

# TARTUFFE (1926)

F.W. Murnau (1888-1931)

## OVERVIEW

*Auteur:* Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was a German film director, screenwriter, and producer. Murnau had an obsession with film since his childhood. He studied philology at the University of Berlin; and art history, and literature at the University of Heidelberg. In WWI, Murnau served as a company commander. He joined the Imperial German Flying Corps and flew missions. After the end of WWI, he established his film studio with Conrad Veidt. His noteworthy films are *Der Januskopf* (1920), an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *The Haunted Castle* (1921), a silent mystery film; *Phantom* (1922); *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922), an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; *The Last Laugh* (1924); *Faust* (1926); *Tartuffe* (1926); *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927); *City Girl* (1930); and *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* (1931). Murnau died in a car accident in 1931.

*Film:* *Tartuffe* is a German silent film produced by Eric Pommer. It was released in 1926. The film was directed by F.W. Murnau, written by Carl Mayer based on Molière's original play, and photographed by Karl Freund. The costumes and set design were by Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig. The film stars Emil Jannings as Tartuffe, Lil Dagover as Elmire, and Werner Krauss as Orgon. The film was shot at the Tempelhof Studios in Berlin. The film retains the basic plot of the play *Tartuffe*, but eliminates most of the secondary characters, and concentrates on the triangle between Tartuffe, Elmire, and Orgon. Critics, in retrospective reviews, praised the film's mise-en-scene and the performances. Its humorous storyline makes it a rarity among Murnau's films which are usually expressionistic dramas.

*Historical background:* The film's plot is based on *Tartuffe, or The Impostor, or The Hypocrite*, a theatrical comedy by Molière which was first performed in 1664. "The characters Tartuffe, Elmire, and Orgon are considered among the greatest classical theatre roles." Almost immediately following the first performance of the play, King Louis XIV suppressed it because of the influence of the archbishop of Paris who was his confessor and tutor. Molière's play became so influential that contemporary French and English use the word *tartuffe* as a hypocritical person who ostensibly feigns virtue, in particular religious virtue.

## CHARACTERS

*Tartuffe* : A hypocrite, a vicious person pretending to be a religious man  
*Orgon:* A naive person, married to Elmire, believing Tartuffe to be a saint  
*Elmire:* The wife of Orgon, tries to expose Tartuffe's real personality to her husband  
*Dorine:* Faithful servant of Orgon and Elmire  
*The young actor:* A man who loves his grandfather and tells a story to make him see the hypocrite.  
*The old man:* A naive, old man believing his servant to be a good person.  
*The servant woman:* A gold digger pretending to be a good servant while poisoning her master

## SYNOPSIS

The film consists of a frame and a main story. In the frame story, we see a servant woman slowly poisoning her master, making him give his entire fortune to herself while distancing the man from his grandson. The grandson appears and understands the hypocrisy that is going on. Unable to convince his grandfather, he decides to play a game in which he changes his appearance and makes them watch a film. The film is the main story. A naive man called Orgon has become a religious fanatic because of his saintly friend Tartuffe. In actuality, Tartuffe is a hypocrite and a charlatan. Everybody else, including

Elmire, Orgon's wife, and the servants, sees Tartuffe's real self. Elmire decides to play a game that will reveal Tartuffe's true character. She invites him for a cup of tea and tells him that she loves him. Tartuffe, at the very last moment, sees the reflection of Orgon in the teapot and keeps playing his role as a religious man. Devastated that her game has failed, Elmire is ready to risk it all and play a bigger game in which she calls Tartuffe to her room late at night. Tartuffe comes and starts drinking, making inappropriate advances toward Elmire. At this moment, Dorine, the faithful servant tells Orgon to come with her to see Tartuffe's real face. Orgon finally understands Tartuffe's hypocrisy, slaps him in the face, and is reunited with his wife. Here, the main story ends. In the frame story, the young actor likewise reveals the servant woman's real face in that he finds the poison which she gives to the old man. He sends her away from the house. The grandfather is puzzled as to how he could believe such a liar. The grandson says that none of them is proof against such people. This is the end of the frame story.

