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ARTWORLD ROUNDTABLE: THE ART OF IMMORAL ARTISTS

November 22, 2017 by [aestheticsforbirds](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

The following is a post that appeared originally on the philosophy website [Daily Nous](#) as part of their “[Philosophers On](#)” series. Thanks to Justin Weinberg for permission to repost it here.

"Aesthetics is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds." -Barnett Newman

SEARCH

The news over the past several months has been full of revelations of sexual harassment and assault by men involved in arts and entertainment and other fields (for lists of recently revealed cases, see [here](#) and [here](#)). The cases have brought to the public's attention a variety of questions concerning power, justice, gender relations, privacy, business practices, and the responsibilities of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. When it comes to those involved in the arts, most of us come into contact with them largely as consumers, and so it is no surprise that one of the questions many people are discussing is this: How, if at all, should the moral transgressions of those involved in making art change what we think about, and how we act in regard to, their art?

For this installment of “[Artworld Roundtable/Philosophers On](#),” several philosophers—and one stand-up comic—briefly share their thoughts on this and related questions. Their contributions should not be taken as their last words on the topic, but rather as prompts for further discussion of it.

Our contributors are:

- **Eva Dadlez**, professor of humanities and philosophy, University of Central Oklahoma
“Flaws, Aesthetic and Moral”
- **Carol Hay**, associate professor of philosophy at University of Massachusetts, Lowell
“Enabling The Sociopathy No More”
- **David Heti**, stand-up comic (with two albums) who teaches comedy writing at McGill University and Toronto's Flying Books School of Reading & Writing
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- **Shen-yi Liao**, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Puget Sound
“Non-Aesthetic Reasons For Engaging With A Work”
- **Kate Manne**, assistant professor of philosophy at Cornell University
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- **Matthew Strohl**, associate professor of philosophy at the University of Montana, and **Mary Beth Willard**, assistant professor of philosophy at Weber State University
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Flaws, Aesthetic and Moral Eva Dadlez

So, I'm making a good faith endeavor to introduce my Contemporary Moral Problems students to arguments advanced against for-profit insurance and the contention that it incentivizes turning down claims. To that end, I pop Michael Moore's documentary "Sicko" into the DVR. To my horror, the Miramax logo, followed by "Harvey Weinstein," scrolls onto the screen. It is too late to fast forward. Crap.

Sexual harassment and misconduct by artists and art producers (Weinstein, Louis C.K., Spacey, Cosby, etc.) have raised questions not only about the film industry, but about how art appreciators should respond to the work of these individuals in light of the disclosures and admissions that have flooded every media outlet. And while "Sicko" is not art, my experience suggested that any work might be considered somehow *tainted* by association with a miscreant.

At least two distinct questions are at issue here. First there is a practical question regarding the decision to continue consuming the artist's or producer's work. This is a question about inclinations to boycott the work of people of whom one disapproves. In many of the preceding cases of performer misconduct, programs have been cancelled by networks in a kind of preemptive strike, prior to any organized protest. Such cancellation (and prospective boycotts as well) are not an indictment of the work, but of the artist or art producer. Programs were cancelled not because artistry had suddenly and radically diminished but because the popularity of the artist had waned for reasons unrelated to artistry.

The second question is less practical but more interesting to an aesthete. Should our judgment regarding the work or performance itself be affected by such disclosures? Is a film less good if it is produced by a rapist, a role less expertly performed if performed by a harasser, a routine less funny if an exploitative exhibitionist performs it? It depends. More precisely, it depends whether the attitudes that we object to—perhaps attitudes according to which the above mentioned conduct is harmless or playful or permissible—are endorsed in the film or performance. That needn't mean, of course, that any actor portraying a rapist must be thought to endorse rape or uncritical attitudes toward it. Nor need it mean that such subjects themselves are out of bounds. A work (or performance) might be thought to endorse a problematic attitude toward objectionable sexual conduct when it invites us to imagine conduct of that kind as attractive or funny or arousing or indicative of a turbulent and passionate character unfettered by restraints afflicting ordinary men. So far, that might provide an ethical ground for condemning a work. But many philosophers believe that such endorsements can undermine aesthetic or artistic worth as well.

