

How ‘Incredibles 2’ Is Making Superheroes Great Again

I saw [*Incredibles 2*](#) over the Father’s Day weekend, and just like its predecessor, there’s a lot to ponder beneath the surface of this animated film. In the real world we’ve had to wait 14 years, but the sequel picks up basically where the original left off.

As the Rev. Jerry Zandstra [wrote of the original](#), “litigiousness and mediocrity are some of the biggest obstacles in our culture. The propensity to settle every dispute by legal action undermines values, such as trust and forgiveness, that are essential to the maintenance of genuine community. Fear of rewarding or achieving excellence discourages human persons from fulfilling God-given potential.” In the sequel, superheroes are still illegal, for reasons of both litigiousness and social anxiety over “supers,” that is, those who have super abilities.

Incredibles 2 has a lot to do with the virtues of a system that allows individuals to find out what they can do well and how those abilities can serve others for their good. In this, it is true to the stewardship mandate at the heart of all superhero tales: [with great power comes great responsibility](#). Or as Jesus puts it, [to those whom much is given, much is expected](#).

But the issues of trust are at play as well in the sequel, and in a way that shifts the focus beyond the legal system to the marketplace. It is always notable when the businessperson or the entrepreneur in a film is something other than the villain, and without spoiling it, *Incredibles 2* stands out in this regard. The villain is someone who wants to sow discord and distrust, and who mocks the trust that, among other things, characterizes the marketplace. Why would we trust

someone we don't know well (or at all) to care about our interests? [Adam Smith gave a compelling answer](#) to that question long ago, but the film does a good job making the case for re-examining the dynamics of trust and distrust in a digital age.

And while it may not offer a fully-fledged theory or philosophy of society, *Incredibles 2* does a fantastic job of opening up lines of conversation and discovery around a host of issues, including family structure and gender roles, vocation and stewardship, digital worlds and virtual reality, as well as law, justice, and the market. Among the offerings of brooding anti-heroes and gritty realism of many superhero films lately, *Incredibles 2* is a film that is helping to make superheroes great again.

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