## SCENES

### PRESENT

**Hypocrite servant** The film starts with the intertitle which says: 'Great is the number of hypocrites on earth and many are the forms in which they appear...! Many a time we unsuspectingly sit next to them! For see...' Then begins the film. We hear a bell fixed to the wall that is ringing. We see a woman with a wretched and squalid appearance who is irritated by the bell. She wears her servant's attire and goes to her master. She makes the master wear his shoes and gives him a coat to keep himself warm. The old man coughs heavily. The woman pretends to have affection and love for her master, but she sticks out her tongue when he is not looking at her. The man is thankful that she brought him a glass of water.



**Fortune goes to the servant** The woman asks: 'Perhaps, your honor would write the letter to the Notary today.' The man cannot hear well, so she has to repeat what she has just said. After understanding, the man smilingly nods. Next, we see the man writing the letter to the notary. The woman pretends to take the dust off the desk, but she secretly looks at what the man is writing. The letter states: 'My dear Notary! I have learned from information gathered by my faithful old housekeeper that my grandson is leading a most unworthy and dissipated life— he having become an actor against my will. I, therefore, have decided to leave my entire fortune to the good old lady who attends to my household. The woman's eyes are wide open and extremely happy to have received the news. Her greed is apparent in her eyes. She takes the letter to put it in the letterbox.



**The grandson has arrived** The moment she is about to go outside, the bells start ringing again. She looks outside from the door hole. As soon as she looks, she quickly closes it and goes upstairs. Meanwhile, the old man is preparing for a shave. The woman helps him with shaving. At that moment, the grandson of the old man who had arrived finds a way to open the door from the outside. He looks like a happy person. Seeing the shoes on the floors are not in order, he puts them in order. He knocks on the door twice, then opens it. The woman realizes that he is in the house and tries to shut the door in his face. In response, the young man breaks into a burst of laughter. The woman tells her master that his grandson has come. The old man says he does not want him in the house and banishes him.



**The young man understands the hypocrisy** The young man sees how the woman is elbowing the old man and thus understand that she is behind the change in the attitude of his grandfather. He says that someone has been handing him too much soft soap. Then he leaves. As he leaves, the servant woman mockingly tells him that he would perhaps call again some other day. The man greets her with his hat as a goodbye, then leaves the house.



**Breaking of the fourth wall** The fourth wall is broken and the young man directly speaks to us viewers: 'You, who witnessed this scene, may rest assured that I shall not give in without a struggle. I shall come back and release my grandfather from this humbug.'



**Preparation for the play** Next, the young man puts on a wig, glasses, a beard, and a mustache.



**Touring cinema** He comes to the front of his grandfather's house shouting 'The touring cinema! The grand touring cinema!' The servant woman opens the window and shouts that they want no cinema. The young actor calls her 'a fair lady' which makes her attitude change toward the business of cinema. She asks what they will show to which he responds with 'A story of saints and sinners'.



**The old man thinks cinema is nonsense** She goes inside to ask the old man to let the young actor in. The old man thinks that cinema is nonsense and does not want the actor to enter the house. The servant woman nevertheless makes him let the actor in by appealing to the fact that she, as a rule, day in, day out, only considers her master's well-being. After she gets the approval of the old man, she shouts to the actor from the window that she will come.



**The servant's excitement** She looks at the mirror to better her appearance. Then she excitedly opens the door and lets the young actor in while sending away all the children waiting outside. The young man prepares the curtains. The servant has worn her best clothes. He lets her take a seat.



**The young man sees the poisoning** Meanwhile, the old man is coughing heavily. The man rings the bells to call her. She is very irritated by this. Finally, she says to the young actor that she will be back in a minute. The young man sees that the servant puts poison into the water the old man will drink. He rings the bells to call them both to see the film.



**Introduction to the film** The young actor begins to introduce the film: 'The title of the comedy. Tartuffe—or the play of Mr. Orgon and his well-beloved friend.' He introduces the persons in the play who are Mr. Orgon, Madame Elmire, Doreen, and Mr. Tartuffe. This is 'a play of all times and all realms'. The young man puts out the candle lights. He starts telling the story: 'Elmira is expecting her husband back from a long journey.' Then he opens the curtains and the frame story ends. The main story of Tartuffe begins.