In "Of the Standard of Taste" David Hume criticized works in which "vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation" (ST 246). We cannot, Hume continues, "enter into such sentiments; and however [we]... may excuse the poet, on account of the manners of his age, [we]...never can relish the composition" (ST 246). This incapacity or disinclination is thought by philosophers like Noel Carroll to identify an aesthetic flaw, for, Hume continues, a "very violent effort is requisite to...excite sentiments of approbation or blame...different from those to which the mind...has been familiarized" (ST 247). That is, the work or the performance may well have failed to elicit the emotional attitudes of enthusiasm or approbation that it undertook to elicit. (Inserting emergency after-the-fact reference here: this kind of imaginative resistance has been productively and provocatively discussed in the blog of philosopher Kathleen Stock, who recently posted "[Imaginative Resistance and the Woody Allen Problem](#)".)

The disruption of imaginative immersion is held by some (though by no means all) to have a conceptual difficulty at its basis. That is, our conception of the limits of moral permissibility may undermine our ability to imagine nonconsensual sex as a deeply satisfying expression of affection, just because we can't imagine what we can't conceive. We can, of course, imagine that characters believe their conduct is appropriate, even if we do not. But we cannot imagine it permissible ourselves unless we believe the permissibility of such an action or policy is *possible* (perhaps in the unusual context the fiction presents, or in an otherwise restricted range of cases), something which strongly suggests that moral (and probably other) attitudes transcend fictional contexts. In other words, works and performances can make us complicit in the attitudes they endorse. The endorsement of attitudes most are inclined to resist might be thought an aesthetic flaw as well as a moral one.

Enabling The Sociopathy No More

Carol Hay

Is it ok to enjoy art that's made by sexist assholes? I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm kind of sick of the question. I just don't have it in me to sit through one more dinner party conversation monopolized by a mansplaining colleague bent on defending Woody Allen's shitty movies. (I'm just gonna put this out there: most of those movies would suck even if they weren't made by the child-raping, daughter-marrying, embodiment of narcissistic White male entitlement.)

Is it ok to enjoy art that's made by sexist assholes? Does the art celebrate, elevate, or excuse sexist assholery? Then probably not. Otherwise, go nuts. I thought the poststructuralists had decided the author was dead; shouldn't we just evaluate the content of the work itself? On the other hand, it seems to me the mere fact an artist happens to be a certain type of person—a *female*—has been sufficient to discredit the quality of women's work for centuries. If it's good enough for us, I figure it's probably good enough for the assholes.

Does the assholery infect the work? I mean, probably. It's not like there's a shortage of art that wears its hatred for women on its sleeve. "**Women live in objectification the way fish live in water,**" Catharine MacKinnon reminds us. We're surrounded by it, but we've also come to need it, and some days, even like it.

Women have proven themselves more than willing to consume art infected with sexist assholery. What other choice do we have? What else is there? We're trained up from the beginning to identify with a male protagonist, illustrated so succinctly, and brilliantly, by the [Bechdel Test](#) (and its newer variant, the [Sexy Lamp Test](#)). Sandra Bartky called it "[cultural domination](#)"—the phenomenon whereby women are expected to identify with the abstract and universal subject for whom art and culture is purportedly made, even though this subject isn't really universal, it's male.

Most of the media explicitly pitched at women is garbage—chick flicks, rom coms, celebrity gossip, fifty shades of patronizing bullshit—and even if it weren't a cultural wasteland we'd never notice because we've already drunk the Kool-Aid that tells us that anything by women, or for women, is inherently trivial, insubstantial, ephemeral. Real art, real ideas, are by men and for men. We're supposed to count ourselves lucky to serve as their Muses, and any degradation required of us by the appetites of their genius should be given willingly, happily, gratefully. This is as close to greatness as any of us have any reason to hope to get: being jerked off in front of by an asshole.

The real kicker is that it's also up to us to make this sociopathy okay. And we do. We are So Good At Making Nice that we usually don't even notice we're doing it any more. We are so fucking good at our jobs that we've managed to make everyone—ourselves especially—forget how much work we're doing. We dodge the drunken pawing, we laugh off the awkward innuendo, we meekly apologize for friendzoning the guy who has no right to our affections, we gamely pretend the superior isn't flirting with us ([for which Sartre accuses us of bad faith](#)), we bend over backwards to avoid making men feel bad about themselves.

The only time anyone ever notices that something is amiss is when women can't, or won't, keep doing the work of smoothing things over. And now suddenly, out of nowhere, the cat's out of the bag. Tastemakers, idols, the best and brightest of the intelligentsia: turns out they're a bunch of assholes. Perverts. Scumbags. Just a year ago, we were able to explain away the "locker room talk" of the dude who happens to be the actual Commander in Chief, but for some reason we've now hit a tipping point and the accretion of male sins has become impossible to ignore. Every one of us has stories. #Metoo has laid bare the elephant in the room, skeletons burst from closets, dirty laundry flaps in the breeze. What's rotten in our personal state of Denmark is sexuality itself—what MacKinnon started referring to more than thirty years ago as our culture's [eroticization of gendered relationships of dominance and submission](#).

