HUMANISM and the CLASSICAL TRADITION:
LATE CLASSICAL GREEK ART:
(Sculpture of Lysippus and Praxiteles)
LATE CLASSICAL GREEK ART

Online Links:

Lysippos – Wikipedia

Herakles – Wikipedia

Twelve Labors of Herakles

Praxiteles – Wikipedia

Farnese Hercules – Smarthistory

Praxiteles Venus – Smarthistory

Rise of Women in Ancient Greece - History Today

Keepers of the Faith- New York Times Book Review

Sexual Behavior in Ancient Greece – Purdue
Polykleitos. *Doryphoros (Spear Bearer)*, Roman copy from a bronze original of c. 450-440 BCE, marble

*Polykleitos of Argos* was esteemed by his contemporaries, and his work is still thought of as the embodiment of Classical style. He is known to have created a canon, which is no longer extant. Most of his sculpture was cast in bronze and is known today only through later Roman copies in marble. Ancient records document the fact that the *Doryphoros (Spear Bearer)* was originally bronze.

When boys reach the age of sixteen they are expected to pay special attention to physical exercises, as fitting them in some measure for the tasks of war. Even their sports give them indirectly a military preparation: they run, leap, wrestle, hunt, drive chariots, and hurl the javelin. At eighteen they enter upon the second of the four stages of Athenian life (*pais, ephebos, aner, geron*- child, youth, man, elder), and are enrolled into the ranks of Athens’ soldier youth, the *epheboi*. 
Under moderators chosen by the leaders of their tribes they are trained for two years in the duties of citizenship and war. They live and eat together, wear an impressive uniform, and submit to moral supervision night and day.

They organize themselves democratically on the model of the city, meet in assembly, pass resolutions, and erect laws for their own governance; they have archons, strategoi, and judges. For the first year they are schooled with strenuous drill, and hear lectures on literature, music, geometry and rhetoric.

At nineteen they are assigned to garrison the frontier and are entrusted for two years with the protection of the city against attack from without and disorder within.
The development of the male nude in fifth-century Greek art is related to several social factors, in addition to whatever aesthetic considerations were in force. In Athens and certain other city-states, for example, we have evidence of male beauty competitions, in which the dominant criterion for assessing “fine manliness,” or euandria, was bodily tone and shape.

It was not extraordinary for men to take exercise naked, in more or less public places. The Greek word “gymnasion” means simply “a place where people go gymnos (naked)”; and the presence of a gymnasium was one of the defining characteristics of what made a city in Greek terms.
The sculptor Lysippos is unique in that many details of his life are known. He claimed to be entirely self-taught and asserted that ‘nature’ was his only model. Although he expressed great admiration for Polykleitos, his own figures reflect a different set of proportions than those of the fifth-century BCE master, with small heads and slender bodies like those of Praxiteles.

The heads are roughly one-eighth the height of the body rather than one-seventh, as in the previous century.
Herakles, the Greek hero of superhuman strength, was the son of the Greek god Zeus and Alkmene. According to Greek mythology, Zeus desired to sire a son who would be the guardian of mortals and immortals. Thus, he visited the mortal woman Alkmene in Thebes, where they conceived Herakles.

However, on the day Herakles was to be born, Zeus boasted that his son would rule over Greece. Homer describes how Hera, wife of Zeus, delayed the birth of Herakles until the day after his cousin Eurystheos was born. Thus, the vengeful Hera ensured that Eurystheos inherited the throne.

And she sent two snakes to destroy the infant Herakles as he slept in his cradle. Yet even as a baby Herakles' strength was legendary, and he saved himself from Hera's serpents by grasping one in each hand and strangling them.
The goddess Hera, determined to make trouble for Hercules, made him lose his mind. In a confused and angry state, he killed his own wife and children.

When he awakened from his "temporary insanity," Hercules was shocked and upset by what he'd done. He prayed to the god Apollo for guidance, and the god's oracle told him he would have to serve Eurystheus, the king of Tiryns and Mycenae, for twelve years, in punishment for the murders.