## FILM

**Elmira is waiting for her husband to come** We see a young aristocratic woman from the 1600s in high-toned clothes. She is excited about the arrival of her husband. The servants are preparing the palace for the return of the owner of the palace. A carriage is in sight. The young woman hugs her faithful servant Dorine and tells her how happy she is about the return of her husband. Elmire is waiting for him.



**Orgon has changed** Orgon finally arrives and says: 'Elmire, if you knew how happy I am!' She asks him to kiss her to which the man replies that: 'To kiss is to sin — so teaches my friend Tartuffe.' Elmire asks who his friend Tartuffe is. The man looks up to the skies and replies that he is a saintly man and that he has hurried on to prepare all for his reception. The man hurriedly goes to his room. He seems not to be interested in his wife at all. The wife follows him into the room, but a few seconds later she comes back out with a defeated and depressive look on her face.



**Tartuffe does not approve of luxuries** The man calls the servants: 'Hullo, Pierre, Jean, Jacques! Clear out all this rubbish. Mr. Tartuffe does not approve of luxuries!' Meanwhile, Elmire talks to Dorine about how she does not recognize him. 'It is like religious mania.' Dorine tells her that she will bring him to his senses: 'I will give him a piece of my mind.' Dorine comes near Orgon who is throwing everything and anything luxurious out of the house. One of the servants soon notifies them that a quaint-looking fellow is outside the house and that he says he is expected. Orgon is very excited to hear that Tartuffe is outside. He gets angry at the servant because he has not let him in. He runs to welcome Tartuffe. Then he stops to say to the servants to put the lights out, because 'Tartuffe does not approve of extravagance'.



**Elmire's sadness** Elmire is sitting with a melancholic face in her room. She looks wistfully at her necklace which has a picture of her husband Orgon. We see two teardrops falling off on the picture. Elmire weeps with sadness.



**Servants are fired** Dorine secretly walks up to the room of Mr. Orgon. She looks at his pocketbooks that are in his coat. Soon, Orgon comes out and calls Hullo, Jacques, Jean, Pierre, and Camille. He says to them: 'Tartuffe does not approve of so many servants, and so...you shall leave. Go, all of you!' The servants leave. Dorine begs her master: 'Oh, dear Sir, for twenty years have I been in your service. Don't send me away!' He says that she will stay to wait on Mr. Tartuffe.



**The breakfast table and the morning pray** In the morning, Mr. Orgon personally sets the breakfast table for Mr. Tartuffe. We see Mr. Tartuffe coming out of his room. He walks while reading a religious book which he keeps too close to his face. As Tartuffe is going to the breakfast, we see Dorine almost about to throw the tray she has in her hand angrily at him. Orgon invites him to the breakfast table, but Tartuffe says that they must pray first. Orgon asks him to forgive him for his behavior. He follows Tartuffe as they both hold the religious books close to their faces and read. Then they have breakfast. Tartuffe sees that Orgon carries a ring. He says that this is a sinful frivolity. Orgon takes the ring off and gives it to Tartuffe who puts it in his pocket.



**Tartuffe is a gold digger** Dorine brings Orgon's pocketbook to her master Elmire. In the letter found in the pocketbook, it is written that Mr. Orgon has given 500, 700, and 2000 shillings to the poor and Tartuffe. She asks where Tartuffe is as a response to which Dorine starts nervously laughing.



**Earthly things are vain** Outside, Orgon is swinging the hammock on which Tartuffe is sleeping and reading his religious book. The wife comes to the garden and calls Orgon. She says that they have to talk to each other and asks him to be sensible. She further asks him to wake Tartuffe up. Elmire further realizes how unkempt and neglected Orgon is. She sees written in his pocketbook: 'About the vanity of earthly things. The love of your wife and other persons must be reset to nothing compared with the love you owe me, your holy friend Tartuffe. After reading this Elmire tries to tell Orgon that Tartuffe is imposing on him and taking advantage of him, but Orgon asks her to wait until she knows him and says that she will also look up to him as he does. He thus seems not to hear or understand her.



