

Intro to humanities



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Define ideal humanism and illustrate by discussing the construction and decoration of the buildings of the Athenian acropolis. Ideal humanism was an idea that was based upon the idea that form and function could coincide with one another within an often geometric design. Classical humanism is exemplified by a well-tempered system in which each element co-exists with the other within a beautiful form. The construction and decoration of the Athenian Acropolis is a perfect example of such humanism at work.

The overall design of the Acropolis is based upon the idea of what can be termed synthetic geometry. For example, the west elevation of the Propylaea is a design based upon the ratios of 2: 1, 3: 2 and 4: 3. This construction was designed to be harmonically ordered so that it reflected the harmony of life. Beyond this type of geometric design comes the combination of practical and aesthetic qualities as the Acropolis (which literally means "high city") was placed on the highest spot in Athens so that its people could retreat there in the case of invasion from the outside. It was a place of both literal and metaphoric sanctuary.

Much of the design of the Acropolis is massive in nature, but there are also smaller buildings which may be seen as a form of decoration. For example, there is the Temple to Nike Athena (the Athena of Victory) which commemorates a vital victory over the Persians. It is small in size, but perfect in proportion, as if the Greeks were attempting to show that it is the quality, in geometric perfection, that is more important than its size.

The various works of art which once existed in the Acropolis, few of which are still there in their original form, show that the Acropolis was designed as a kind of living history of the mythology of Greece. For example, the porch of the maidens commemorates the mythological contest between Athena and

Poseidon over who would be the patron of the new city that had sprung up there.

It is perhaps a suitable commentary upon the difficulties involved with keeping the Classical Humanist ideals alive that much of the surviving works of art from the Acropolis have actually been taken away from the site, notably the Elgin Marbles that were "given" to Lord Elgin by the Turks in the Nineteenth Century. The British still hold on to these works of art, despite repeated attempts to get them returned to Greece.

Works Cited

Adventures in the Human Spirit", 3rd edition, Author: Philip E. Bishop