
Realism and Its Stark Contrast to Romanticism

Realism is a very wide subject. It covers broad area, it can be found in literature, art and painting, in films and theatre. In philosophy, realism is derived from Greek word 'res' means object and -ism means philosophy. It is an approach to philosophy that regard external object as most fundamentally real thing, and regard perceptions or ideas as secondary. Opposed to idealism in philosophy, art, etc. in reference to the belief of St. Thomas Aquinas (opposed to nominalism and exaggerated realism) who opposed to idealism in philosophy (opposed to nominalism and exaggerated realism) argue that human reason could not totally grasp god's being, but one could use reason in theology whenever it was concerned with the connection between universals and individual objects.

Realism has been an indispensable schools and periods in literary history, and also been a fundamental intermittent of literature, the principle of mimesis in Aristotle's Poetics is its first conceptual foundation. Aristotle is considered to be the father of Realism philosophy. In this sense, Realism can be regarded as one of the central questions of literary theory, the task of which should be to define the boundaries of this concept clearly and do away with the imprecision, ambiguity, and polysemia that have often accompanied its use. Even though the modern literary term originates in Aristotle, the real roots of mimesis go back to Plato's thought, where it transcends a strictly artistic context, being at the core of his entire idealistic philosophy. A momentous book, Mimesis by Erich Auerbach, subtitled as Represented reality in 1946 marked the awareness in realism. He was of the view that the spirit of realism lies in its completeness and truthfulness. In the hands of classicist the presentation of life can take place in the style of classicism that cannot adore the truth and reality alone, while the realist present the life as it actually is.

Encyclopedia Britannica define realism as an approach that attempts to describe life without exaltation or romantic subjectivity. The term "realism" had been used in the 1820s but did not attain any attention in literary strategy and criticism until the 1830s when a reaction started setting in against the predominating ideals and exaggerated emotionalism of Romanticism. Romanticism was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that focused on inner pious side of human nature, which towards the end of the 18th century was originated in Europe and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850. It emphasized the imagination and emotions whereas realism attempts to illustrate life without romantic subjectivity and idealization and focused on the mundane and every day. The main objective of realism was to present life as it truly is, to portray real, typical people, their problem and situations as precisely and in a veracious manner.

Definition of Realism

As mentioned earlier Realism is an attempt to portray life 'as it truly is'. The term realism in literature is also used to describe the work so truthfully that may give priority to the ugly and sordid reality of life, that focuses primarily on common people and ordinary events. If we go through the literary definition, according to Mariam Webster Dictionary, "Realism is (a) Concern for fact or reality and rejection of impractical and visionary. (b) A doctrine that universal exists outside the mind; specifically the conception that an abstract term names an independent and

unitary reality.(c) A theory that objects of sense perception or cognition exist independently of the mind.(d) The theory or practice of fidelity in art and literature to nature or to real life and to accurate representation without idealization.”

According to William Harmon and Hugh Holman, “Where romanticists transcend the immediate to find the ideal, and naturalists plumb the actual or superficial to find the scientific laws that control its actions, realists center their attention to a remarkable degree on the immediate, here and now, the specific action, and the verifiable consequence”² (A handbook to literature 428) Gustave Courbet, the leader of realism movement in art, defined realism as a “human conclusion which awakened the very forces of man against paganism, Greco-roman art, the renaissance, Catholicism and the gods and demigods, in short against the conventional ideals.”

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