

A Film about Homosexuality

Vorwärts, June 1, 1919

The original article is available through the Deutsches Zeitungsportal ([link to article](#))

A new enlightenment film that premiered on Friday -- from Richard Oswald and sexual pathologist Magnus Hirschfeld -- deals with the problem of homosexuality. The infamous § 175 still drives innocent people, those who have a different disposition by nature, to misery and often death.

The film "Anders als die Andern (§ 175)" claims to fight this injustice. But it misses its target. Film, which by nature requires fast action and suspense, is here filled with endless scenes that are highly fatiguing. A famous virtuoso falls in love with a boy who approaches him with enthusiastic friendship. The boy is then frightened away by an encounter with a blackmailer, and the virtuoso ends up in the same dock as the blackmailer. The ending: morphine with a musical accompaniment.

The possibility that boys are brought into the path of "natural inversion" by an adult seducer is the strongest weapon of friends of the law. And yet it is at this very alarming point that the film begins, a film that is supposed to act in support of homosexuals! In addition, the whole film displays a scarcity of theatrical creativity, of beautiful imagery, and its group shots ultimately end up in a "smile for the camera" pose.

Translated by Shoshana Schwebel.

§ 175

Neue Kino-Rundschau, July 26, 1919

The original article is available through the ANNO Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften ([link to article](#))

Seldom is such a delicate and serious question handled with greater tact and wisdom than in the sexual hygiene film "Anders als die Andern," which discusses the issue of homosexuality. Previously, it was standard to call these people criminals or, in polite circles, pathological. Only since Professor Krafft-Ebing began his campaign and spoke and wrote in support of those who have been outcast, did some here and there begin to take a closer look at the issue and investigate this seemingly abnormal disposition. In particular, the German scholar and health counselor Magnus Hirschfeld is using his science and full humanity to fight for a fair assessment of these marginal cases and to lighten their burden. He is campaigning fiercely against Paragraph 175 of the German Imperial criminal code, in which homosexuality is a punishable offense, in order to bring down this unjust, long-outdated penal code.

The art of film has now also been used for its intended purpose, proving that film propaganda, insofar as it stays within the bounds of enlightenment, can be a powerful factor in liberating people from prejudice and narrow-mindedness.

With rare skill, the director has set the scientific material into the scenes in such a way as to achieve a profound effect on the emotional life of the audience. Compassion and sympathy take the place of intolerance and loathing, and one declares oneself inwardly in complete agreement when, in the film's climax, the paragraph is struck from the penal code of the German Republic.

The personal involvement of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld gives the whole work even more of a scientific signature, which is unmistakably imprinted with the seriousness and carefulness of German research.

The Oswald Film Company can look with justified pride at this outstanding work!

Translated by Shoshana Schwebel.

Enlightenment??

Anders als die Anderen. (§ 175.)

Velberter Zeitung, Dec. 22, 1919

The original article is available through the Deutsches Zeitungsportal ([link to article](#))

In the name of accommodating a certain section of the public's need for sensation, the local Salamander Theatre is currently showing a so-called "enlightenment film." I doubt whether the cinema is the right place to bring such a delicate subject matter closer to the masses, and if it is even desirable for such a difficult question to be dealt with in front of an often indiscriminating public.

The goal of these screenings is to awaken compassion and understanding for those who, as a result of their disposition, feel sexually different than others, and who are at the mercy of the court due to Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code. The further goal is to abolish this law, which has brought punishment and shame to perhaps otherwise-valuable people, and has contributed to the breeding of shameful blackmail, against the intentions of the lawmakers.

It is probably true that this film could in no way be considered an enlightenment film, since it issues--even if indirectly--an almost refined sort of propaganda for the abolishment of Paragraph 175 and for the free development of homosexuality. To call such a miserable work an enlightenment film is probably too naive, since it is only intended to incite the basest instincts in people [*im Volke*].

Fortunately, there are still some in our time who don't automatically accept every piece of trash they are offered. As has become known, during the above-mentioned screening at Salamander Theatre on Saturday evening, a stormy protest broke out against the continuation of the film, which resulted in the "enlightenment" being stopped and the film not being shown. In the meantime, the police are said to have already taken matters into their own hands and have arranged provisionally for "Anders als die Anderen" to no longer be screened at the Salamander Theatre.

