favours, Athene helps her by sending her into a deep sleep and beautifying her.

“First, she (Athene) cleansed her (Penelope’s) lovely cheeks with heavenly kallos, beauty, such as that with which Aphrodite with the lovely crown is anointed whenever she goes among the charming chorus of the Charites.”  

Od.18.192–4

Just as Penelope’s sexual desirability that will result from the beautifying is represented by the goddess of love, Aphrodite, so the pleasure that will be derived from the sight of the beauty is represented by the figures of the Charites who are, in mythology, Aphrodite’s attendants.

The reason for their being given this position in the hierarchy of the gods is now clear. Just as love and joy are closely associated and intertwined, so Aphrodite and the Charites dance in chorus and attend one another.

When Athene has entered Nausikaa’s bedroom in disguise, Homer adds:

“Beside her (Nausikaa) were two maids, having beauty from the Charites.”  

Od.6.18
Because the pleasure that beauty causes is such a prominent feature, the Charites, the goddesses of delight, are seen as the source of that beauty. Now, the process of deification is carried one step further. The emotive effect of beauty is deified in the form of the Charites. But this process is now established and forgotten, and so it is not felt as in any way illogical that they should in this case be the givers of beauty: they give the beauty and they give the pleasure it causes—both are charis.

It is not necessary for the pleasurable response to beauty to involve a sexual element, as it does in these cases. Odysseus receives from Athene this charis, the quality that makes him a source of pleasure to others, before he goes into the assembly of the Phaiekians (Od.8.19). It would, doubtless, help to render him, though a resourceless stranger, less of an object of suspicion to the Phaiekians. The same quality Athene gives to Telemachos before he addresses the assembly of the Ithakan nobles (Od.2.12) and before he rejoins the suitors gathered in his home (Od.17.63). In each case, it would have the effect, through the experience of pleasure, of to some extent disarming hostility—in the latter case, that of the suitors towards the son, by Odysseus, of the woman they hope to marry, and in the former case that of the assembly towards so young a man who dares to address them and challenge them to action. In a small way, then charis can operate co-operatively, by inducing a favourable attitude of mind in the people round about.

In the Homeric Hymns, charis is possessed without its being a gift from the gods, presented at that particular moment. Demeter, in the second Hymn, says to the girl who has just given her food and water:

"Greetings, girl, for I do not expect that you are born from kakoi, ignoble, parents, but from agathoi, noble ones. Indeed, aidos and charis are clearly seen upon your eyes, as if on the eyes of kings who dispense justice."

Hom. Hymns 2.213–5

Respect (aidos) and pleasure are emotions felt by a person who sees the girl, but, since the distinction was not perceived or felt necessary, they are represented as qualities inherent in the girl's appearance. If charis is no longer a direct gift of the gods, it has come only one step down the social ladder—it is now a quality of kings or the agathoi. Thus, by the time of the composition of this Homeric Hymn, charis can be a quality actually possessed by a young girl, and not momentarily donated by an outside source. However, this and Hom. Hymns 3.151–5 are isolated examples in Homeric poetry of charis as independent of gifts from the gods, and it is to the lyric poets with their heightened awareness of the individual and his characteristics that one must look for more parallels.

The adjective charieis also is used to describe that which is pleasing to look upon. It is used of parts of the human body, and frequently to describe clothing. The reference is clearly to the pleasure of sight but the pleasure of hearing was important too. Agamemnon's psyche, spirit, says:
"The immortals will contrive a chariessa song about wise Penelope for men on earth" Od. 24.197–8

and here the chariessa song is to be contrasted with the "hateful song" (Od. 24.200) that will be produced for Klytemnestra. There is, naturally enough, no distinction at this stage between pleasure or distaste roused by the aesthetic merits or demerits of a song, and the emotions roused by the subject matter of a song.

Similarly, in Odyssey 9, Odysseus says how good it is to listen to a singer such as Demodokos:

“For I say that there is no ending chariesteron, more pleasing, than when joyfulness possesses the whole people.” Od. 9.5–6

Chariéis is linked with “joyfulness” and that, in turn, with the picture which has preceded (Od. 9.4: 7–10) of a vast banquet with plentiful food and drink and the presence of a good singer. Charis clearly refers to pleasure deriving from more than one of the senses, including that of hearing. The association of charis with the delights of music can be seen also in the connection between the Charites, the Muses and Apollo that can be seen in Homeric Hymn 27 when Artemis, visiting her brother Apollo, dances amidst the ‘beautiful chorus of the Muses and the Charites.’(12–17). We note too that the author of Homeric Hymn 24 prays to Hestia for his song to be successful in these words:

“Cause charis to attend my song.” Hom. Hymns 24.5

This is a prayer that the quality of charis may be given to the song, rendering it a source of pleasure to those who hear it.

