

## How effective is the soft determinist approach in answering questions about sexual ethics?

Soft determinism attempts to combine the opposing theories of hard determinists and libertarians. Despite this, we have to appreciate that soft determinism is not a compromise between the two but rather a way of seeking to bring freedom and accountability together, in congruence to the sense that choices are predetermined by prior choices.

This approach demonstrates that freedom to act means doing what it is that we desire, with no external inferences or coercions and the choices we make are entirely voluntary. Our own values and choices will determine how we will act upon a certain situation. However, these are so complicated that they are almost completely random in their effects and may not actually determine a precise or specific action. In an essence, then, these actions are determined but on the other hand, they are also free due to the lack of external coercion involved.

In terms of the issue of adultery tied with soft determinism, people are inclined to question why a person, even in a loving, happy marriage would succumb themselves to such unforgivable temptation. Tiger Woods, for example has recently been plastered all over the tabloids due to his long drawn sexual antics with numerous amounts of different women during the time of his marriage. He admitted that his addiction was triggered by fame: he felt that he was able to get away with such things, as he felt that his way of life was superior to social normality. Immanuel Kant, being a soft determinist, advocated that looking for causes of our actions outside of knowing and understanding our own will is irrational. Our understanding of the world around us claims that we are free. However, if we then claim to not be free, this renders the problem of who originates our actions. In the case of Tiger Woods, soft determinism would state him to be aware of his moral responsibility. He does this through admitting to the general public that he is in fact a sex addict. However, his admitting that his actions were triggered by his fame may allow for questionability in terms of soft determinism, as this infers that he is blaming external coercion for his substandard actions, which leads more into a hard determinist perspective. A soft determinist would state that Woods, despite the fame, and despite his genetic or hormonal make up, he should still have been able to control his desires as it was his choice in the first place whether to act upon it or not.

The approach in affiliation with homosexuality sees an equal division between whether the aspect should be inferred as right or wrong. 'Exorcism as a psychiatric treatment', by which I literally mean electroshock aversion therapy, is believed to cure a person of having carnal desires for another of the same sex. A person is shown erotic images of the same sex and when aroused, an electric shock is sent through their whole bodies, which should ultimately lead to the halt of same sex desires. This method was stopped in the 1970s when it was evident that the treatment lead to no improvement within the patients. Reinhold Niebuhr stated that the biblical idea of divine providence over human destiny does not remove human freedom, but gives some element of meaning to it. Through this statement, the perception that soft determinism will infer this issue to be one that could not but also could be avoided. The divine providence over a homosexual person may determine their sexual comfort; their sexual orientation. Human freedom, however, allows for that person to choose whether or not they wish to act on such desires. Again, the aspect of moral responsibility is something that raises a question. A homosexual person may due to societal norms of moral perception, think about the consequences of their actions and to understand that anything that they do will always be their responsibility, whatever the consequences. Soft determinism would advocate that the very essence of being homosexual is not wrong in itself, although engaging in widespread homosexual activities such as casual sex, 'cottaging', etc would be going against their moral responsibility. This infers that homosexuality, is in fact a way of life that takes into account both freedom and accountability, as it looks at the issue in a more holistic approach, taking into consideration not only biological and psychological aspects, but also the social factors.