May all such products meet the same fate. I believe that only the best is good enough for our people [*unser Volk*].

Translated by Shoshana Schwebel.

THE PROMISE OF CINEMA

**GERMAN
FILM THEORY
1907-1933**

**EDITED BY ANTON KAES,
NICHOLAS BAER, AND
MICHAEL COWAN**



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machines to think for them because they understand the futility of critical understanding.

Cinematic man, who both shares guilt for and suffers from the general misery of the world, has lost his inner personal limitations and externalized himself. To bring him back again remains the great educational issue of the coming centuries. Today, loneliness appears as the bitterest fate. One day, when everyone has arrived at this fate, it will be the only human way. Communication with people will no longer take the form of theatrical mockery, but will take place on the ethereal bridge of forgiving understanding, of a heartfelt thou and thou.³ *Inwardness* is the great rallying cry of the new humanity. No good deeds, no charity rooted in poisonous vanity! Only the triumph over cinematic mankind through the recognition that we can be good people only if we do not let anything within us wither, if we do not blindly accept any surrogate! Once everyone, without exception, is inwardly active, even external actions will be valid and no sensible person will be able to cry "Hunger!" anymore!

Notes

1. Goldscheid was a pioneering Austrian sociologist who was also active on behalf of monism, pacifism, human rights, and sexual reform. He served on the executive board of Vienna's Urania.
2. On the Viennese Urania society, see Lou Andreas-Salomé in chapter 1, no. 13.
3. The phrase is likely a reference to the so-called "Dui-Du" chorus in Johann Strauss's operetta *Die Fledermaus* (1874), which Strauss also adapted into a waltz under the title "Du und Du."

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WALTHER FRIEDMANN

Homosexuality and Jewishness: The Latest Method of Agitation against "Aufklärungsfilme"

First published as "Homosexualität und Judentum: Die neueste Hetzmethode gegen die 'Aufklärungsfilme,'" in *Film-Kurier*, no. 33 (July 13, 1919), 1–2. Translated by Nicholas Baer.

This editorial appeared in the daily film paper *Film-Kurier* in response to the backlash against Austrian-Jewish director Richard Oswald's *Anders als die Andern* (Different from the Others), which had premiered in Berlin on May 28, 1919, and was banned a year later by the Berlin censorship board. The film, often characterized as the first to explicitly thematize homosexuality, was co-written by Jewish sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld and starred Conrad Veidt as a gay violinist who is blackmailed under Paragraph 175 of the German penal code. Walther Friedmann was a doctor of law who served as attorney and general secretary of the Vereinigung Deutscher Filmfabrikanten e.V. (Association of German Film Manufacturers) and the Arbeitgeberverband der Deutschen Filmindustrie (Employers' Federation of the German Film Industry), for which he handled many film censorship cases during the Weimar era. He was arrested by the Gestapo in 1941 and subsequently murdered.

The *Deutsche Zeitung*, arguably the lowest and most abhorrent of the Pan-German daily newspapers in Berlin,¹ has made a curious discovery that deserves to be conveyed to broader circles. Among vehement attacks on *Aufklärungsfilme*,² the newspaper tells in its Friday evening edition of a tumultuous screening of *Different from the Others* in the Biophon-Theater-Lichtspiele on Potsdamer Straße. According to the report, the first appearance of the hero of *Different from the Others* and his pupil, a "true showpiece of the Jewish race," caused a storm of protest in the house. From all sides resounded boos—people

jeered, screamed, and whistled. Nonetheless, the projection continued. However, when the scene in the Puppencafé came, where people danced in the most repugnant way, boys dressed in part as girls, the tumult began again. All around one could hear: "Should we Germans let ourselves be contaminated by the Jews?" "How can something like this be presented to us?" "Where is the science here?" The theater tried to continue the film a number of times but the noise was too great. For a while, it looked foreboding, particularly as a "number of Jewish youths" recovered from the initial shock and spoke with wild enthusiasm of enlightenment and science. They really managed to get part of the audience on their side, but the commotion in the theater went on until a large part of the audience left.

