

“If the purpose of comedy is to correct men’s vices, I do not see why any group of men should have special privileges. If this were so, it would have a far more dangerous social consequence than all the other vices, and we have seen that the theatre’s greatest virtue is its ability to correct vices. The most beautiful expression of a serious moral is most often less powerful than that of satire, and nothing reforms the majority of men better than the portrayal of their faults. To expose vices to everyone’s laughter is to deal them a mighty blow. People easily endure reproofs, but they cannot at all endure being made fun of. People have no objection to being considered wicked, but they are not willing to be considered ridiculous.” (Molière, Preface to *Tartuffe*, 1669. Translated by Richard Kerr)

“Again and again the play [Tartuffe] shows the modest values of human decency threatened in the name of piety so extreme that it sees human kindness as worldliness, indifference to the death of all one’s nearest and dearest as moral elevation, and consideration for a daughter’s happiness as ‘human weakness’.” (Donald M. Frame)