

**PHILOSOPHY (GENERAL)**  
**SEM 2 Paper CC-2**  
**WESTERN PHILOSOPHY**  
**TOPIC--Idealism vs. Realism**

**AN INTRODUCTION**

In order for us to be able to differentiate between idealism and realism, we must first have a thorough understanding of the two terms. Idealism is when you envision or see things in an ideal or perfect manner. Realism, on the other hand, tends toward a more pragmatic and actual view of a situation. The two concepts can, in layman's terms, be deemed different in perspectives; with idealism focusing on 'what could be', and realism focusing on 'what actually is.'

These commonly accepted definitions of the words are rooted in the philosophical uses of the terms. In philosophy, when discussing the issues of perception, idealism is a theory that states that our reality is shaped by our thoughts and ideas. Realism, on the other hand, deals with the fact that reality has an absolute existence independent from our thoughts, ideas and even consciousness.

Using the classic test of whether the glass is half empty or half full as an example, we see that idealists tend to be positive thinkers – i.e. those who see the glass as being half full. Realists may not hold the opposite or negative point of view, but they do view a situation through less hopeful eyes. Realists are stereotypically seen as people who are very rational, who think carefully, and weight their options before making a choice. In this sense, realists make safer and more practical choices when compared to idealists, who may be willing to make more risky decisions.

These perspectives also have an impact on how individuals deal with success or failure in their lives. An idealist who is always in search of the 'good', might be less affected by setbacks than a realist. However, being lost in a world of fantasy and unachievable goals may not always be a good thing, as an idealist may set goals that are impossible or grandiose. A realist, on the other hand, is more likely to set achievable goals, and follow their pursuit in a planned manner.

Overall, idealism and realism can be understood as two different perspectives. Some of the key differences between them include:

1. Idealism causes you to see things in a very hopeful manner, shaping situations with your own ideas. Realism, on the other hand, causes one to assess a situation as it is, without overt emotional involvement.

2. Idealists tend to be more positive when compared to realists, in how they perceive things and carry out tasks.

3. When making decisions, realists are more goal oriented and thorough than idealists, who may have lofty ambitions, but lack the clarity and focus to put them into action in an achievable way.

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