So much for the *Deutsche Zeitung's* account of the actual proceedings of the "scandal," the accuracy of which we wish to accept in good faith. The paper adds the following questions: "Can one indeed regard this incident as a sign of the times? And shouldn't the German people gradually wake up and notice where they are heading?" These phrases, which have been taken most thoughtlessly from the habitual lexicon of the Pan-German papers and applied here, could not fit the whole affair any better. But that is only a side note. What is significant about the whole affair is simply the almost unbelievable fact that the blame for homosexuality is now also placed on the Jews. This is, to our knowledge, a new barrel on the barrel organ of anti-Semitism, which has already been heavily played. Until now, one has generally assumed that homosexuality is certainly an extremely regrettable and, for people with normal sensitivities, a repulsive degeneration of the sex drive, which unfortunately occurs in all social classes, independent of nation, race, and denomination. And if one recalls the most famous homosexuals, whom the pitiable victims of Paragraph 175 invariably invoke and whom they proudly call their own (we'll mention only Frederick the Great, Plato, Oscar Wilde, even Schiller!), one will search in vain for a Jew among them. Also, in the famous Round Table of Prince Eulenburg,³ which, without exception, was very near to the Pan-German conservative circles, there was, to our knowledge, not a single Jew. Of course it should not be claimed that there are no homosexuals among the Jews. But, until now, it has really not come into anyone's head to make the Jews appear as particular supporters and proponents of homosexuality. If the ingenious writer for the *Deutsche Zeitung* had reflected just a bit on this problem, it wouldn't have escaped him that the large number of children in Jewish families, which has been bemoaned by anti-Semites since time immemorial, the custom of Jews to marry at a very young age, and, finally, the fact that Jewry has survived to this day despite all forms of persecution and oppression provide the most conclusive counterevidence to Jews' alleged homosexuality. Or does the brilliant informant for the *Deutsche Zeitung* perhaps mean to say that the Jews have secretly devised a means of reproducing themselves through homosexual means as well?

To be sure, these remarks do not serve the purpose of defending Jewry against ludicrous attacks, which seems totally superfluous and also wouldn't be our task. We are interested in this incident—which, by the way, has been deliberately blown out of proportion—only because the whole rude anti-Semitic clamor is doubtlessly being raised for the sole purpose of campaigning for the reinstatement of film censorship by other means. The author of the article makes no secret of this whatsoever. He indeed concludes his report with the words: "The censor has been lifted, and what happened? As we have learned from another party, requests for a prohibition of these trash films have been submitted to the police headquarters and other relevant authorities, without success. Shouldn't the people take the law into its own hands?" The main purpose of the exercise is thus—however indirectly—the call for censorship, which, as we emphasized just recently, is now uttered to a particularly great extent by the Pan-German, anti-Semitic

press. Since the decision on the question of the reinstatement of film censorship will be made in Weimar in the coming days, it is perhaps still useful in the last hour to show the Social Democrats and Democrats once again what abhorrent, ludicrous, and dirty company they will enter if they cooperate with people who have the effrontery to use such nasty means in the struggle over film censorship.

Notes

1. The Pan-German daily newspapers were organs of the Aldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League), an ultranationalist, imperialist, and anti-Semitic organization that dates back to 1891.
2. The Aufklärungsfilm genre thematized taboo subjects, generally sexual in nature. (In German, *Aufklärung* means both “enlightenment” and “sexual education.”) Though ostensibly educational, Richard Oswald’s Aufklärungsfilme on topics such as prostitution, sadomasochism, and homosexuality during the censorless period from November 1918 to May 1920 were precisely the sorts of risqué, often-sensationalist films feared and rejected by cinema reformers.
3. The Eulenburg Affair (1907–09) exposed the presence of homosexuals in both Kaiser Wilhelm II’s inner circle and the German military. Magnus Hirschfeld, who collaborated with director Richard Oswald on *Different from the Others* and also appears in the film, provided his testimony about the homosexuality of General Kuno Graf von Moltke.