**Orgon tends to Tartuffe** She asks him to think about how happy they were. She tells him that she loves him and kisses him afterward. They hug each other. Meanwhile, Tartuffe is awakened. Orgon tells her that she disturbed him and thus woke him up. He goes near Tartuffe and covers him with blankets lest it is cold for him. Seeing how his husband has become a miserable and pitiful servant to Tartuffe, Elmire is determined to get to know him. She calls Tartuffe to her room to meet him. Orgon asks Tartuffe to convince her and convert her to his way of thinking.



**Tartuffe's inappropriate gaze** Orgon leaves them alone hoping that Tartuffe will make her as religious as he is. She says to Tartuffe that if he is truly a friend of her husband's, then he should quit their house and go away from there. She tells him that he is forcing her husband into religious fanaticism. Tartuffe appears to be unaffected by these statements and keeps on reading his religious book, keeping it very close to his face. As she says these things, her hand is on the shoulder of Tartuffe. Tartuffe sees this, he looks at her body and dress. Realizing his disturbing gaze, she shies away from him. He tells her that Heaven sent him to them. She answers in response: 'then... forgive me...and pray.' Then she leaves.



**Tartuffe will be put to a test** Elmore speaks with Dorine. She tells her that Tartuffe is an impudent fellow. She further asks him to call her husband. The husband comes but leaves the room after a few seconds shouting that he won't have his friend slandered. Elmore says that she can give him proof. She says she will put him to the test and Orgon will be her witness without being seen. He accepts this and tells her to make whatever arrangements are necessary. Then he leaves. Elmore calls Dorine and writes a letter for Tartuffe. She says to her that it is Orgon's blind credulity that forces her to take this step. Dorine gives the letter to Tartuffe who first smells it and realizes that it is the smell of Elmore. In the letter, it is written: 'Dear Mr. Tartuffe! I beg your pardon that I broke off our conversation in this way. I should like to talk about one or two things with you. Will you take a cup of tea with me this afternoon? Mrs. Elmore'



**Orgon hides behind the curtains** Next, we see Elmore's room where she and Tartuffe will drink tea. She shows her husband the curtains behind which he will hide. Orgon says that he accepts her suggestion merely to convince her. Tartuffe comes out of his room reading his religious book, he sneakily looks around to see if anyone is there. Dorine lets her know that Tartuffe is coming. She says to her husband: 'Oh, that you would but believe my words. Spare me this masquerade!' However, Orgon says that he believes in Tartuffe. So, the masquerade must go on.



**Tea time** Tartuffe comes into the room. She pours him a cup of tea and tells him she wishes to confess to him about why she asked him to leave them this morning. She further says that she fears she might fall under the spell of his personality and that she fears she loves him! Then she starts crying. At this moment, Orgon is looking at them secretly behind the curtains. Elmore's napkin falls to the ground and after she takes it back, her ankles are visible. Tartuffe stares at her ankles. Then he looks to see if there is anyone behind the door. He says he felt a draft. He is suspicious that there might be something going on. The moment he is about to look at the curtains, Elmore stops him and asks: 'Is it a saint to love a saint?' She makes romantic advances toward Tartuffe. However, at that moment, Tartuffe sees in the reflection of a teapot that Orgon is watching them. He takes out his religious book from his pocket and says that he has listened to her confession and that he shall pray for her. As soon as he leaves, Orgon comes out behind the curtains laughing. He asks her whether she now believes in him. She says she does, but that Tartuffe should never know that she induced Orgon to listen to their conversation. Orgon leaves the room.



**Tartuffe pretends to pray for Elmore** The moment Tartuffe sees him, he pretends to pray for Elmore: 'Oh, my Lord! Have mercy on the unhappy woman!'