Women are not food. We do not exist to be consumed by men's insatiable sexual voraciousness. We do not exist to nourish the fragile egos of entitled men who look to us to make up for the stings of a world who refuses to bow down to their unrecognized genius. Our adoration is not a consolation prize nor a soothing balm for life's disappointments. Our affections are not awards to be handed out to those deemed most successful.

We're done with it. The endless stream of fungible sexbots is drying up, and we're running out of ways to discredit the women brave enough to call these assholes out. In the words of the inimitable Lindy West, [let the witch hunts begin](#).

Art Makes and Remakes Its Own Ethical Boundaries

David Heti

More or less, I find most of today's conversation about art and morality to be pretty banal. I find it very hard to see how anyone actually concerned with art has any interest in the matter other than to put it to rest. For too long it has been too much of a distraction, and good artists should have better things to be doing (i.e. addressing) with their time.

The question *What are the (permissible) limits of artistic transgression?* can be answered only through art, or, perhaps more properly, the particular piece of allegedly "transgressing" artwork being questioned.

Any attempt to legitimate an artwork (in any way) by reference to a stand-alone code or ethics or standard *outside of or other than* the artwork itself is something to consider only for those who don't care about art ultimately. But, then, the question obviously comes: why does their opinion matter?

In a 22-year-old interview with [BOMB Magazine](#), art critic and old man Dave Hickey said, "simply put, the art and criticism that interest me seek to reconstitute what we think of as 'good.' Maybe you don't have to be 'bad' to make good art, but I suspect that there is no need for art in an environment where we all agree on what's 'good' and on what constitutes 'good' behavior."

None of this is to say, of course, that criminal courts shouldn't deal with criminal matters, or, similarly, that other kinds of courts shouldn't deal with other kinds of non-criminal but similarly expressly legal matters. But, whether it's for me to tell a guy who cheats on his taxes that he shouldn't go out and finish his painting anymore, I think, is really beyond my scope. (And, sometimes, too, of course, "courts of 'public opinion'" can be without rules of procedure, triers of fact, sentencing guidelines, and other such relics of Common, Civil and all other such Law traditions. Full disclosure, though, I am personally not a fan of Facebook.)

The good comic—good ethically and good aesthetically—is the one who calls into question, confuses and provokes the serious. For the comic, the serious is the mark of human folly, vanity, error, and excess. Accordingly, for the comic who cares for the comedic, it is an absolute horror—it is *the* absolute, the *existential* horror—that any comedic possibility could be unconditionally proscribed.

Finally, in general it doesn't matter at all to me to know who or what is behind any work that I like (e.g. Kafka and Giacometti could have been better to their women; Heidegger, to the Jews). In the case of Louis C.K., though, I think back to Joseph Kosuth's line from the essay "[Art After Philosophy](#)": "a work of art is a kind of proposition within the context of art as a comment on art."

In other words, Louis C.K. can tell a joke again, but it just better be a damn fine joke.

Non-Aesthetic Reasons for Engaging with a Work

Shen-yi Liao

Is a comedian's moral failing a good reason to not watch their stand-up special?

To try to answer this question, we might start by asking whether the comedian's moral failing make the stand-up special aesthetically worse. We run into complications quickly. On the one hand, philosophers have not really written about the relationship between a creator's moral failing and their work's moral defect. On the other hand, philosophers have written way too much about the relationship between morality and aesthetics of a work, such that the debate seems not only longstanding, but intractable. (FYI: My own take is that the

relationship between **the morality and aesthetics of a work is varied** and **perhaps moderated by contextual factors**, but too many other philosophers disagree with me.)

But we can also try to answer this question by shifting our focus. In thinking about whether to engage with a work, we need not focus exclusively on our aesthetic reasons for or against doing so. In fact, with our limited cognitive and material resources, we often decide whether to engage with a work on the basis of non-aesthetic reasons.

For example, given that I have a Netflix subscription, I decide on the stand-up comedy specials to watch partly on the basis of what is available for streaming. That is, *availability* is a mundane non-aesthetic reason with which we decide whether to engage with a work.

