**Classical/4th Century/Hellenic Philosophical Ideals**

**Humanism: “Man is the Measure of all Things”**

Humanism- an attempt to understand what it is to be a human being and also understand the individuals’ relationships with the world around them; their social relationship; the natural environment and their relationship to the universal scheme of things.

The Relationship of Greeks to their pantheon (all deities of a specific religion) of gods:

* Greeks conceptualized their gods as idealized humans, but with human passions and ambitions
* Conversely, the gods were personifications of human traits or ideals

Definition of mimesis and its relationship to the arts:

* the role of art was seen as an imitation of nature

The Nudes significance to Humanism for the Greeks:

* the perfection of the human body was thought to be the manner in which they most resembled the gods.

**Idealism:**

Plato’s concept of idealism’s relationship to ideal forms, parallelism, and the *Republic*:

* Plato believed that the world of visible forms (reality) was just a reflection of perfect truth, beauty, and goodness, which existed in a world of ideas.
* Parallelism is the theory of an ideal that can never in reality be absolutely realized.
* Plato’s Republic is an intellectual exercise to create an ideal state.

Plato’s and Aristotle’s ideas regarding visual arts relationship to concept of *the ideal*:

* For Plato, art is thrice removed from the ideal since art imitates reality (nature) and reality is an imitation of *the ideal* concept.
* For Aristotle, art should be a presentation of one of three possibilities: Better than real life (idealism); the same as real life (realism); and worse than real life (caricature)

The Classical period avoided representing the male or female body in old age or infancy because immaturity and post maturity implied incompleteness or imperfection and hence were incompatible with the concept of ideal types.

**Rationalism:**

* A concept and a way of life that rest on the idea that the rule of reason should prevail in human affairs.
* The belief that the mind could illuminate the ways and means of ordering human life as well as governing the state by applying reason.
* The belief that the intellect is the highest human faculty.

**Plato’s three part division of the human constitution:**

Appetite

Emotional

Rational

*(Abdomen)*

*(Chest)*

*(Head)*

Ignorance

Opinion

Knowledge

Of truth, beauty and goodness

Slaves

Free men

Philosophers

**The significance of Pythagoras’s discovery of mathematical ratios of musical interval:**

* The belief that the universe was founded on rational (harmonic ) principles (all things are numbers)
* The belief that beneath (beyond) the world of appearances there was an underlying permanent order of the universe based on logic and reason plus numbers and ratios
* The belief that through knowledge (investigation) one could unlock the logic of the universe
* The belief that there was such a thing as perfection- the ideal and universal truths
* The belief that the greatest error was to lack knowledge (ignorance)

**The theory of Harmonic Proportions and the significance of the number “7” and the octave to the arts, particularly architecture.**

* The belief that there was an underlying relationship within the cosmos based on the harmonic scale and the division of matter into seven parts.
* The belief in the significance of seven heavenly bodies which created cosmic music
* The division of an octave in seven tones of the diatonic scale (based on musical scales consisting of five tones and two semitones, e.g. a major or minor scale with no extra sharps or flats added)
* Implications of the idea of ideal proportions for architecture and sculpture based on harmonic proportions (Polykleitos’ Cannon)
* Implications for concepts of unity, balance and coherence in art and especially architecture

**Realism / Abstraction:**

Mimesis-

* Visual art seen as the imitation of nature-
* “The imitation or representation of nature”
* Both internal human nature and the external environment

Representation of **nature** in Greek Art

Realism (concrete):

Rendering actual, tangible objects with all their particular and peculiar characteristics

Objects as they appear to the physical eye

Emphasis on Nature

The world of appearances

What is real

Nature of Representation in Greek Art

Abstraction:

Elimination of all extraneous accessories and concentrating on the essential qualities of things

Objects as they appear to the mind’s eye

Emphasis on imagination

The world of essences

What is ideal