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WILHELM STAPEL

Homo Cinematicus

First published as “Der homo cinematicus,” in *Deutsches Volkstum*, no. 10 (October 1919), 319–20. Translated by Eric Ames.

A political commentator known for his conservative, nationalistic, and anti-Semitic views, Stapel became editor in chief of the monthly journal *Deutsches Volkstum* in January 1919. Much as Richard Guttman invoked a “cinematic mankind” (no. 101), Wilhelm Stapel (1882–1954) postulates the existence of a “new psychic type”: the flighty, distracted “homo cinematicus,” to whom he attributes recent social unrest. (In the American context, Barton W. Currie had famously invoked “nickel madness” a decade prior.) Stapel’s critique was directed less against certain programs than against the very medium of film, which he wanted to extirpate. He is thus one of the few cultural critics in this volume for whom cinema did not hold any promise; he calls for abstinence from film per se for the sake of “our entire culture.” Stapel’s text was cited at length in Konrad Lange’s *Das Kino in Gegenwart and Zukunft* (Cinema’s present and future) the following year. See also a similar diatribe by Aurel Wolfram (no. 106) in the same journal toward the end of the Weimar era.

The sins of the cinema have been repeated ad nauseam. Everyone knows that, next to alcohol, there is nothing more harmful to the health and morality of the people than the cinema. It is now only necessary, it seems, to translate this knowledge into reality against the dogged resistance of cinema capital. However, the most profound and serious danger of the cinema has been seen only recently by just a few observers—namely, when someone goes to the cinema one, two, or three times a week, he suffers psychic damage from the *form* of the presentations alone, regardless of their content. The cinema may be quite decent; it may show a program that has no doubt been censored for content. But the sheer fact that the viewer becomes habituated to the flashing, fluttering, and twitching images

of the flickering screen slowly but surely destroys his psychic and, ultimately, his moral stability.

First, one acquires the habit of being jerked from idea to idea in an abrupt and unmediated fashion; one loses all constancy within the chain of ideas, that ability to remain steady, which is the precondition of any thorough judgment. Second, one becomes habituated to the random sequences of images, succumbing to them and following them involuntarily; one no longer misses the logical succession of a continuous thought, that continuity which alone is able to combine individual ideas into what we tend to call a “thought.” The mere recording of pictorial ideas—which have no logically or psychologically necessary relation to one another (as they do in a real drama, story, or scientific argument), but only a coincidental one—amounts to nothing more than a passive self-abandonment and surrender of the soul. Autonomous psychic activity can take place only by *thinking*, by forming necessary relations. Without this autonomous activity, one can never gain mastery over things; at best, one remains stuck in the murky enjoyment of one’s affects. Thus, cinema leads to psychic atony. Third, in the flow of images swiftly passing by, one acquires the habit of perceiving only the approximation of an impression; one does not gain a clear and conscious understanding of the image down to its details. Thus, the only impressions to remain in one’s mind are the rough, surprising, and sensational ones. Lost is any sense for the intimate, the exact, and the refined. Regulars of the cinema think only in garish, approximate ideas. Any image that catches their inner eye captures their entire attention. They no longer contemplate or rethink it; they no longer attend to its details and foundations. It suffices for the show to be dazzling and affectively charged, and they fall helplessly victim to it. They have turned into catchword people.

The consequence of all of this is the following: under the influence of cinema, a new psychic type is emerging among the people. A human type, which only flutteringly “thinks” in rough, general ideas, which allows itself to be ceaselessly carried from impression to impression, which is no longer *capable* of making clear and convincing judgments. A human type that already did enough damage during the revolution, and that, with every new generation exposed to the psychic attrition caused by the cinema, will grow and make its mark on culture (including political culture). *The cinema is constructing a new human type, inferior in both its intellectual and moral capacities: the homo cinematicus.*

Herein lies the enormous danger of cinema for our entire culture, which is grounded in higher intellectual faculties. From generation to generation, men’s brains and souls continue to be mangled, losing their capacity for nobler culture. And neither censorship nor model cinemas can help; against the cinema (as against the devastations of alcohol) only *abstinence* can help. There is no salvation, except to stifle the cinema as a mass phenomenon and to replace it with more worthwhile pleasures. Either cinema capital or our culture must go bankrupt. I would rather see cinema capital go broke. With every cinema insolvency, we ought to hold a thanksgiving service.