It is important to recognize that there is also a moral dimension to mundane non-aesthetic reasons like availability. Stand-up specials—like all other human creations—are not produced or consumed in isolation. As is the case with many other facets of our society, the availability of works typically reflect, and are often determined by, the various structural injustices that our society has.

By my count, there are currently **194 single-comedian stand-up specials that are available on Netflix in the US**. 82% of these stand-up specials feature men. Or, to contextualize the disparity another way, there are 35 stand-up specials featuring women comedians, and there are 5 stand-up specials featuring Louis CK.

To decide which engagements with works are worth our while, we should consider the various aesthetic and non-aesthetic reasons collectively. That is, we should not try to answer the question that we started with in isolation. A comedian's moral failing is, after all, just one non-aesthetic reasons amongst many that contribute to our decision. We should ask analogous questions regarding our other non-aesthetic reasons. For example, we might also ask: Is the lack of availability due to structural injustices a good reason to not watch a stand-up special?

But Not Him, Surely
Kate Manne

This piece contains descriptions of sexual violence.

What should we make of the #metoo moment? As powerful man after powerful man with a history of sexual predation has gone down, it's tempting to conclude that the ground has finally shifted. Another possibility: something has changed about the perpetrators. The obvious candidate: they have gotten older.

As such, they are much easier to cast in the common cultural script featuring the "dirty old man"—albeit a powerful variant of the trope, rather than a more pathetic figure.

But it is not as if sexual predators typically begin in their dotage, or even in middle-age. The typical sexual assailant begins to offend during adolescence, according to self-report measures. Moreover, even making an exception for statutory rape cases that are admittedly far from straightforward (morally or legally—of which more later), a significant proportion of sexual assault is committed by juvenile offenders. These offenders are overwhelmingly male, just as with older perpetrators.

The cases to make the most headlines to date bear this out. The allegations against Spacey and Weinstein currently date back to the early or mid-eighties (respectively). Spacey would have been around 24; Weinstein, about 30. Now we can envision each man as a sexual predator, looking back on it; we read the older him back into the narrative told by his victims who were hitherto silent. Yet when a woman came forward to testify that Ed Westwick, 30, had raped her three years prior, a common attitude expressed on twitter was: he's too young and hot to be a predator.

Two more women have since come forward to testify against Westwick.

So why aren't we talking about predators before they become so? Why are we so focused on uber-powerful older men, depicted as monsters, at the expense of recognizing where this tends to start—both statistically speaking, and in the cases of Weinstein and Spacey, specifically?

My hunch is that it has a lot to do with how protective we tend to be of boys and young men, when they are otherwise privileged in being, e.g., white, cis, and non-disabled, at least presumptively. We are extremely reluctant to depict these young men as wrongdoers, or even as doing serious moral damage. And, relatedly, we are highly sensitive to potential harms done to them across the board—sometimes quite appropriately so, in

ways that should be extended to other groups, and sometimes at the expense of acknowledging those who number among these boys' victims.

This sensitivity and protectiveness toward privileged boys in the US context is evinced by who men in positions of power seem to have to wrong before being held accountable. This is true both regarding sexual misconduct, and more broadly, in ways that suggest a diagnosis beyond homophobia (though this is doubtless a contributing factor). Trump was accused by numerous women of sexual assault and harassment, and made egregiously misogynistic and sexually objectifying remarks about women throughout his campaign last year. But it was his characteristically unhinged and sexually braggadocious remarks to the boy scouts of America this year that engendered unprecedented moral disgust and outrage from many hitherto supporters.

Similarly, consider what brought down Milo Yiannopoulos: his remarks about the sexual molestation he had suffered at age fourteen, by an adult male priest, as having done him little harm (on the contrary, he contended). It was vital not to let these gross and pernicious falsehoods stand, of course. But the public outcry was so strong as to cost Yiannopoulos his book deal and position at Breitbart. Whether or not this was the correct outcome (and bearing in mind the fact that victims of sexual abuse are often groomed by their abusers to believe such false exonerating narratives), this was hardly the first damning piece of evidence about Yiannopoulos's character. After all, he had previously egged on his Twitter followers to abuse the Black actress, Leslie Jones, in egregiously misogynistic and racist ways. Though this got Yiannopoulos banned from Twitter, it was not until he was perceived as wronging privileged boys (by being nonchalant about the kind of abuse he himself had suffered) that many erstwhile supporters grew disgusted.

Consider too the victims of abuse by Catholic priests, among other religious leaders. The salient victims are boys, of course. But a significant number (as many as a third, by some estimates) of the actual victims are girls, who tend to be erased from the discourse.

