



# Finding Ourselves at the Movies: Philosophy for a New Generation

*Paul W. Kahn*

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Academic philosophy may have lost its audience, but the traditional subjects of philosophy -- love, death, justice, knowledge, and faith -- remain as compelling as ever. To reach a new generation, Paul W. Kahn argues philosophy must be brought to bear on contemporary discourse surrounding these primal concerns, and he shows how this can be achieved through a turn to popular film.

In such well-known movies as *Forrest Gump* (1994), *The American President* (1995), *The Matrix* (1999), *Memento* (2000), *The History of Violence* (2005), *Gran Torino* (2008), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *The Road* (2009), and *Avatar* (2009), Kahn explores powerful archetypes and their hold on us, and he treats our present-day anxieties over justice, love, and faith as signs these traditional imaginative structures have failed. His inquiry proceeds in two parts. First, he uses film to explore the nature of action and interpretation, and narrative, not abstraction, emerges as the critical concept for understanding both. Second, he explores the narratives of politics, family, and faith as they appear in popular films. Engaging with genres as diverse as romantic comedies, slasher films, and pornography, Kahn gains access to the social imaginary, through which we create and maintain a meaningful world.

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