

**How effective is a soft determinist approach in answering questions about sexual ethics?**

A soft determinist believes that hard determinism and libertarianism are compatible with each other. They believe that some acts are determined by external causes and therefore we have no moral responsibility over these actions. And other acts are determined by internal causes and therefore these acts are our own choice and we are morally accountable for them. For example some people may believe that a gay man is not accountable for his orientation but is responsible for acting on it. A soft determinist would say that all sexual acts are the result of internal causes and that we are morally responsible for choosing to act on sexual impulses. Soft determinists would say that rape, sex with a minor, sex with someone who is drunk or someone with learning difficulties is wrong. Kant believes that what makes humans special and different from anything else is our ability to reason “taken by itself (sex) is a degradation of human nature by placing on a level with animal nature”, so he is saying that by giving into our sexual desires and lusts we are giving away our ability to make free rational decisions, as we are choosing to be controlled by our most basic animal instinct and losing our ability to reason. Only sex in a committed relationship makes sense, as you are at least losing your ability to reason with someone who you trust to help you make the right decisions. Kant saw homosexuality as among the “most abominable conduct”, he thought that gay sex was like giving into every sexual desire and was the same as participating in bestiality. Kant didn’t see that homosexuals could also freely choose to be in a committed relationship just like heterosexual relationships, he thought that homosexuality was just an act of lust. Modern day Kantians would think differently, they would think that homosexual sex is ok as long as it’s done in a committed relationship.

Hard determinism rejects the possibility of moral responsibility as we have no free choice. All our actions are determined by external factors and because of this we have no control over any of our actions and therefore cannot be held morally accountable for any of our actions. For example a pedophile is most likely to have been abused when they were younger so their biology and psychology are what has made them have sexual desires for young children. Sometimes we cannot know exactly why a person acts in a certain way, but there will be something that has caused their behavior and ultimately this is out of their control. Hard determinism hopes to explain why people act in certain ways. For example people who are involved in s&m (sex linked to punishment) would have most likely been told in their childhood that sex is bad, so subconsciously they would want to be punished during sex. Soft determinists however would say that even though pedophiles have these sexual desires, it is ultimately their choice whether they act on those desires or not. So predetermined events would have caused them to want to have sex with children but it being compatible with libertarianism would mean that some people could stop themselves from acting on these desires, for example wearing a rubber band around your wrists, and every time the pedophile gets aroused by children then he could flick the rubber band on his wrist so that he learns through punishment that it is wrong to have sexual desires for young children. The hard determinist response is helpful to understand that some behavior especially sexual behavior has hidden causes. But we also need people to be morally responsible so that they can be sexually responsible.