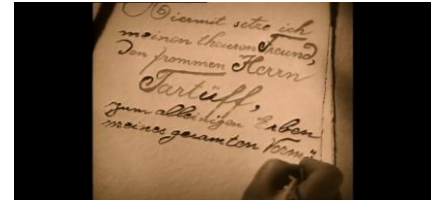
**Elmore risks it all** Elmore tells what happened to Dorine. She says she must risk it all to save her husband. She goes near Tartuffe and continues her romantic advances. She tells him that she must see him alone. Tartuffe first looks around whether anyone is watching them, then he tells her to send Dorine to bed early that night. After Elmore leaves Tartuffe, she goes to her room and starts crying. She prays: 'Oh, my Lord, give me the strength to rescue my husband from the clutches of this hypocrite!'



**Dorine watches Tartuffe** When Dorine goes to her bed, Tartuffe leaves his room, carefully inspects the area, and seeing no one is watching, enters Elmire's room. Doreen sees the shadow of Tartuffe and understands that he has entered Elmire's room. She goes to notify Orgon that Tartuffe is in Elmire's room.



**Orgon gives his fortune to Tartuffe** Meanwhile, Orgon is writing a letter that says: 'I herewith bequeath to my faithful friend, Tartuffe, my entire fortune —' Dorine knocks on the door, enters the room, and implores him to ask no question, but come with her.



**Orgon sees Tartuffe's real face** In Elmire's room, Tartuffe is drinking alcohol. Orgon looks from the door hole at him and cannot believe what he sees. Dorine tells him to look so that he may be cured.



**Tartuffe's true character is seen** Tartuffe takes his clothes off and takes off the clothes pieces on Elmire's shoulder. He jumps into the bed. Elmire says she is so afraid that her husband might come in. Tartuffe says: 'No fear! He is obediently writing his last will and testament in my favor.' Elmire gives Tartuffe one more glass of wine which he drinks in an instant. He laughs hysterically and hugs her tightly. She asks whether it is not a sin what they are not doing. His reply is that who sins in secret, does not sin!' Elmire is shocked: 'You say that, a saint?' Once again, Tartuffe laughs hysterically: 'I —a saint—?' Then he makes his shoulder bare and a tattoo is visible on it. Elmire runs away from him, opens the door, and shouts: 'Now, are you convinced, Orgon?'



**Elmire and Orgon are saved from the trouble** Orgon comes inside and slaps Tartuffe several times. After Elmire stops him, Tartuffe runs away. Orgon hugs his wife. Elmire says: 'Oh, my Lord, I thank you for helping me regain my husband's love!'



BACK TO PRESENT

**The young actor reveals himself** This is the end of the main story. The young actor closes the curtains and greets his audience, which is the master and his servant. He explains that from that time on, all hypocrites are called Tartuffe. 'Often they sit beside you without your knowing it.' Then he takes off his wig and fake beard and mustache. The servant woman is shocked. The young man says: 'You are stealthily trying to obtain possession of my grandfather's money.'



**The young actor finds the poison and sends the servant away** She laughs hysterically. He sees the cloth bag in her seat. He opens it and sees that she carries poison there. They fight, but he takes the poison into his hands: 'A slow but sure poison!' The old man cannot believe what he sees. The young man says to the servant: 'Your role



is played out, go pack your boxes.' She leaves the house. The children outside shout: 'Tartuffe!' which is a statement directed at her.

**None of us is immune against hypocrites** After all this, the old man asks his grandson: 'Was I blind? How could I trust that awful person?' The young man replies wisely: 'Dear grandfather, none of us is proof against hypocrites.' The film ends with the intertitle: 'And therefore you, do you know who is sitting beside you?' which is a question directed at the audience to reflect upon their lives.



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Tartuffe** (*Hypocritical, Lustful*)

Tartuffe is the leading character of the main story. He is a man who pretends to be religious whereas, in reality, he is someone who uses Orgon for his greedy aims. He has an extreme influence on Orgon and drives him into religious fanaticism. However, he shows his true face thanks to Elmire's games or tests that she concocts against him.

*Hypocritical:* Tartuffe is essentially a hypocritical person. He is a scoundrel who pretends to be a religious ascetic who abstains from luxury, sensuality, and anything that drives one away from religious pursuits. However, this is a facade that he presents to the outside world so that he can get others under his influence and get their money. He is a gold digger under the disguise of a saint. He makes Orgon act according to his wishes and even bequeath his entire fortune to him.

