

## 20 years of *The Truman Show* - how close are we to Jim Carrey's nightmarish reality?

***Released 20 years ago (June 5th, 1998), *The Truman Show* chronicles the life of Truman Burbank to form a quintessential (= wesentlich; vollkommen) satire of reality television and celebrity obsession, as a striking demonstration of the power of media.***



Truman's entire life has been nothing but a 24/7 running television show, with the city he lives in becoming known as a huge studio with hidden cameras and actors. Most importantly, Truman is completely oblivious (= nichtsahnend) to the fact that he is the star of the most popular TV show, one that is being recorded and broadcasted all over the world.

Still, people tend to remember *The Truman Show* as a comedy – it does star the hilariously (= sehr komisch; sehr witzig) relatable (= identifizierbar) Jim Carrey after all - yet, whilst it relies on some humour to carry us through the first half, Carrey's paranoid nightmare is more a prediction of the rise of reality TV. It's almost like a really intense *Black Mirror* episode.

With this, it's almost impossible not to draw some unsettling comparisons between the film and the media-orientated lives we lead today.

A new medical phenomenon, "The Truman Show delusion", aka (= also known as) "Truman syndrome", was a term coined (= Begriff prägen) in 2008 by Joel and Ian Gold as a type of delusion (= Einbildung; Wahnvorstellung) in which the sufferer believes their lives are staged reality shows, or that they, much like Truman Burbank, are being watched on cameras. With over 40 recorded instances in the U.S, the U.K, and elsewhere, are we all living our own version of *The Truman Show*?

I would argue we're all somewhat living a Truman Show reality, yet there is no one Truman among us. Through the likes of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc, our lives are essentially being translated into digital – with ourselves posting updates on who we're with, what we're doing and where we are on a daily basis. Sure, the whole world isn't necessarily watching, but in spending so much time glued to these social networks people can indeed watch your life unfold (= offenlegen; offenbaren) from a distance – not to assume we're not guilty of 'stalking' classmates from 10 years ago on social media either.

Further, these channels are brimming (= übersprudeln) with advertisements tailored just for 'you'. This too can be said to be the most amusing part of *The Truman Show*, as different characters continuously pitch (= hier: anpreisen) products to those watching the show. Now, advertisements are a mass medium whether it be digital advertising that follows you across the internet, or merely (= lediglich; bloss) stepping onto the London underground to be greeted by *Deliveroo* billboards and 'use promo code TUBE10 for a discount on your first order'.

As the creator of the Truman Show, Christof, states in the narrative: "we accept the reality of the world with which we are presented". Many of us accept the media construct of our reality despite (= trotz) there being infinite realities to experience in this world. Without question or curiosity, we, like Truman, do not consider that maybe there is a more authentic realm (= Reich; Bereich) to be surrounded by, that can break from of our consumerist, media-orientated habits.

For example, most of the things we know are only what we have been exposed to, therefore limiting the truth of what actually 'is' by accepting the reality of the world with which we are presented.

With this direct parallel perhaps being a slight (= leicht; schwach) far stretch, myself being 99% certain we are not living in a dome, reality television stands as our Trumanesque habit. The constructed-reality of programmes such as *TOWIE*, *Made in Chelsea*, and *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* fixes us with the psychology of Christof, as if we know these individuals through their on-screen presence. Voyeurism and reality TV go hand in hand, with ourselves fixating (= sich fixieren auf; sich auf etwas konzentrieren) over other's private lives through screens.

So, 20 years on, *The Truman Show*'s shadow stays cast (= bleibt) over most aspects of modern life. The topics it touches upon still resonate (= nachhallen) as a social commentary of today's world - and with the light comedy that reigns in the insanity of Jim Carrey, if ever a satirical remark (= Bemerkung; Äusserung) was made about our acts as humans, it is to be found in *The Truman Show*.

### **Tasks for discussion:**

1. Your use of social media: what, when, where, why, etc.?
2. The Internet and Voyeurism: The Internet allows us (mainly via social media) to have access into the private lives of many people. In how far is this true?
3. In how far is *The Truman Show* like – for instance – Cristiano Ronaldo (447 mio. followers on Instagram & > 100 mio. followers on Twitter), Kim Kardashian (314 mio. followers on Instagram & 70.4 mio. followers on Twitter) or Katy Perry (161 mio. followers on Instagram & 108.7 mio. followers on Twitter)? Where is it different?
4. Where is the difference between the fictional character of Truman and Cristiano Ronaldo, Kim Kardashian, Katy Perry, and the like?
5. Why do you think people have this want to know about other peoples' lives?
6. Is there a limit regarding what you can/should do or show on social media or reality shows?

Source:

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[http://www.thenationalstudent.com/Film/2018-06-](http://www.thenationalstudent.com/Film/2018-06-05/20%20years%20of%20the%20truman%20show%20how%20close%20are%20we%20to%20jim%20carreys%20nightmarish%20reality.html)

[05/20 years of the truman show how close are we to jim carreys nightmarish reality.html](http://www.thenationalstudent.com/Film/2018-06-05/20%20years%20of%20the%20truman%20show%20how%20close%20are%20we%20to%20jim%20carreys%20nightmarish%20reality.html)

Further videos that discuss *The Truman Show*:

*The Take*: "The Truman Show Tried To Warn Us": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRb7iIlNciw>

*MakeBetterMedia*: "The Truman Show: A Cleverly Disguised Tragedy": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAX9qWiJxvU>