In the case of a figure like Roy Moore in Alabama, she may also be blamed for seducing him—when she was fourteen, and he was in his early thirties. She is depicted as Lolita; he, as a modern-day Joseph, Daddy of Jesus.

So what should we do about all of this? Sometimes, the appropriate corrective is simply to extend as much concern to other victims as we have for those we envisage as prototypical boy scouts and altar boys: i.e., those who are white, cis, middle-class, and non-disabled, in the dominant collective imagination if not in reality. Moral concern and sympathy ought to be evenly distributed across gendered and other intersecting social hierarchies. But another danger is that we will elide the damage boys with this demographic profile do before they are men, typically to other, younger children, in the name of upholding these boys' good names and bright futures.

Roxane Gay wrote, in her devastating memoir, *Hunger*, of the teenage “boys who were not yet men but knew, already, how to do the damage of men.” They had brutally gang-raped her during early adolescence. A prepubescent boy strangled his female classmate on the HBO television series, *Big Little Lies*; me too, I thought to myself, when I watched it. I was grateful for the permission to remember what had seemed to date unspeakable.

There are difficult questions about whether and how to punish and blame boys for such bad behavior, before they know quite what they do, depending on their exact age among other factors. But we must acknowledge *what* they do, and that they do it disturbingly often, statistically speaking. (And though girls are offenders much less frequently, when they are, the same of course goes for them.) We must not forget this for the sake of their victims—male as well as female or non-binary, and both former and future.

Some Thoughts On Art, Appreciation, and Masturbation

Stephanie Patridge

Recently, serious allegations of sexual misconduct have been raised against high-profile men, including male artists—e.g., James Tobak, Kevin Spacey, James Woods, Terry Richardson, and Louis C.K—these are, no doubt, not even the tip of the iceberg. Such public revelations naturally lead us to wonder how we, as appreciators, should respond to the creative works of sexually predatory individuals. One answer is that we should withdraw our financial support of these works to signal that such behavior is intolerable, and to undercut one main incentive for tolerating it (money). Still, success here depends on collective action, and

given that on its opening weekend *Daddy's Home 2*, starring Mel Gibson, outperformed industry expectations, conservative expectations seem warranted. Time will tell.

Still, we might want to know how, when confronted with such creative works, we should respond to the artistic elements of the works. There are two different questions lurking here:

first, might some facts about an artist's moral character impact the appreciative-relevant features of their artworks/cultural products?

and

second, should our willingness to engage with these works from an art-appreciative perspective be affected by our knowledge about the creators?

Many will think that the answer to both of these questions is an obvious "no." After all, Miles Davis, by his own admission, physically abused the women in his life. But, few would think that *Kind of Blue* is somehow made a worse jazz record by this fact, or that our enjoyment should be thereby disrupted. And, we might think that this generalizes to all such cases. But, the truth is more nuanced than this.

Let's take Louis C.K.'s recent admission that he routinely masturbated in front of female colleagues. I will not bother to explain the troubling moral nuances of this case, but it is obviously quite bad. In light of this, we might wonder if in *this* case that the answer to either of our aforementioned two appreciative questions might be "yes". Why might we think that it is? Well, in Louis C.K.'s case, art often imitates life in a way that might be thought to rightly bear on our interpretation of at least some of his comedic and directorial work. After all, masturbation is not an uncommon theme for him. For example, in a stand-up bit about the sexual differences between men and women, he *quips* "I cum everyday, and I've fucked maybe twenty times in my life." This line now seems to have taken on a new, perhaps unintended, expressive meaning.

We might say the same about his recent directorial work *I Love You, Daddy*. Here the main character—who pursues a relationship with a very young show runner, and is said to be thinly veiled nod to Woody Allen—spends an entire scene engaging in mock masturbation in the presence of an unwitting, female actress. Of this scene, film critic Kyle Buchanan *says* that it "cannot help but evoke some of the stories that C.K.'s accusers have just told."

In this sort of case, moral facts about the artist not only *legitimately* affect our appreciative responses, at least some of us are more disturbed and less amused, but we might think that they *should*. Here, art imitates life in a way that will and should alter our appreciative responses—we will likely find it less funny, or at least funny in a different, more painful way. Moreover, we might find that it also affects our assessment of the appreciative properties and even the merit of the work. Given our knowledge about Louis C.K., *I Love You, Daddy* is plausibly less funny, and merits being reviewed to less acclaim than it would otherwise. It seems that sometimes facts about an artist's moral life will affect our interpretation of, attribution of appreciative relevant properties to, and overall evaluation of an artist's work. (A similar claim likely holds for at least some of Woody Allen's work.) Of course, all of this is consistent with the thought that *Kind of Blue* is a note-worthy jazz album, since here there is no plausible claim to be made that we see Davis' moral life manifest in his work, at least not in any troubling way. There are cases, and there are cases.