*Lustful:* Greed and lust are Tartuffe's driving forces that eventually bring his downfall. He is greedy for money, but also for women. Elmire sees his true face based on his behavior toward her. Tartuffe not only is after the fortune of Orgon. He is a lustful person who falls into the trap of Elmire's game. Her charm, beauty, and affection influence him so he goes into her room at night which shows us the audience that he is not a supernatural character, but a human with certain weaknesses.

### **Orgon** (*Naïve, Religious*)

Orgon is one of the three leading characters of the main story alongside Tartuffe and Elmire. He is essentially a naïve person who falls into the trap of Tartuffe's religious asceticism. Later on, Elmire makes him see the truth about Tartuffe. At the end of the story, he realizes his naïveté and mistakes. He is finally reunited with his wife.

*Naïve:* Orgon is a naïve person. Because of his naïveté and good-heartedness, he believes that Tartuffe is a real saint, a devoted, humble, and pious man but he is nothing more than a charlatan. Tartuffe becomes Orgon's role model and looks up to him regarding all matters.

*Religious:* He tries to be as religiously devoted as Tartuffe and embraces asceticism. He gets rid of luxurious items in his house because Tartuffe does not approve of them. He fires his servants because they too are an unnecessary luxury. He even bequeaths his fortune to Tartuffe at the end of the film because of his holiness and saintliness. His excessive admiration of Tartuffe and his religiousness reach a comic level.

### **Elmire** (*Loving, Investigative*)

Elmire is one of the three leading characters of the main story. She is the wife of Orgon. She is someone who has a moderate approach regarding religion and secular life. It can be said that she steers a rational, moderate course and therefore can see through the veil of Tartuffe's plays. Elmire is extremely saddened that Orgon has become a religious fanatic and cannot see Tartuffe's hypocrisy. However, she is determined to fight for her love.



*Loving:* She has a deep love for and devotion to her husband Orgon. She is very sad that he has fallen into the trap of Tartuffe. Therefore, she tries everything in her power to wake Orgon up so that he too can see Tartuffe's real face and hypocrisy. Thus, she pretends to be in love with Tartuffe and makes romantic advances toward him. When her first plan does not work, she decides to risk it all and invites Tartuffe to her room at night.

*Investigative:* Elmire is an investigative person. When Orgon first comes home after a long journey, she realizes that she cannot recognize him anymore. Soon she understands that Tartuffe is the cause of her husband's drastic character change. After having seen that Tartuffe is an impostor, she decides to play certain games so that Orgon can see Tartuffe's real self. Her investigation into him is not without risks, however, she is already ready to play this game for the love of her husband.

### **Dorine** (*Loyal, Intelligent*)

Dorine is a faithful servant who has worked and served in the house of Elmire and Orgon for twenty years. She is an intelligent woman who sees through the masquerade of Tartuffe. She also helps Elmire with her plays against Tartuffe.

*Loyal:* Dorine is a loyal servant. Orgon fires every servant but her. Dorine is also very close to Elmire. It seems to us the viewers that she is not only a servant but a close companion of hers. Elmire shares her joys, worries, and sadness with her showing us that even though Dorine has a lower ranking as a servant, she and Elmire are good friends. She is thus always loyal to Elmire, as can be seen in her helping Elmire through her games against Tartuffe.

*Intelligent:* Dorine's intelligence is seen in her seeing directly through Tartuffe's pretenses. She also sees the comical side of everything that is going on with Tartuffe and Orgon's extreme attachment to him. When Orgon is swinging the hammock that Tartuffe is sleeping on, she breaks into a peal of laughter reflecting the comic and absurd side of their story. Thus, her intelligence is seen in many instances throughout the film where she perceives the truth as she quickly understands Tartuffe's hypocrisy and helps Elmire out with her games.