The association of charis with the joys of song comes to full flower in Pindar, for whom charis and the Charites are strongly linked with his poetic art.

Charis may be used not only of poetry with its musical accompaniment, but also of ordinary speech. When Euryalos is blatantly and without provocation rude to Odysseus, twice Odysseus says or implies that what is missing in his behaviour is charis.

“Another man, again, is like the immortals in appearance, but charis does not crown his words.” Od. 8.174–5.

His appearance may be godlike, but his words lack the godlike quality of charis. His words had been calculated to distress instead of giving pleasure. Charis would not have belonged to the words: it would have surrounded or crowned them, because the hearer’s reaction would come after the words were actually spoken to surround them with the pleasure they were intended to produce.

Elsewhere, the enraged Odysseus says to Euryalos:

“Stranger, what you say is not good; you are like a thoughtless man. So the gods do not give charienta gifts to all men, neither in form, nor in mind, nor in speech.” Od. 8.166–8

Once again, the gods are presented as the givers of charis, the mysterious quality of giving pleasure by one’s appearance, character or speech. 22

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By contrast, at *Odyssey* 8.236, when, instead of being gratuitously insulting, Odysseus issues a polite challenge to the Phaiekians to show their worth, Alkinoos describes his words as not *acharista*, not lacking in *charis*.

It is, perhaps, precisely because the actual words do not possess *charis* but it is dependent on the reaction of the hearer, that the gods are made its donor. The reaction of an individual is always incalculable and this element of uncertainty and inscrutability about *charis* led the Homeric Greeks to place it in the gift of the essentially incalculable gods.

When Iphidamas dies in Book II of the *Iliad*, Homer says:

"But after marrying, he came from his bed-chamber, following the rumour of the Achaians’ (expedition) . . . So he, having fallen there, slept the brazen sleep, wretched man, while protecting his townsfolk far from his young, lawfully wedded wife, of whom he had known no *charis*, though he gave much for her."

II.11.227,241–3

The reference here is, presumably, to yet another form of pleasure to be derived from the senses, sexual pleasure. The *charis* he might have experienced is contrasted, perhaps, with the ‘brazen sleep’ he now sleeps.

The word *charis* at many points tends to be rendered as “favour,” especially in the phrase usually translated as “doing” or “giving someone a favour.” Literally, the phrase is “bringing a *charis* to someone.” The *charis*, of course, is both the concrete favour and the emotion involved in receiving the favour — again an untranslatable amalgum. By aiding men in war, the gods bring *charis* to them (*Iliad* II.5.873–4; 21.458) and men do the same for each other, e.g. by fighting alongside one another in war (*Iliad* II.5.211). In fact, in days when there was no patriotism and no loyalty to an organized city-state to persuade men to join others in fighting an enemy, this aspect of *charis* was probably an important reason for joining a war. The whole Greek side in the Trojan war fought “bringing a *charis* to the sons of Atreus,” Agamemnon and Menelaus (*Odyssey* 5.307). 23 The translation “favour” is unsatisfactory in that the English phrase “doing someone a favour” normally implies something about the intention of the man doing it — presumably to help the other, to promote his interests. Homeric Greeks were not given to the consideration of motives, as theirs was essentially a results-culture, laying no emphasis on intentions. The actions and results implied in the English and Greek phrases are in fact identical, and possibly the motives too were the same. It is merely a question of emphasis. The Greek phrase describes the outward effect of the action on the man for whom it is done, while the English phrase describes an attitude of mind of the doer. 24

This can perhaps be seen in *Iliad* 9. When Phoinix tries to persuade Achilles to end his anger and rejoin the fighting, Achilles says:

“Do not by grieving and mourning disturb my *thumos*, my purpose, the while bringing *charis* to the hero son of Atreus, Agamemnon.” *Iliad* II.9.612–3

It seems in the highest degree unlikely that Phoinix would be ‘doing a favour’ for Agamemnon, implying goodwill towards him at the expense of his protégé,
Achilles. It is possible that the unreasonableness of the charge marks the extent of Achilles’ anger at Phoinix’ plea, but it is more likely that Achilles’ comment refers to the effect that Phoinix’ actions will have on Agamemnon. It implies no intention to please him, but simply states that it will give him pleasure.

