#### Charis Before Christ:

a Discussion of Grace in Ancient Greek Literature

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# χάρις

charis: grace

For by *charis* you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory... full of *charis* and truth.

And from his fullness we have all received *charis* upon *charis*. John 1:14 and 16

... but where sin increased, *charis* abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, *charis* also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:20-21

### The Charites



## EVIO

xenia: hospitality

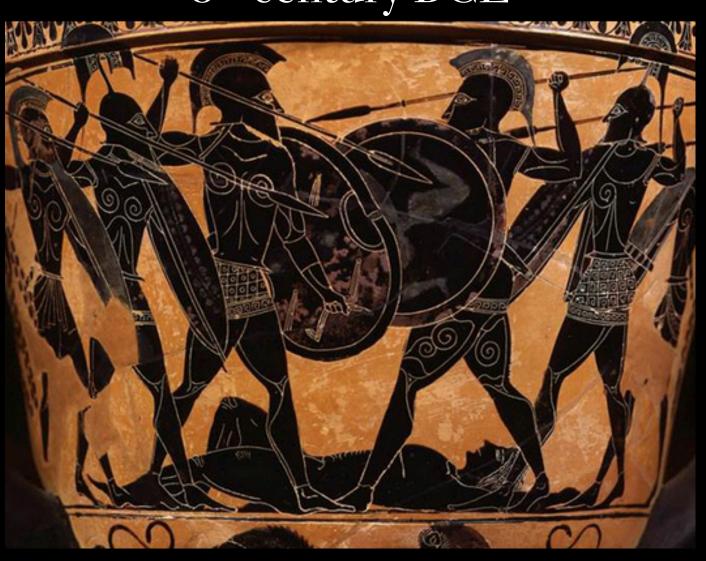
## The Odyssey 8th century BCE



#### Odyssey 6.229 - 37

"Athena, daughter of Zeus, made [Odysseus] seem taller for the eye to behold, and greater... And just as when a master craftsman overlays gold on silver, completing pieces full of *charis*, so too did Athena gild *charis* over Odysseus' head and his shoulders. He then went and sat by himself on the seashore, radiant in beauty and *charis*."

### The Iliad 8th century BCE



#### *Iliad* 9.316 - 17

"... since there was no *charis* given for fighting incessantly forever against your enemies."

"Charis is one of the major evidences of this need for co-operation in order to secure the survival of the individual."

Mary Scott, "Charis in Homer"

"Charis removes the natural barriers that separate people... [it] induces a social softening between strangers, friends, lovers, mortals, and gods. This experience, profoundly social, one of the best experiences known to humankind, is pleasurable."

Bonnie MacLachlan, The Age of Grace

### The Ajax, by Sophocles mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE



#### Ajax line 1354

"Remember what sort of man he was, this man to whom you are now giving *charis*."

#### Romans 6:14

"Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under *charis*."

#### I Peter 4:10

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied *charis*."

#### Works Cited

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