
Comparison Of "Being There" and "The Truman Show"

Theme in Being There and The Truman Show

Advancement is well amongst the most positive and cheerful words we use. Yet advancement, in an ironic way, may and rather frequently does lead to harm. As technology advances rapidly, we do lose our identities and get away from our very own nature. Television is the perfect example of this injudicious progress. The more time we spent watching it, the more we lose ourselves. Literature –as it is about the human race and its activities- examines this. Two texts, "Being There" and "The Truman Show" draw attention to this issue, make it their themes and both of them do a splendid job expressing it, with some differences of course.

Presented are two entirely different perspectives on the effects of television on us. Whereas "Being There" shows the situation of the effected, "The Truman Show" focuses on both sides: The effected and the influential. We watch and see the creators of a TV show, why and how they manipulate the people and rip them off of their own lives and the reality. We see the viewers and how far away they are from their very own lives. And we read how terrible the outcome will be should people get too involved in this process.

In Truman Show, the protagonist –Truman- is unconsciously the star of a worldwide famous show, witnessed by millions of people. His whole life is staged and nothing he knows, does or even loves is real in any way. The whole town he is living in, his wife, friends and even the most important events in his life are all staged. He does not even begin to realize it until he is 29 years old and things start to go wrong. (ESL) Whenever he questions the reality, the crew struggle to prevent him from questioning. For example, when he wants to explore the rest of the world, see new places and countries; the newspaper reads "WHO NEEDS EUROPE?". When he wants to buy a plane ticket, posters showing flight disasters are shown to him.

The public simply loves the show. They watch it all the time and the show is –in a way- more real than their own lives. They even buy clothing or house items with Truman's picture on them. Unlike the TV shows we have in real life, the Truman Show goes on forever, there are no commercial breaks or any time between episodes; it is on air 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Yet the people try to watch as much as they can and even plan and live their lives accordingly. They sleep when Truman sleeps, they cry when Truman cries, be happy when he is happy and so on. Even though we are not shown all the details about how they live, we can easily guess that these people are not really successful in life and spend less time thinking about their own lives than they do about Truman's.

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Chance in Being there, on the other hand, is directly influenced, rather than being influential. Every single thing he knows about life comes from TV, it is his actual reality. He does not even think of questioning it, just as we do not question what we are presented on the TV. As stated wonderfully by Peter Finch in the movie "Network", "Television is not the truth. It is a goddamn amusement park. (...) But people sit there day after day, night after night and are beginning to think the tube is the reality." (Finch) It can be seen easily that Chance and the fans of The Truman Show are just like the people Peter Finch describes. Television is not real, it just cannot be. However, this tube of invented reality grips the people's perception and shape all their lives accordingly to what is being shown on the screen.

When we enjoy these two wonderful works, we think that they are only about television and its effects, thus it is relatively easy to stay away from the harm and that they are exaggerating. "Chance is a videot and no person can be as effected as he is", one may think. The reality could not be any further from the truth. The works, especially the Truman Show, also do try to question the real life. How real is it and are we as far away from the effects of the media as we think? As a blogger puts it, the Truman Show makes an attempt to criticize the mass media we have nowadays. (Zoom-In) We are all living in "invented" worlds, chasing invented dreams, having invented hopes and living our invented lives. And just as the public in the Truman Show and Chance have no problems with that, we also accept it as it is and actually like it in a way. Lies render our environment safe and we are afraid of the real world that we'll find ourselves in, should we begin to question the invented world. Just as Truman showed reluctance before leaving his fake world, we are reluctant to leave ours. As Christof in the Truman Show states when asked why Truman had never questioned the reality until then "We accept the reality of the world which we are presented, simple as that" (Christof)

As Plato explained it perfectly ages ago, we are simply interacting with the shadowy images on the wall of our little caves. The reality is out there, but we are too afraid to leave our caves. We feel safe and happy not knowing what is real. This is why television became so popular in such a small amount of time. It gave us exactly what we wanted: A forged reality to run away from the actual one. The two works compared in this essay are both examining this issue and indicating that television is just a mere shadow of reality. It is only a mean of running away from the reality. The effects of television on people are too great to be ignored, yet we try not to see it and shape our lives according to what we see on the screen, just like Chance.

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