In a vigorous battle-context, as the Trojans assail the wall of the Greek camp and their ships, Homer says:

“Whichever of the Trojans charged against the hollow ships with blazing fire, as a charis for Hektor, who urged them on, him Aias wounded, having received him with his long spear.”

This is probably the earliest example of the construction which later becomes regular, the accusative of charis, used absolutely, with a dependent genitive, and having the sense of “for the sake of.” In origin, of course, it is “as a source of pleasure to” a person, though the person concerned is expressed by a possessive genitive. The literal translation, then, is “the pleasure of” someone, the phrase being in apposition to the main sentence structure. A specially daring assault by a Trojan on the Greeks brings pleasure to their leader, Hektor. The assault is a pleasure which is felt by, which belongs to Hektor. Once again, charis describes the effect of the action on Hektor, not the intentions in making the attack, as one would expect of a results-culture.

The verb charizesthai also frequently occurs in a context where it is rendered as “do someone a favour.”

The description of the housekeeper serving a meal is formulaic in the Odyssey, and occurs in several passages.

“The respectable housekeeper, bringing bread, placed it beside them, setting many foods on (the table), charizomené from all available supplies.”

The housekeeper, in serving food, is merely doing her duty and therefore any idea of ‘doing a favour’ for the guests is out of the question. The verb, once again, looks to the external effect on the recipient, the pleasure which the act creates in him. Since this is so clearly the case here, there is no reason to suppose that anything different is true even of passages where the translation ‘do a favour’ is not obviously contra-indicated. Charizesthai is merely ‘providing pleasure for’ someone and describes the effect of the action without analysing the intentions of the doer of the action.

This does not imply that the intention of pleasing was not there. In some cases, it clearly was. Theano was trying to please her husband by bringing up his bastard Pedaios and it seems that Kinyras was trying to please Agamemnon with his gift of a breastplate when the king set out for Troy. Demodokos the bard, though he failed to give pleasure to everyone, was surely trying to do so.

There is another interesting example. Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, tells the swineherd, Eumaios that he has seen Odysseus alive, and Eumaios replies:

“Do not charizeo or charm me with lies.”
This appears to represent what Eumaios feels was Odysseus' intention in saying what he does, since it does not describe Eumaios' present reaction to the words. It must, however, be that Eumaios is remembering past experiences when he has been led to feel pleasure by reports of Odysseus' safety which later turned out to be false. Perhaps, too, his immediate reaction to Odysseus' story was one of pleasure, which he repressed on remembering past disappointments. He now forbids Odysseus to do this to him again. This explanation is more likely than to presume, without sufficient support, any emphasis on intentions in the meaning of the verb in a society which has not yet advanced from the descriptive to the analytic.

There is, in Homer, no specific mention of a return for a charis being due or actually rendered, but obviously, though at this stage there is no sanction laid down, by social code or by precedent, which demands the return of a charis, the aim of a person who charizetai would probably be to create an atmosphere in which the person who receives the charis would be favourably disposed towards him and inclined in his turn to provide a complementary charis. At a later stage in Greek literature, it can be seen that the idea that a charis lays a man under an obligation to return that charis is well established. In fact, it is so completely accepted that it can become a matter for philosophical analysis in Euripides' Hecuba. 29

In Homer, there are a few signs which already point to a concept of exchange of charites. Hera tells Hypnos, sleep, that, if he will send Zeus to sleep for her, "I would indeed know (recognise) the charis for all time." Il.14.235

Here we see the stage of acknowledgement of a charis or pleasure granted, which will later demand an active return of the charis.

When Achilles gives a prize to Nestor who is too old to compete in Patroklos' funeral games, Nestor does not return the charis himself, but prays that the gods will.

"May the gods, in return for these things grant you a satisfying charis." Il.23.650

The use of the word anti establishes that this charis is a direct return for Achilles' kind action. 30

The charis that will be granted is in return for a charis received, but, since the actual word charis is not used of the initial action, they cannot be quoted as specific instances of a charis being returned by a charis. However, since the word charis can be used equally of the initial action (Il.14.235) and of a return made for that action (Il.23.650 and not 30), the basis for a bartering use of charis is already present in Homer, though nowhere explicitly stated. The emphasis remains on the creation of pleasure in the recipient rather than on any sense of obligation which may be incurred.