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KURT TUCHOLSKY

Cinema Censorship

First published under the pseudonym Ignaz Wrobel as “Kino-Zensur,” in *Die Weltbühne* 16, no. 38 (September 16, 1920), 308–10. Translated by Alex H. Bush.

Abolished by the Rat der Volksbeauftragten (Council of the People's Deputies) on November 12, 1918, censorship was reintroduced in Germany with the Reichslichtspielgesetz (Reich Motion Picture Law), which was passed on May 12, 1920. According to this law, every film needed to be approved by a state censorship board (located in Berlin and Munich) prior to its exhibition. Making arguments against "bad films" similar to those advanced by some cinema reformers, Kurt Tucholsky here affirms the need for censorship in the war against vile commercialism. Texts by Tucholsky also appear in chapters 5 (no. 71) and 8 (nos. 122 and 125) of this volume.

No stage of film production has anything to do with art; it is an industry. This is the basis upon which we should judge every governmental interference with production, and the expression "cinema censorship" can easily lead us astray. Whether Paragraphs 184, 184a, 104, 110, 111, 112, 130, 131, and others in the penal code are enough to prevent attempts to misuse cinema for immoral, inflammatory, defamatory, or class-combative ends, has yet to be determined. Here is what the Reichslichtspielgesetz (Reich Motion Picture Law) of May 12, 1920, stipulates in broad terms:

Films may be shown publicly only after they have passed the censorship board. Academic films in research institutes are exempt from censorship. Permission for public presentation of a film will be considered upon application. § 1: "Permission will be denied if examination reveals that the presentation of this filmstrip is likely to endanger public order or safety, to offend religious sentiments, to have vulgar or morally corruptive effects, or to endanger the German reputation or German relations with foreign nations. Permission may not be denied on grounds of political, social, religious, ethical, or ideological biases as such. Permission may not be denied for reasons beyond the content of the filmstrip." The censorship board may cut parts of the film and leave the rest. Censorship is stricter for children under eighteen years of age, who are forbidden to see any film "that gives cause for concern over negative effects on moral, spiritual, or hygienic development, or overexcites the fantasy of young people." Youth welfare offices or communities can determine stricter guidelines for film censorship in their districts. The local police, alongside the censorship board, regulates film advertisements according to the tenets of this law. Local police offices can independently issue permits for films about current events and scenic films. The censorship boards, whose number will be determined according to need, consist of a civil service chairman and assessors. (The number is not dictated in the law.) Of the assessors, one quarter will be chosen from the film industry, one quarter from among those with experience in other areas of art and literature, and half from among those experienced in the areas of social welfare, public education, or youth services. Members of the censorship boards will be appointed to a term of three years by the Reich Minister of the Interior. Women may also serve. The censorship office may only make a decision when the chairman and at least four other assessors are present. "In cases of filmstrips intended for presentation in youth programs, young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty may be selected by the committee to give their opinion." In very simple cases, the chairman may give permission without other assessors. The appeal board for the decisions of the censorship office is the Oberprüfungsstelle [Central Censorship Board], which will make a final decision in the presence of five members (one certified official and four assessors). Censorship is subject to fees. Interim regulations will govern the censorship of films that were finished before the enactment of the law. Sanctions include jail sentences of up to two years and fines of up to one hundred thousand marks. Objective court procedure against the films is permitted.

So much for the statutory provisions. Incidentally, I do not know what purist assessor thought up the misbegotten term *filmstrip* [Bildstreifen], but the government should not

participate in the idiocy of these linguistic pedants, who always create false and ugly words when they want to Germanicize popular foreign words. (The correct term, of course, is *Bilderstreifen*.)

By and large, we must say that the recommendations of the commission (reported by, heaven forbid, Representative D. Mumm)¹ have led to a tightening of censorship guidelines rather than their relaxation. In many cases, the representatives—indeed the representatives of all parties—were more narrow-minded than the government, and thus this law came to be. Like all censorship regulations, this first paragraph of the film censorship law is elastic; its wording will mean nothing, and everything will be determined by how it is put into practice. The fact that the words “endanger the German reputation” could make the desired political tendentious films totally impossible is clear to anyone who knows how censorship works in Prussia. Maybe this or that element of the censorship apparatus could be improved—praxis is still the main issue.