As part of his sentence, Hercules had to perform twelve Labors, feats so difficult that they seemed impossible. Fortunately, Hercules had the help of Hermes and Athena, sympathetic deities who showed up when he really needed help. By the end of these Labors, Hercules was, without a doubt, Greece's greatest hero.

His struggles made Hercules the perfect embodiment of an idea the Greeks called pathos, the experience of virtuous struggle and suffering which would lead to fame and, in Hercules' case, immortality.
This copy of a work by Lysippos depicts Herakles after he has completed the last of his Twelve Labors. “The exaggerated muscular development of Herakles is poignantly ironic, for the sculptor depicted the strongman as so weary that he must lean on his club for support. Without that prop Herakles would topple over. Lysippos and other fourth-century BCE artists rejected stability and balance as worthy goals of statuary.
Hendrick Goltzius. *Farnese Herakles*, 1591, engraving

Herakles holds the golden apples of the Hesperides in his right hand behind his back- unseen unless one walks around the statue.

Eurystheus commanded Hercules to bring him golden apples which belonged to Zeus, king of the gods. Hera had given these apples to Zeus as a wedding gift, so surely this task was impossible.

These apples were kept in a garden at the northern edge of the world, and they were guarded not only by a hundred-headed dragon, named Ladon, but also by the Hesperides, nymphs who were daughters of Atlas, the titan who held the sky and the earth upon his shoulders.
Atlas gives the apples to Herakles in a metope from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, c. 460 BCE

Prometheus told Hercules the secret to getting the apples. He would have to send Atlas after them, instead of going himself. Atlas hated holding up the sky and the earth so much that he would agree to the task of fetching the apples, in order to pass his burden over to Hercules. Everything happened as Prometheus had predicted, and Atlas went to get the apples while Hercules was stuck in Atlas's place, with the weight of the world literally on his shoulders.
Instead of expressing joy, or at least satisfaction, at having completed one of the impossible twelve labors, he is almost dejected. Exhausted by his physical efforts, he can think only of his pain and weariness, not of the reward of immortality that awaits him. Lysippos’s portrayal of Herakles in this statue is perhaps the most eloquent testimony yet to Late Classical sculptors’ interest in humanizing the great gods and heroes of the Greeks.
Praxiteles. *Aphrodite of Knidos*, Roman copy of an original of c. 350-340 BCE, marble

The leading Athenian sculptor of the Late Classical style was Praxiteles. A gentle S-shape, sometimes called the ‘Praxitelean curve,’ outlines the stance of Praxiteles’ most famous statue, the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, which is known only from Roman copies.

The east Greek city of Kos originally commissioned the *Aphrodite*, but rejected the finished work because of the nudity, and it was then accepted by the Anatolian city of Knidos. It represents the goddess standing next to a water jar (hydria) after her bath. She picks up drapery with her left hand and, while the gesture of her right hand implies modesty, at the same time it calls attention to her nudity.
Engraving of a coin from Knidos showing the Aphrodite of Cnidus, by Praxiteles

Pliny's claim that Praxiteles' statue put the new Knidos on the map is belatedly confirmed by numerous Knidian coin issues of the Roman period showing a nude Aphrodite by a vase.
Whether in fact this was the first nude Aphrodite is not clear. The reasons for its notoriety may have been more based in the rumor that Praxiteles had passed off his vision of Aphrodite a full-body portrait of his mistress Phryne.

Near the temple dedicated to Aphrodite is another temple dedicated to the goddess Demeter. We can set up a series of oppositions between Aphrodite and Demeter: the one worshipped by courtesans, the other by wives and virgins; the cult occasions of the one marked by feasting and license, of the other by fasting and abstinence; the one bathed in perfumes, the other in seriousness. Aphrodite has her cherished boy, Adonis- eternally young, eternally to be petted and cosseted; Demeter, in much more matronly fashion, has Persephone, rescued from sexual abduction to bring flowers to the earth.
The Ludovisi *Cnidian Aphrodite*), Roman marble copy (torso and thighs) with restored head, arms, legs and drapery support.