The bartering sense of charis would, of course, exist only between men of more or less equal status. 31 An exchange of charites presupposes both the resources and the will to return a charis received.

I do not imagine that, in the time of Homer, with philotês and xenia providing
some sort of established framework for the exchange of charites, the act of offering a charis would be felt as particularly risky. I am thinking of the time when the practice was just being initiated and was not yet established. At that time, it must have taken courage to offer a charis on the off-chance of the recipient's feeling the need to return. However, no-one can be so self-sufficient as to have no need of anyone else. It is therefore essential that one takes steps to ensure (or try to ensure) the co-operation of others. It thus lay in the interests of these early Greeks to take the risk of offering the first charis. Clearly, without a well-established framework of reciprocity, the offering of a charis is a very insecure thing, and its presence at all in a society so sensitive in matters of standing is an interesting pointer to people's later adaptation to living in a more closely-knit society and to relating to others.

An interesting sidelong to this aspect of charis appears in Odyssey 17. Antinoos refuses to give any food to Odysseus who is disguised as a beggar, and he says of the other suitors who have given:

“They give recklessly since there is no holding back or generous impulse about giving pleasure from another man's goods, since there is plenty before each man.” Od.17.450–2

He states that their providing this source of pleasure for the beggar was not attended by any feeling of inhibition, any holding back because it is another man's possessions that they are giving away. Each man has plenty before him, but as it belongs in fact to another, he does not experience a sense of being threatened when he gives from it. Otherwise, Antinoos implies, they would think twice before offering a charis to a man obviously incapable of returning it and restoring their resources to their former level.

Thus, in a success-orientated society, charites are exchanged between men of more or less equal standing. The man who offers a charis must feel that his standing is not threatened thereby. A framework for such security exists within the context of philotês and xenia, where a bond does exist within which the expectation of a return is a regular feature. It is established procedure to give one's xenos, guest, a gift and equally established that this was in expectation of a return. Charizesthai is used of the giving of such gifts. Once again, of course, the verb would describe the effect of the gift on the recipient, the pleasure he would experience, rather than comment upon the donor. The use of charizesthai in the context of such giving may have helped to create a standard of reciprocity for charis more generally.

In Odyssey 10, Odysseus' crew open the bag containing the winds, given to Odysseus by Aiolos, in resentment because they are empty-handed.

“And now Aiolos gave these to him (Odysseus), charizomenos to their philotês, friendship.” Od.10.43–4

In this case, the act of giving is expressed by “he gave,” and charizomenos and philotês add further circumstances, describing respectively the result of the giving and the reason for it. It provided a source of pleasure for Odysseus and was given out of philotês.
When the Phaiekians are giving gifts to Odysseus, Alkinoos asks all the nobles to contribute:

“For it is difficult for one man or charisasthai without reimbursement.”

Od. 13.15

In this case, the notion of pleasure involved in charisasthai is not dominant. By weakening of meaning, the word is used simply as an equivalent of “to give,” as it is that rather than Odysseus’ reaction which is important here.

This quotation is interesting also in the sidelight it throws on the relationship of xenia, guest-friendship. There were no public inns in which one could stay while travelling and thus one was dependent on hospitality offered by the network of one’s xenoi. One would offer this hospitality in the hope that, when travelling oneself, one could rely on one’s xenos, host. However, there was every chance that there would never be the opportunity for one’s xenos to return the hospitality offered. Yet the giving of gifts and offering of hospitality is so much an established part of life that it continues even when the possibility of return is so remote as to be minimal. In this case, the possibility is so remote that the offering of gifts is “as a gift,” without expectation of return. And yet it is still freely made.

In Odyssey 24, Odysseus, instead of rushing to embrace his father, first tests his attitude to his son’s return (“to make trial, test.” line 240). He pretends that he has given gifts of hospitality to Odysseus. Laertes, who has despaired of Odysseus’ return, refuses to hope on hearing this and says:

“In vain you charizeo, give as a charis, these gifts, presenting him with innumerable gifts.”

Od. 24.283

Because Odysseus is ‘dead’ and cannot return the charis of the gifts, it was in vain. Thus it can be seen that within the framework of xenia, exchange of charites is accepted already.

