

What do you do when you find out the theologian you respected is kind of slimy?

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It happens all the time: I'm reading a beautiful piece of theology, and while the thinker is waxing on elegantly about God and man, he barrels in on the subject of women or Jewish people, and suddenly I'm hit by a barrage of nastiness.

Or, I'll look up to a living theologian, and then find out how he invited an intern on a vacation without his spouse or cohered a student back to his hotel room at a conference. When you start listening to women academics in religious fields, you find out that it can often be difficult to make it through a Ph. D. without some sort of unwanted sexual tension.

I'm observing from an outsider, of course, but I wonder why harassment so prevalent. Is it the meeting of minds that's exciting and stimulating? Is it a field that's not used to women so men don't quite know how to act? Is the bad behavior as inherent in theology as it is [in philosophy](#)? Is it the power arousal that one gets when he's got so much sway over another person's career? Is it just sexism, manipulation and sliminess?

I don't know what it is, but when I hear stories about men I respect (I haven't heard of any women), I breathe deeply with disappointment. It's often just gossip. But I've been around long enough to know that gossip can be a subversive act—it may be the only defense for someone who is powerless to do anything else.

So what do you do when you're read Augustine's *On the Trinity* and you learn that he didn't believe that women were in the image of God [unless joined with a man](#)?

Or when you read the letters of Hannah Arendt and you learn the extent of Heidegger's Nazism?

Or when you read Hannah Tillich and find out about Paul Tillich's sexual addiction?

What do you do when someone has deeply influenced your thought and you find out about such moral failings?

I know that I would have to throw out all of Christian theology and the Bible itself if I discounted everything on the basis of sexism. But it's often difficult to separate the thought from the action. When does a [philosophical system affect behaviors](#)? What do you do when [philosophical argumentation is used to undermine a woman's reality](#)? Do we use the writings and thought, and simply adhere a warning label to the footnote? When we excuse the sexism of the past, are we also giving a wink and a nod to what happens in the present?