



The Fictional Christopher Nolan

Todd McGowan

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From *Memento* and *Insomnia* to the Batman films, *The Prestige*, and *Inception*, lies play a central role in every Christopher Nolan film. Characters in the films constantly find themselves deceived by others and are often caught up in a vast web of deceit that transcends any individual lies. The formal structure of a typical Nolan film deceives spectators about the events that occur and the motivations of the characters. While Nolan's films do not abandon the idea of truth altogether, they show us how truth must emerge out of the lie if it is not to lead us entirely astray.

The Fictional Christopher Nolan discovers in Nolan's films an exploration of the role that fiction plays in leading to truth. Through close readings of all the films through *Inception*, Todd McGowan demonstrates that the fiction or the lie comes before the truth, and this priority forces us to reassess our ways of thinking about the nature of truth. Indeed, McGowan argues that Nolan's films reveal the ethical and political importance of creating fictions and even of lying. While other filmmakers have tried to discover truth through the cinema, Nolan is the first filmmaker to devote himself entirely to the fictionality of the medium, and McGowan discloses how Nolan uses its tendency to deceive as the basis for a new kind of philosophical filmmaking. He shows how Nolan's insistence on the priority of the fiction aligns his films with Hegel's philosophy and understands Nolan as a thoroughly Hegelian filmmaker.

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