Charis is used of the pleasure to be found still within the relationship of philotês, friendship, but outside the context of an exchange of gifts.

Apollo requests the trickster Hermes to vow never to steal his lyre or his bow and says that, if he does so vow,

“You would do everything that brings charis to my thumos, heart and everything phila, congenial.”

Hom. Hymns 4.520

The phrase to do phila things refers in the same way as charizesthai, to the effect on the person for whom the action is undertaken. Hermes will be acting in a way that is congenial and pleasing to Apollo.

Charis is a feeling, experienced in the thumos, heart, of the man acted upon. This can be seen also in the recurrent salutation, “you who have brought pleasure to my heart.” It is used three times of Diomedes, by Achilles to address Patroklos (Il.11.608) and in Briseis’ lament over the dead Patroklos.

Telemachos uses this mode of address to his travelling companion and comrade, Peisistratos, Nestor’s son, who has left his own home to accompany and guide Telemachos on his journey in search of his father (Od. 4.71), and Dionysos, too, addresses these words to the helmsman who has recognised his godhead and
pleaded with the rest of the pirates to release him (Hom. Hymns 7.55). In some cases the charis, pleasure, which these people rouse in the hearts of those who address them, has an immediately obvious cause. In the others, it may be inferred. 38

It is interesting that the two characters in the Iliad who tend to show some consideration for others 39 are also the two who merit this form of address, which reveals an active emotional response to one who is philos. 40

The emotive element in charis makes it involve something more than the purely material. Achilles in Book 9 of the Iliad says that Agamemnon will never persuade him to return to the battle.

"since there was indeed no charis in struggling continuously always against the enemy."

Il. 9.316–7

Glaucos uses the same phrase to Hektor when he tells him that the Lykians will no longer fight the Greeks before Troy (Il. 17.146–8). We are not told much about the background to Glaucos' complaint, but Achilles' story is the main focus of the Iliad. Because of this fact, we know that Achilles' statement that there is no charis in continual fighting does not refer simply to the material rewards an agathos wins by so doing. Although the quarrel arose when Achilles, in Book 1, was deprived of a part of his material rewards, he has, before he makes this comment, already been offered full material compensation and has refused it. Charis, then, makes a demand for more than this. Achilles has suffered more than a material loss. He has lost face. All this is implied in the loss of timé in Homeric times. It implies a diminution of one's standing, both in honour and in possessions. Achilles feels threatened by Agamemnon's action and by the fact that, owing to circumstances beyond his control, he cannot react as he would wish and, in fact, as his aretē demands. It is this threat, the fact that he feels he cannot rely on Agamemnon not to do the same again whenever he wins some booty in war, that has destroyed the charis of fighting. In the same way, possibly, Glaucos, feeling that he is overburdened, given more than his share of the fighting to do, feels that the charis of fighting is destroyed. His aretē demands that he continue to fight unrelentingly, but at the same time he feels that his allies are not fulfilling their part of the bargain, and his pleasure was destroyed. 41

Athene persuades Pandaros to shoot an arrow at Menelaus, thus breaking the truce. The argument she advances is:

"You would win charis and kudos in the eyes of all the Trojans."

Il. 4.95

He would win from all the Trojans not only kudos, which is experienced as a swelling feeling of pride, 42 but also the pleasure which may attend this feeling in the right circumstances. 43 Charis often tends to be translated as 'gratitude' and in Iliad 9.316–7 cited above, English would tend to speak of fighting as being a "thankless task," and of there being "no gratitude" for good deeds. The English phrase implies a wish to return the original charis either emotionally or materially, an outgoing feeling. The Greek speaks only descriptively of the effect of the charis on the recipient, the pleasure it creates. As is to be expected, the earlier phrase is descriptive, and the later, English phrase is analytic, discussing
motivation rather than simply describing actions or effects.

There is yet one more context where charis is used in Homer. It describes offerings made by men to the gods, or offerings made by inferiors to superiors among men.

As has been argued, although the intention to please cannot be proved to be present in charis or charizomai because they described only the external effect on the recipient of the charis, nevertheless, numerous quotations show that this intention may reasonably be presumed to have been present. The insecurity involved initially in the offering of a charis, the uncertainty of the return, did not stop charites from becoming a regular feature in Homeric society, especially within relationship of xenia and philotês.