It was natural enough for a port-city to foster the cult of Aphrodite, traditionally goddess of fair passage for sailors and merchants, and at Knidos she was worshipped with the epithet *Euploia*, “safe voyage.”

Archaeological confirmation of the statue’s celebrity had to wait until 1969, when excavations revealed a curious circular Doric temple at the western end of the uppermost terrace. There is little doubt that this is the temple which housed the statue. What confirms the identification is the exact resemblance of its design and circumference to the copy of the Knidian temple created by the Roman emperor Hadrian at his villa in Tivoli.
Aphrodite of Cnidus in München

The Cnidian (or Knidian) Aphrodite has not survived. Possibly the statue was removed to Constantinople and was lost in a fire during the Nika riots. It was one of the most widely copied statues in the ancient world, so a general idea of the appearance of the statue can be gleaned from the descriptions and replicas that have survived to the modern day.
In a single lifetime, between the fall of Athens in 404 BCE and the rise of Alexander the Great in the 330s BCE, the Greek world was turned on its head. What does the tale of this brutal dawn reveal about the role of women in ancient Greece? The transformations that occurred were motivated in part by the catastrophic effects of the Peloponnesian War, the 30-year conflict which had brought democratic Athens to its knees.

In response to the increased poverty that resulted, Greek women began to work outside the home. The orator Demosthenes, writing in the middle of the fourth century, complained that they now worked as nurses, wool-workers and grape-pickers on account of the city’s penury.
This primarily economic drive was coupled with great political upheaval, an increasingly muddled distinction between public and private worlds and new forms of religious expression. In different parts of ancient Greece, women become visible for different reasons. In Athens they appear center stage in comic discussions of sexual and political equality and in the law courts on issues relating to citizenship.

In Sparta, women emerge as landowners and are portrayed in training for motherhood and athletics. Throughout Greece, new forms of expression for women are evident that were energetically taken up in response both directly and inadvertently to the unpredictable world around them.
As the dominant element in society Greek males imposed their will on all beneath them, including women, both free and slave, children, both male and female, other men, through domineering homosexual relationships associated with symposia, and even animals. It was almost as if the hoplite warrior class exerted its authority sexually as one of several means by which to demonstrate its male virility, relegating all subordinate elements of society to status as potential sexual objects.

Modern western notions of marriages arising spontaneously from “love relationships” between independent males and females simply did not exist in ancient Greece. All marriages were arranged by parents, usually neighbors or interrelated aristocratic families, at the time when identified spouses were still children.
To insure the sanctity of the marriage relationship and the purity of the family line, freeborn Greek children underwent a highly restricted, segregated experience with regard to sexual interaction with the opposing gender. Within freeborn landholding citizen elites in Greek society, young people of opposite genders were kept apart, particularly insofar as freeborn daughters of respectable landholding families were concerned.

These women were given in arranged marriages to neighboring families in order to procreate and to maintain the economic basis of both families. Dowries and gifts of parcels of land accompanied the coming of age in Greek society. Religious taboos, the need to produce a male heir to preserve the ancestor cult, added further impetus to the need for the Greek bride to be a virgin at the time of her marriage.

These measures insured that no "foreign seed" contaminated the ancestral line, thereby angering the ancestral "shades." Typically, young freeborn females of respectable society would experience no sexual experimentation, no "dating" as we know it, prior to marriage. They would be kept carefully cloistered in the private recesses of the family household and even more carefully chaperoned in public.
Praxiteles. Hermes and the infant Dionysos from the Temple of Hera (Olympia), copy from an original of c. 340 BCE, marble

Considered to be a “sensual” artist, Praxiteles is said to have represented with refinement the feminine body and the body of the ephebe, the somewhat effeminate young man.

Though this sculpture was found at Olympia and was certainly commissioned for that sanctuary, it is worldly in concept and effect. The Classical restraint and poise is replaced by an undulating body in a defined S-curve which defies equilibrium. While the proportions of the infant Dionysus are not quite lifelike, the inclusion of babies/children in Late Classical sculpture is significant of social changes, of the prevailing secularism and sentimentalism from this point on.