Finally, it is worth noting that there may be some moral violations that are a bridge too far, and so merit our rejection of an artist's work altogether (whatever we'd say about their appreciative properties). This is not a wildly implausible suggestion. We might think that certain egregious forms of racism are like that. For example, we might think that were Hitler's paintings moderately competent we'd still have a compelling moral reason to avoid responding to them positively. Whether or not Roman Polanski's raping of female children is one such a violation, does not seem to be a settled moral question. Time will tell.

Aesthetics, Morality, and a Well-Lived Life

Matthew Strohl & Mary Beth Willard

Suppose you've been a Woody Allen fan since you were twelve. You've long related to his neurotic characters. You watch *Hannah and Her Sisters* every Thanksgiving. You've amassed a collection of his works on DVD. But in 2014, [Dylan Farrow published her open letter](#), in which she accused Allen, her adoptive father, of molestation. You believe her. That's awful. He's awful. May you still partake of his artwork even while condemning him as a person?

In cases where one's interest in the artwork is low or ambivalent, the choice might be easy. Attention is a scarce and valuable resource, and one can choose to spend it elsewhere. Sometimes, even in cases where one's antecedent interest in the work was high, learning about the moral transgressions of the artist interferes with one's ability to engage with it. For us, the tension between **Bill Cosby's** wholesome image and our perception of him as a vile sociopath makes it impossible to enjoy the comedy routines we were fond of in the 80's. In the case of Woody Allen, he sometimes casts himself or another older man as the love interest of a young ingénue, which may call to mind his alleged crime in a way that interferes with engagement with his work. On the other hand, we do not find that **background knowledge of the accusations against George Takei**, relates to his performance as Sulu in *Star Trek* in a way that interferes with our enjoyment of the work.

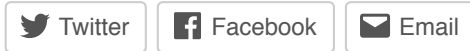
There might be a moral imperative to cultivate a disposition to dislike art that is created by morally reprehensible artists. If the disposition to dislike the artworks in question is a moral virtue, however, it may also be an aesthetic vice. A person who has such a disposition to a high degree would shut their eyes when they walk past **Gauguin paintings in a museum**, **change the station whenever Bowie comes on the radio**, and **never, ever attend The Ring Cycle**. Caravaggio? **Murdered a pimp**. Ezra Pound? **Anti-semitic**. (We could go on. **Many great artists are awful human beings**.) Perpetually viewing art through the lens of the moral character of the artist seems likely to ruin one's enjoyment of art. Someone who lives their life like this might be well on their way to **moral sainthood**, but at the expense of severely impoverishing their aesthetic life.

Questions of social utility are also relevant. The artists just mentioned are all long dead, but many morally reprehensible artists are still alive and kicking. Privately watching a James Toback DVD that's you've owned for twenty years probably has no marginal effect, but buying a ticket to a new film arguably does. If a new Toback movie were successful, **it might put him in a position to harm additional victims**. In cases like this, moral considerations might well override aesthetic considerations, but other cases are less clear. Often, as in Woody Allen's case, while a viral boycott might hold the wrongdoer symbolically accountable, it might also severely harm the careers of their artistic collaborators. One might think they have it coming to them for agreeing to work with Allen, but this seems like a harsh attitude to take towards, for example, a young camera operator whose judgment was understandably colored by an opportunity to move forward in their profession. Such considerations are not decisive, but they might give us pause.

In any case, we take issue with treating moral considerations as *automatically* overriding aesthetic considerations. Aesthetic considerations aren't negligible. Aesthetic value makes an important contribution to a well-lived human life, and great artworks aren't fungible. There's only one *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and engagement with it as an artwork can add significant, irreplaceable value to one's life. This isn't a small thing to give up, especially when it's not clear what doing so will accomplish.

The recent spate of public realizations about the pervasiveness of sexual misconduct must restructure institutional policies going forward, but our private aesthetic lives are another matter. To be clear, we're talking about enjoying the art, not defending the artist. (On the latter, we like [Sarah Silverman's take](#).) We don't think there are easy generalizations available to guide our actions in this domain. We are left as individuals with the difficult, personal work of weighing the aesthetic and moral values in each case.

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