### **The young actor** (*Intelligent, Good-hearted*)

The young actor is the one who shows the film to his grandfather, the woman servant, and us the viewers. He is very joyful to visit his grandfather. However, he quickly sees that his grandfather is in a deluded state as he trusts someone who he shouldn't. Therefore, he decides to play a game to show the truth to him. Here we can draw a parallel between the Elmire's games and the young actor's game as both are directed to open the eyes of those they love and make them see the truth.

*Good-hearted:* The young actor is a good-hearted person who loves his grandfather. Therefore, he wants him to break free of his deluded state of mind and see through the pretense of the woman servant. That is the reason he changes his appearance and plays a game with them in that he shows them a film telling a similar story to the situation the old man finds himself in.

*Intelligent:* The grandson is an intelligent, young man. He sees through the pretense of the woman servant quickly. He also observes how the servant puts poison into his grandfather's water. After he is kicked out of the house, he devises a plan so that his grandfather can finally see the truth about the servant's hypocrisy.

### **The old man** (*Naïve*)

The old man is a sick man who lives alone with his woman servant. He can barely take care of himself. The woman servant deceives him into believing that she is a good-hearted person. The truth, however, is that she is a gold digger just as Tartuffe is a hypocritical gold digger. The old man can only see this truth with the help of his grandson.

*Naive:* The old man is a naive person because he believes in the goodness of the servant. The servant slowly poisons him and makes him sick, however, the old man is not aware of this fact. His naiveté almost costs him his fortune as he intends to give his entire fortune to the servant just as Orgon wishes to give his fortune to Tartuffe.

### **The servant woman** (*Greedy, Hypocritical*)

She is the reason why the grandson feels the need to devise a plan to open the eyes of his grandfather. She is someone who pretends to be a good-hearted and caring person, but she is a greedy gold digger in truth. She wishes to get the fortune of the old man she serves, therefore she makes sure to distance him from his grandson.

*Greedy:* The servant is a greedy person. Her whole aim is to get the money of the old man. To that aim, she engages in immoral acts such as poisoning the old man which she does not have any qualms about. Her greed is at times seen in her wide, shining eyes such as when the old man writes his will to bequeath his entire fortune to her.

*Hypocritical:* Just as Tartuffe is the hypocritical character of the main play, the servant is the hypocritical character of the frame story. She masquerades as a good person. Her pretense, however, is seen through by the grandson.

## THEMES

### SOCIETY (Religion)

**Religion** Religion is a focal theme of the main story. Tartuffe pretends to be a religious and ascetic man even though he is a scoundrel. Thus, he uses and exploits religion for his aim of gaining money and power. The main story thus encourages the viewers to reflect upon the relationship between religion and those who use it and turn it into a means for their own aims. One of the questions we find asking ourselves is whether we can fully trust the people who claim to be religious, pious, and humble. Are appearances true or is something else going on behind the veil of appearances? These questions may make us wary of people, in particular those who make religions their whole identity and claim to be pure and ascetic.

### JUSTICE (Injustice)

**Injustice** It might be said that the use of religion, something considered to be sacred, for selfish gains is an instance of injustice. Thus, Tartuffe engages in unjust acts when he pretends to be a holy man, his acts are immoral both because they affect the people around him, in particular, Orgon, in a bad way and also because his actions do injustice to the institution of religion itself. Another case of injustice is that of the servant against the old man in the frame story. The servant slowly poisons her master so that she can finally get possession of his entire fortune. Just like Tartuffe, she does not seem to have any scruples about the immoral and unjust acts she engages in. Thus, Tartuffe of the main story and the servant of the frame story indeed are parallel characters with similar personalities and aims. Another character whose behavior can be said to be unjust is Orgon. His behavior toward his wife is negatively affected because he is under the influence of Tartuffe. He does not believe her when she says that Tartuffe is a hypocrite. He does not seem interested in her anymore. So, his extreme devotion and religious attachment to his brother Tartuffe do injustice to his marriage.