Arete and success-orientated standards place an emphasis on self-sufficiency and the ability to survive by one’s own resources. However, “no man is an island;” we cannot survive in isolation. Our need of each other for our own survival is one of the main bases for society and its organizations. Charis is one of the major evidences of this need for co-operation in order to secure the survival of the individual. In spite of the general background of the dominant social-code with its emphasis on personal survival, the exchange of charites arises as a consequence of the realization that one cannot survive alone, that one needs others.

NOTES

7. Zielinski, op. cit. 159.
9. And Hesiod Theogony 946.
12. Moralia: peri tou akouein 44 D.
13. Thesmophoriazusai 295; Peace 456.
14. op. cit., 159.
15. Hermaphroditos was a creature combining male and female sexual characteristics. The use of Hermes and Aphrodite as parents for this creature would suggest that Hermes was once as much a symbol of male sexuality as Aphrodite is of the female side. The survival of cults where Hermes is associated with an erect phallos at Kyllene (RE VIII, col. 754, s.v. ‘Hermes’ II 21), Sestos (Ibid. col. 746, ‘Hermes’ II 23 and 24) and Samothrake (Ibid. col. 746, ‘Hermes’ II 25) with the classical phenomenon of the Hermai, cult-stones with worked heads and phalloi attached, would again suggest this.
18. Hera’s body gleams with oil (171), her clothes would possibly also shine with oil (cf. Leaf and Bayfield’s note on Iliad 18.596 (Macmillan 1901) and Odyssey 7.107) and she is adorned with jewellery (lines 180 and 182).
20. Il. 5.905; 6.90–1; 271–2; 22.510–1; Od. 5.230–2; 10.222–3, 543–5; Hom. Hymns 27.17.
23. Cf. also Il. 15.449, 17.291.
24. I have been asked, “In English, can one not reluctantly do a favour? If so, what does this say about the ‘attitude of mind’ involved?” I can imagine situations where one could “reluctantly” do a favour. If one felt disinclined for some reason to do the particular action involved or if one felt that the action was not really in the interests of the recipient of the favour, one might nevertheless ‘reluctantly’ do a favour by performing this action. Presumably, this would be because one’s desire to please the person for whom one did the action outweighed one’s reluctance to perform the action. My point is that the English phrase still implies the will to please and assist the recipient of the favour, whether one performs the action involved willingly or reluctantly. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines “favour” as “an act of grace or goodwill”, and this is the essence of the English word in this context.
27. Il. 11.23; cf. also Od. 2.53–4.
28. Od. 8.538: Menelaus, in the midst of battle, reproaches Zeus: “How you give pleasure to insolent men, the Trojans…” (Il. 13.633–4). The notion that Zeus would act without deliberate intent would not be natural to Homer who emphasizes that events depend on the boulai, plans, of Zeus.
31. See Adkins’ article mentioned in n. 29.
32. Standing, of course, also embraces physical possessions cf. the discussion of timē in Adkins, “Honour and punishment in the Homeric Poems”, B.I.C.S. 7 (1960) 23–32. Cf. also Odyssey 13.265–6 where Odysseus contemplates, as a charis to someone, fighting under his command (therapon) when he clearly has the choice of himself being a leader (266).
33. Cf. my article ‘Pity and Pathos in Homer’, Acta Classica 22 (1979) 1 ff. on eleos.
36. Cf. my article cited in note 34, p. 5 (on phila phroneōn).
37. Il. 5.243, 10.234 and 5.826 (in the mouths of his charioteer, Sthenelos, Agamemnon and Athene).
38. Diomedes’ warlike achievements would give charis to Athene and Agamemnon. The latter may also have found charis from Diomedes’ behaviour in Iliad 4.411 ff. cf. my article ‘Aidos and Nemesis’ Acta Classica 23 (1980) 17.
40. Cf. also Od. 6.22–3 (the quality of the relationship enables Nausikaa to accept criticism as well as advice from Athene); 8.354–5.
41. Cf. also Od. 4.694–5 and 22.318–9 for parallel examples.
42. Kudos is perhaps connected with kūma, wave, kuo, impregnate, kūmainō, boil, swell, seethe, all with the accessory idea of “swelling.” Kudos is a swelling feeling, perhaps from the chest visibly swelling in pride.
43. Cf. also Od. 15.320.
44. Od. 1.60–2, 19.397, 16.185, Il. 20.298. Cf. also Il. 8.204.
45. As in the phrase “bringing charis to” used of men following leaders to war, discussed above, and Il. 9.599.
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