

Concepts of classical humanism



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The citizens of ancient civilizations lived in a world where the influence of nature and the influence of its rulers minimized the common mans efforts. Confronted with this, ancient Greeks professed they had the greatest intelligence of all, saying they had the natural abilities to understand and control the world - *Classical Humanism* .

Classical Humanism resonated in every part of Greek life. From Poets like Sophocles who's play " Antigone" speaks to their influence on humanity at the time. Classical Humanism was also conveyed by the Greeks' incredible self belief within their own civilization, none more so than the wealth and power shown in Fifth Century Athens. Although this confidence eventually diminished, the belief of Humanism remained a cognate legacy. Renaissance philosophers and artists challenged the Church by perusing the ideas and culture of Greek Humanism.

An illustration of Greek Humanism was the spectacular complex of temples in theAthensacropolis, soaring high over the city below. An acropolis was a fortress built on top of a hill at the center of the city. They were commonly the city's most revered district and contained temples anointing the city's patron leaders.

A prime example of this was the Parthenon temple in Athena. It was one of the largest temples ever built inGreece, and all aspects of its construction were closely monitored and controlled by the city's leading artists and architects of the time. The Parthenon was built on the top of Acropolis; the original building on the site was built as an offering to honor the goddess Athena because the people of ancientAthensbelieved that she watched over

their city. This time was the Golden Age of Athens, with the institution of democracy in the city, with a new form of government, citizens were afforded the opportunity to view and understand themselves as constituents of a greater whole, the latter being Athens.

The Parthenon was unparalleled among Doric temples as it had a second frieze (*Frieze*: the part of a classical entablature between the architrave and the cornice, usually decorated with sculpture in low relief). The Parthenon's frieze ran along the cella wall and across the inner columns. It was a stroke of genius as acted as a sculpted advertisement for Athenian civic prudence, which was more than 500ft long. This [particular frieze depicted a noble parade of Athenian citizens, reminding the citizens of their festival held every four years for the Goddess Athena.

The frieze had a naked horsemen sitting on their horses in all glory, it had Athenian maidens leading a parade to the thrones of Zeus and Athena, who presided over the celebration. Inspired by their self belief as being the supreme citizens of Greece, they confidently portrayed themselves among the gods.

The Greeks were a civilization who had a high confidence of themselves and of there God given abilities. This was shown in many ways with their architecture at the time, none more evident than the Parthenon in Athens which proudly, and some may say arrogantly, displayed the Athenians as a higher class of citizen I Greece and throughout the region. This belief would continue on in years to come through the literature and buildings from this era.