What, then, do we want? We want to obstruct the spread of bad films. But that is not a statement, just a disguised and subjective value judgment, and this monument of divine beauty they wish to raise for the people will be very crudely hewn. A delicate little dirty joke does not seem as dangerous to me as brazen kitsch, which corrupts the outlook of thousands, for the audience loves to transfer the wrongheaded opinions it receives from the cinema to real life in all the wrong places. Furthermore, a bureaucratic selection of censorship representatives is evil, yet necessary; such a commission of fat cats with watch chains, full beards, and glasses will of course determine a law for hundreds of thousands of people based on what they learned in school by the time they were sixteen. Further, it seems to me that a major problem with Prussian paternalism is that it uses regulations to spare itself any kind of popular education. If there are riots in the cinema because an anti-social strike film displeases the workers, all public institutions would be obliged to explain to the workers that there have been enough polemics in the press, enough boycotts and flyers distributed, and that toppled benches and broken windows are not arguments; if good citizens are in an uproar because their kaiser, their church, or whatever else seems holy to them has been offended, then we can teach them. These hard-line prohibitions accomplish nothing. We are not a nation of little children. Everyone has a right to the public sphere.

Too much paternalism is always evil. As long as just about any member of the populace can be transformed by means of appointment from a person into a certified official, it would be better if the authorities concerned themselves less with the “welfare of the youth” and more with concrete things like tuberculosis and syphilis. We can deal with our souls on our own.

Professor Brunner of the Preußisches Ministerium für Volkswohlfahrt (Prussian Ministry for Social Welfare) was among the commissioners of the Reich Ministry who gave counsel on the film law.² This man is the source of much controversy, and artists that I know criticize his utterly inartistic mindset. But we cannot expect filigree from a field gunner. An opinion from Brunner and the blessed Traugott von Jagow about a poet is unlikely to really speak to me.³ But blindly, at two in the morning, without hesitating for a moment, I would take Brunner’s side in the struggle against his enemies.

I see it as my duty to state here that our notorious sensational press, illustrated as well as unillustrated, which argues against tightened censorship in the name of artistic freedom, has under no circumstances the right to do so. If they are not corrupt, muckraking newspapers, they are speculations on the dirtiest and lowest back-alley sensuality. Such publications are so disgusting precisely because they present themselves as moral and bourgeois, rather than being open and forthright like studio shots from Budapest. A Prussian censor is often (always, when it comes to politics) an evil apparition, but against

such filthiness no red pencil is too sharp and no policeman's fist too hard. This is not a matter of censorship. It is purely an issue of artistic street cleaning.

We do not need to talk about the question of cinema censorship for children. It is necessary. The penal code will suffice to address the exploitation of the sex trade by unscrupulous entrepreneurs. This motion picture law is not even so bad. It just seems superfluous to me.

Notes

1. German theologian and politician D. Reinhard Mumm helped found the national-conservative Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP; German National People's Party) in 1918.
2. A text by Brunner appears earlier in this chapter (no. 100). Tucholsky had also dedicated an essay to Brunner: "Verbotene Films," *Die Schaubühne* 9/2, no. 40 (October 2, 1913), 949–53.
3. President of the Berlin police from 1909 to 1916, von Jagow was also involved in the short-lived Kapp Putsch against the Weimar government in March 1920.

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ALBERT HELLWIG

The Motion Picture and the State

First published as "Lichtspiel und Staat," in Heinrich Pfeiffer, ed., *Das deutsche Lichtbildbuch: Filmprobleme von gestern und heute* (Berlin: August Scherl, 1924). Translated by Tara Hottman.

