

The Invention of Lying

The film, *The Invention of Lying*, directed by Ricky Gervais and Matthew Robinson is an interesting film that represents a world where there is no such thing as lying or deceit. This idea allows many possibilities and routes that can make the film fun. In the end, I believe this film to be an excellent choice as it is a fiction film and theories that can be attributed. Ricky Gervais does an excellent job in this film with the many roles he plays such as the protagonist, director and screenwriter. Theories that can be attributed to this film would involve idealism, class differences such as social and economic, and auteurism.

This film focuses on idealism in two different ways, one of which being the idea that lying doesn't exist as there isn't even a word for it, and the other being from the point of view of the man who invented lying and his morality when it comes to his decision making. The vision of this world is really creative since lying doesn't exist, not even the word; everyone is very blunt about everything. There are no such things as fiction/categorical movies and advertisements are merely informational. Everyone believes everyone without an understanding that one can "say something that wasn't". The idealism in this point of view is that deceit doesn't exist and so even if it hurts short term, honesty is the main theme. It's interesting to note that Matthew Robinson stated in an interview that when making the rules of this world "whenever there was an elephant in the room, it had to be addressed". Opposite this idealistic view, Mark stumbles upon a revelation in which he says something that is not truth. This easily becomes a slippery slope and eventually, he creates a new religion. American film critic Roger Ebert said in his review titled "Ricky Gervais Finds a Reason to Hope in the Face of Despair", that this film is not ideological or argumentative. I believe there is a point to be made that it is

not argumentative but I disagree with the statement that it is not ideological. Honesty is a virtue and Matthew Robinson shared in an interview that the plot idea for this film came from a place of depression and so I think it is quite ideological. I believe in the long run, it is better to speak about the elephant in the room rather than to beat around the bush. Another huge aspect about this film from an idealist would be the point of view of the audience. Gervais is not shy about his being an atheist and in this world, takes advantage of that by not being such a thing as religion. Paul Asay, not a critic, but an editor for Plugged In, gives his thoughts on the film and is not too kind, especially with the spiritual aspect. Paul says in his critique of the film, that Gervais is “mimicking and mocking” the Ten Commandments. I disagree with this as he may be mimicking but I don’t believe he is mocking. This may also derive from my also being an atheist but objectively, I believe that in a world with these specific parameters, faith is thrown out the window and fact is the law. Critic, Liam Lacey wrote an article on the film and I believe is not fully grasping the reasons behind the dialogue choices. Lacey states that people “blurt out unpleasant things to each other” as well as advertisements not selling the audience on their product and instead stating how it might be unhealthy. I asked myself these same questions as to why the directors made the decisions on some of the dialogue but quickly realized that deceit includes not speaking openly on almost everything. Expectations play a big part in deceit and I believe Robinson and Gervais did their best working in the parameters they set for themselves by getting rid of the expectations aspect.

The next element used in the film is how Marks’ revelation of lying turns his life around socially and economically. One moment he’s barely able to pay rent and the next, he’s asking for money from the bank and they’re giving him however much he asks. He lies in order to turn his

career around which in turn, makes him look like more of an ideal mate to his love interest, Anna. At first she acknowledges that she isn't attracted to him and due to his position in life, ie. about to get fired and having trouble supporting himself, he wasn't the one for her. The moment Mark began lying, creating fiction stories to get rehired, he became "eligible" to begin seeing her again except for the genetics issue. His life changes socially through his career because although Mark and Anna aren't officially together, they become close friends. However, throughout the film, Mark becomes well known, whether it's due to his now successful film career, or the fact that he's known as the only man who can talk to "the man in the sky." Mark ends up living in a mansion and has everything he's ever wanted except the woman he loves. Coincidentally, Mark ends up living the life he said everyone obtains after they die but it still isn't enough. It's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy for Mark although, there is a message here that sometimes what you think you want, isn't what you need to be happy. There is something to be said for the path Mark took to create this social and economic change though. Intentional or not, there seems to be a message that lying can become a way to economic growth as well as social change; or that it already is a way and Gervais is exposing such paths. Either way, it's interesting to note the amount of change and character development that Mark undergoes when lying is invented as he still shows to have a moral compass when he's honest to Anna about his genetics not changing.

Ricky Gervais plays a wide range of roles in the production of this film and I believe he plays an overall big enough role to be considered an auteur when referring to this film. As the screenwriter and co-director of the film as well as playing the main role in the film, I believe is enough to consider him an auteur at least for this film. Overall, taking into account Gervais' style of films as part of the comedy genre, I believe would also qualify him as an auteur and The

Invention of Lying as an auteurist film. I believe there is enough evidence with his role as well as his film history to meet those qualifications. Ricky Gervais has only directed four films with all of them being comedies, however, The Invention of Lying arguably being his most successful. Gervais is not shy about his atheism nor is he shy about poking fun at himself throughout the film as being called “fat with a snub nose.” The bold decisions Gervais makes for the film I believe are relative to how this film is auteuristic and what makes him an auteur when producing films.

Overall, my review of this film is that it is fun with plenty of comic relief during blunt statements and harsh scenes. The parameters for this new world were set with unlimited possibilities and I believe was executed quite well by both of the directors. I understand where people might be concerned about the religious aspect brought to light but I believe in this world, it makes sense and isn't overstepping any boundaries.

Bibliography

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