### RELATIONSHIP (Marriage)

**Marriage** Marriage is another important topic of the film. Elmire and Orgon love each other, however, Orgon has a weakness in that he falls into the trap of Tartuffe. He becomes a religious extremist, perhaps to compensate for another character weakness which we do not know much about as the main story does not focus on the past of the characters. No matter what the cause is, Orgon fails his marriage life as he distances himself from Elmire and does not see how sad and depressed she is because of his extremely

ascetic behavior. Elmire, on the other hand, is both an intelligent and loyal wife. She does everything in her power to release Orgon from the trap of Tartuffe. Thus, it can be concluded that she does her duties as a wife perfectly. She is also a believer in God, however, her religious devotion is more moderate, thus she steers a middle course. Therefore she does not come under the influence of charlatans such as Tartuffe. At the end of the film, Orgon understands his mistakes and failures. Finally, both are reunited and Orgon comes to understand the true love of Elmire and her devotion to him. It can be said that through Elmire and Orgon's relationship, the viewers are encouraged to reflect upon the relationships they have in real life.

#### PSYCHOLOGY (Sadness)

**Sadness** Elmire is deeply saddened by Orgon's distancing himself from her. She is devastated by the fact that he seems not to be interested in her anymore. She cries looking at her necklace which has a picture of Orgon attached to it. She also shares her worries and sadness with her servant and companion Dorine. Her sadness, however, does not stop her from taking action against Tartuffe. Even though she is distressed by all that is occurring, she does not give up easily and risks everything so that Orgon can finally wake up to see the plain truth. We the viewers are thus also encouraged to go after the truth and never give up. A parallel behavior regarding determination despite disappointment is also seen in the acts of the young actor. He directly breaks the fourth wall just to speak us to the viewers that he will not give in without a struggle.

#### FLAW (Greed)

**Greed** Greed is a flaw of Tartuffe in the main story and the servant in the frame story. The reason why both Tartuffe and the servant engage in hypocritical behavior is because of their greed to gain money and power. They can essentially be considered to be slaves of greed. No one is proof against such hypocrisy, however, the greed of the characters creates weaknesses in them that betray their real faces. Tartuffe, for instance, is a lustful person. That is the reason he goes into Elmire's room when she invites him. And thus begins his downfall. The servant, on the other hand, is someone greedy for money. Because of her greed, she isolates her master and makes him distance himself from his grandson. The grandson, being of an intelligent nature, sees through this game—in particular, in the scene where she nudges her master so that he kicks him out—and decides to play a game against the servant himself. So, it can be said that the weaknesses of the characters betray their true nature and show their hypocrisy to otherwise naive and deluded people.

#### QUEST (Investigation)

**Investigation** What both Elmire in the main story and the young actor in the frame story do can be seen as a quasi-investigation. The reason it is called a *quasi*-investigation is that they both see through the pretenses of the two hypocrites that is Tartuffe in the main story and the servant in the frame story. However, they have to prove their conclusions for their beloved ones to see. That is why they play games. The young actor takes the appearance of another man. Elmire pretends to love Tartuffe. Thus, they both engage in *white lies* so that their opponents' true faces will be revealed. Their investigations are thus an exploration of the inner characteristics of their enemies. At the end of the film, Tartuffe is revealed as a scoundrel in the main story and the servant is revealed as a greedy, gold digger in the frame story. Thus, both investigations are successful.

#### APPEARANCE vs. REALITY (Dishonesty)

**Dishonesty / Lies** The whole film consists of various manifestations of dishonesty and lies. In the frame story, the servant acts dishonestly as she pretends to care for the old man where, in truth, she poisons him. Moreover, the young actor also engages in a forgivable case of dishonesty as he pretends to be someone else in order to show the film to his grandfather and the servant. In the main story, Tartuffe engages in dishonesty as he masquerades as a saintly, holy man where, in reality, he is no more than an impostor and a scoundrel. Furthermore, Elmire also tells white lies such as that she loves Tartuffe so that she can show Tartuffe's true face to her husband. Thus, the two stories, both the frame and main

stories, consist of various degrees of dishonesty and lies. In the very last scene of the film, the viewers are encouraged to reflect on their lives as the intertitle asks us whether we know who is sitting beside us, alluding not only to people sitting in the next seat but, more generally, to people in our lives, who we spend our time with. Other than that, we might also find ourselves contemplating the nature of dishonesty and lies, whether some lies are justified or none are justified, and so on.