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Oral Presentation, Humanities

My paper, Schrödinger's Artist, explores the connection between a creator and their creation, whether the two are divorceable, and the ethical and social impact of partition. Typically, the two are seen as separate entities. Once a work was completed it existed on its own and was judged only on its own merits. For centuries even after the author had passed away the book was considered alive, with a life of its own.

My focus was on the works of men like Bill Cosby, Pablo Picasso, and Harvey Weinstein, and whether their works can or should be separate from their problematic personal lives. Analyzing a variety of sources and treatments I reached the conclusion that no work exists in a vacuum. The personal life of the creator should be considered when consuming their creation. While it is not my opinion or desire that works should be banned, censored, or ignored based only on the moral shortcomings of their maker, the actions of those architects should influence how we interpret the work itself. If individuals hold the two together and can still enjoy a piece, then they should continue to do so. If they instead find themselves unable to enjoy the work, they should discard it.

In the past there was an unspoken rule that artists could misbehave without it tarnishing good work. Even what people were aware of did not impact their view of the product. So long as no law was not violated, creators could do as they pleased and still enjoy an elevated position within the social pantheon. In the tidal wave of the MeToo Movement and its wake the social landscape has been irreversibly changed. We cannot return to feigning ignorance.