The Truman Show

* What were the key ethical challenges faced by the characters?
* What the research described in the movie about?

Before discussing issues regarding research and ethics in The Truman Show, it should be said what the movie is about. Truman Burbank is an “ordinary” man who was adopted by the OmniCam Corporation to become the subject of the popular television show. Truman has no idea that his life is a fake one-planned and created by those who exploited him many years ago. Everyone around Truman are actors who play their roles in this hugely popular 24-hour-a-day TV show.

While talking about the ethical challenges in this movie, firstly it should be said that almost everything in The Truman Show is ethically wrong, in general. To start from the very beginning, Truman was filmed as an infant and child. When any kind of TV show uses children actors there are special rules and restrictions and of course, in this case, the creators of The Truman Show violated the rights of a child who would not be able to defend himself. At the same time, it is ethically wrong to be on camera without knowing it and also without getting paid for it. Simply to say, Truman was deceived by the company which was for the purpose of business and Truman’s every attempt to discover the other world by escaping was blocked by them. He is not treated as a rational being and it won’t be surprising if we take into consideration that he has no privacy and each of his step is taken by others. In this case, there should be mentioned social contract theory which holds that individuals have a right to privacy in their homes and again-this right was violated.

As for the characters and their ethical challenges, it can be said that almost none of them acted ethically right. Most of them are ordinary actors and they choose not to say the truth, they are united around one person-Truman, who has not the right of self-determination. Even his childhood friend is a part of a very cruel system and did not anything to help Truman.

It is really hard to discuss this movie in a one particular way. There are many problematic issues demonstrated in The Truman Show. For instance, how cruel the media can be in order to gain an audience?! (Christof, the show’s director risked Truman’s life by setting the weather to a storm, which was the most unethical decision in the entire film). Within this film we see impact of mass media, which has enough power to obey people emotionally and even rationally. There are many symbols in the movie which remind us that our lives are somehow controlled and determined by others and sometimes the environment we live in can be as nice as Seaheaven but it should not encourage us to live “quietly” without investigation and asking the questions. Truman overcame his fear of water and discover the real world and his artificially created and illusionary world suddenly collapsed. In this case we can talk about the reality which is full of stereotypes and on the other hand, the real desires of human-will you have enough power to live as you prefer to live as the main character had?! Truman proves that life is not like we see it, there are many more still undiscovered.

Finally there are many ethical challenges and research questions in this movie. It has many dimensions and all of them can be understood differently. I believe that the most important one is demonstrating human’s eternal desire to get free from chains and at the same time, the director raises the issue and states that only for gaining the audience media should not violate human rights and act unethically.