In this text, Albert Hellwig looks back at the cinema reform movement in which he had been actively involved (see his 1911 text on trash films earlier in this chapter, no. 93) and considers the movement's legacy in light of the 1920 Reichslichtspielgesetz (Reich Motion Picture Law). His text appeared in *Das deutsche Lichtbildbuch*, a book commissioned by the Deutsche Lichtbild-Gesellschaft (DLG or Deulig; German Motion Picture Company) that featured short essays by a wide range of commentators, including Emil Jannings, Ernst Lubitsch, Joe May, and Guido Seeber. On the topic of film censorship, see also texts by Siegfried Kracauer, no. 124, and Kurt Tucholsky, nos. 122 and 125, as well as Herbert Jhering, no. 172.

When the motion picture began its victory lap through the cultural world twenty years ago, there were no special provisions in any law or regulation that could provide the seed of a law on motion pictures. As with all technological innovations that were not yet well-known when existing laws were adopted, they could not be taken into consideration by lawmakers when issuing these regulations, so it was the dangers of film—real or imaginary, avoidable or unavoidable—that attracted the attention of lawmakers in advanced nations and that soon prompted more or less extensive legislation.

The flammability of film and the panic that would ensue if a fire were to break out in a motion picture theater provided the motivation for detailed—occasionally perhaps even too far-reaching—building and fire regulations.

Soon rules concerning the moral dangers of motion pictures gained a greater sense of urgency, elicited by the various dangers of exposure to trash films, especially for youth but also for adults. This problem has been discussed more exhaustively in Germany than in any other advanced nation, and thus it is understandable that the discussion did not lack exaggerations. Yet such exaggerations were the exception; following the struggle against trash films, most of the guidelines adopted as regulations—and occa-

sionally also as laws—were entirely justified at their core, if not in every detail. Film censorship, along with similar restrictions on youth attendance at motion picture shows, was on the whole concerned with restricting the freedoms of the individual out of concern for the public. If there were no such limits, then film producers could theoretically do irreparable harm through the production, distribution, and exhibition of corruptive and vulgar films. The unfortunate experiences we were forced to undergo after the revolution—when the censorship regulations under federal state law temporarily expired—made this clear.

Through the Motion Picture Law of May 12, 1920, the rules concerning the moral dangers of film are managed in essentially the same way throughout the entire country. The individual states no longer have any censorship authority, which is a good thing. Overall, the censorship bureaus and the Central Censorship Board have mastered their difficult and responsible task of safeguarding the general welfare, while also guarding themselves from petty criticism and complaints not at all justified by the situation. Even if certain details of the Motion Picture Law require improvement, its fundamental components will undoubtedly remain for the foreseeable future. The necessity of film censorship has been demonstrated not only through the experiences during the revolution but also through analogous regulation abroad based on similar experiences.

In addition to further developing the Motion Picture Law, the restrictions on children's attendance, which are still valid under federal state law, must also be standardized and improved. Above all, the state must, to the greatest extent possible, seek to ensure that its regulations have a positive effect in the future, like the one already occurring through the preferential treatment by the review offices and in the entertainment tax code of irrefragable scientific films and similar products.

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AUREL WOLFRAM

Cinema

First published as "Kino," in *Deutsches Volkstum* 13, no. 8 (August 1931), 647–49. Translated by Michael Cowan.

Writing in *Deutsches Volkstum*, Wilhelm Stapel and Albrecht Erich Günther's militantly nationalistic monthly journal, the Austrian conservative Aurel Wolfram here links a sociological critique of cinema to a broader diagnosis of the modern condition. While his essay picks up on many familiar tropes from the cinema reform movement (such as nervous unease and false illusionism), its characterization of the current situation of "spiritual bankruptcy" and "metaphysical rootlessness" also resonates with early writings by thinkers including Georg Lukács (no. 174) and Siegfried Kracauer (nos. 178 and 179 in chapter 12). Wolfram's views would also be echoed in Adorno's critique of mass culture in writings such as "On Jazz" (1936).

So much has been written about the cinema from an aesthetic point of view. So many essays have dealt with the topic of art and cinema. But critics have paid much too little attention to the sociological side of the problem. For it simply cannot be denied that the cinema has acquired an enormous influence over the masses; indeed, the cinema has become the quintessential modern *mass theater*. Even those who hold the cinema in contempt cannot ignore this reality, and they would do better at least to try to understand the