

LOOK OUT! HERE COMES CALIGARI!  
(Notes from the Director's Mousehole)

**\*\*Spoiler Alert : Film's ending revealed here.\*\***

In the historical lore regarding the making of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, it's been written that screenwriters Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz were angry that the people of their country (Germany) had been dragged into a horrific war (WWI) by their leaders and wrote the *Caligari* script immediately after the war (with *Caligari*, representing the leaders, and *Cesare* as the hypnotized populace doing misdeeds for them.) In the writers' view, post-war Germany was also being misled by their leaders and they intended their film to be a warning to beware of those currently in government authority.

Director Robert Weine decided to give Mayer and Janowitz's story a "framing" sequence in which the main character, Francis, is seen telling the story to an old man in an asylum. (These opening and closing sequences were originally conceived of by legendary film director Fritz Lang.) It's told that the screenwriters were furious about the additions of these framing sequences, feeling that the sequences twisted the whole meaning and intention of their story. Instead of damning *Caligari* (a.k.a. government leaders) it made the asylum director (a.k.a. *Caligari*) look kindly, benevolent and misunderstood.

But did these framing sequences really confound the screenwriters' original intent? Arguably not, thanks to the brilliance of actor Werner Krauss (who plays *Caligari*.) In the very last frame of the film we are looking into his eyes after he's told that he believes he can cure Francis of the delusion that he, the kindly

asylum director, is actually the murderous, mythical *Caligari*. Though subtle, the look Werner Krauss has in his eyes just before the screen goes black is unmistakable; it is a look that seems to say that he will not stand for any more of Francis's accusations. The look implies that he'll fix Francis (and fix him good this time.) It is a look that portends to the same kind of "cure" they found for Jack Nicholson's *McMurphy* character in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Though *Caligari*/Asylum Director's guilt is by no means conclusive at the film's close, (as it would have been without the framing sequences), he still is highly suspect.

Perhaps with that final look in *Caligari*'s eyes, the warning to be taken from the film is as the writers intended: be on guard of those in authority who would manipulate you into doing their wicked intent for them. But also perhaps is the added warning: beware of being convinced that fears and suspicions of Authority's malevolence is all just deluded paranoia.

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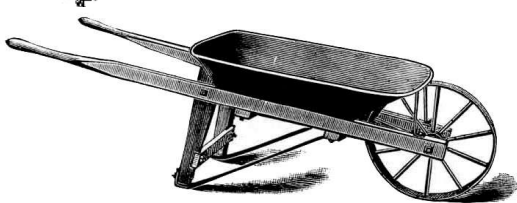


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