Applied ethics, as opposed to theoretical ethics, examines practical ethical issues those contended by the societies across the globe. It does so by analyzing those issues from the vantage point of one or more ethical theories. Whereas ethical theory is concerned with establishing logically coherent and consistent criteria, applied ethics is concerned with establishing logically coherent and consistent criteria in the form of standards and rules for evaluating moral problems. The principal aim of applied ethics is to analyse specific moral problems through the application of ethical theory to the scenarios where conflicting ideas support both sides of the issue. Contemporary American scholar in ethics Prof. Herman T. Tavani writes:

“As such, those working in fields of applied ethics are not inclined to debate some of the finer points of individual ethical theories. Instead, their interest in ethical theory is primarily with how one or more theories can be successfully applied to the analysis of specific moral problems that they happen to be investigating.”¹

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¹ Herman T. Tavani., *Ethics Technology*, p. 10.
For an example of a practical-ethics issue would be extravagant use of cyber technology and the dispute is the question of whether the exchange of proprietary software, or a digital formatted music files known as MP3 files, over the Internet should be permitted. Those advocating the free exchange of MP3 files could appeal to one or more ethical theory that is based on the principle that our policies and laws should be such that they produce the greatest good (happiness) for the greatest number of people. A utilitarian might argue that MP3 files should be distributed freely over the Internet because the consequences of allowing such a practice would make the majority of users happy and would thus contribute to the greatest good for the greatest number of persons affected.²

On the practical grounds, others might argue that allowing this proprietary material to be exchanged freely over the Internet would violate the rights of those who created, and who legally own the material. Proponents of this view could appeal to a non-utilitarian principle or theory that is grounded in the notion of respecting the rights of individuals. According to this view, the concern is with protecting the rights of individuals who legally own the proprietary material in

² Ibid., p. 11.
question, irrespective of the happiness that might or might not result for the majority of Internet users.

Understanding cyber ethics as a field of applied ethics that examines moral issues pertaining to cyber technology is an important first step. But much more needs to be said about the perspectives that interdisciplinary researchers bring to their analysis of the issues that make up this relatively new field. Most scholars and professionals conducting research in this field of applied ethics have proceeded from one of three different perspectives; professional ethics, philosophical ethics, or descriptive ethics. Gaining a clearer understanding of what is meant by each of these perspectives is useful at this point.³

**Professional ethics:**

Professional ethics could suggest that professionals have their own system of ethics, separate from ordinary ethics. Of course, one could reasonably argue that independent of whether a particular moral issue happens to arise in either a professional or a nonprofessional context, ethics is ethics. The same ethical rules involving honesty, fairness, and so forth should apply to professionals as well as to ordinary individuals, so that if it is wrong for ordinary people to steal, and lie, then it is wrong for professionals as well. Thus one might
conclude that a separate field of study called ‘professional ethics’ is not really needed. However, many ethicists argue that the kinds of moral issues affecting professionals are sufficiently distinct and specialized to warrant separate moral obligations, which exceed those of ordinary individuals. To grasp the essential points in the arguments advanced by these ethicists, it is useful first to understand what is meant by ‘profession’ and ‘professional.’\textsuperscript{4} According to American professor in Engineering Prof. Allan Firmage

“A profession can be understood in terms of the attributes and requirements of a professional practice.”\textsuperscript{5}

Firmage points out that the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) defines a profession as a ‘calling in which special knowledge and skill are used in the given field for the service of mankind.” So ‘having a calling,’ ‘possessing special knowledge and skill,’ and ‘providing a service’ are examples of attributes that would distinguish a profession from many ordinary occupations.\textsuperscript{6}

Prof. Ernest Greenwood (1920 - 2004) a renowned American social philosopher believes that professions are occupational fields that can be distinguished in terms of five characteristics:

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\textsuperscript{3} Herman T. Tavani., \textit{Ethics Technology}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{4} Ronald Levin., \textit{Affirmative Action}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{5} Allan Firmage., \textit{Professional Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct}, p. 54.
a) Systematic theory
b) Authority
c) Community sanction
d) Ethical Codes
e) Culture

For the most part, these five characteristics would certainly apply to the computing profession as well. Consider that the field of computing (relatively known as Information Technology - or simply IT) has a systematic theory of knowledge (computer science); a number of professional societies with ethical codes and an emerging culture (sometimes referred to as a ‘high-tech culture) and poses significant challenges within the realm of Applied Ethics. According to Ernest Greenwood:

“The computing profession differs from traditional professions such as medicine and law, however, with respect to individual autonomy for its members. While many doctors and lawyers work in private practice, most computer professionals are not self-employed; even though some work as independent consultants, most are employed by corporations.”

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6 Ibid.
7 Ernest Greenwood., *Separate Category of Professional Ethics*, p. 27.
Irrespective whether a professional is self employed or by a government agency or a private entity, these challenges trigger further evaluation within the context of Applied Ethics,

**Professionals:**

Professionals who comprise a given profession also tend to possess certain defining attributes and requirements. According to the ‘Engineers’ Council for Professional Development (ECPED), “a professional is one who recognizes his or her obligation to the society by living up to established and accepted codes of conduct.’ Medical doctors, lawyers, accountants, technologists and other professionals often find themselves in situations in which their decisions and actions can have significant social effects. For example, medical doctors can prescribe the use of certain drugs for their patients, who otherwise would have no legal access to them, and lawyers are bound by special obligations such as client confidentiality that would not apply if they were acting as ordinary citizens. In these cases, a professional’s roles and responsibilities are said to differentiate professionals from non-professional persons.

Prof. Elizabeth Buchanan, a renowned contemporary American scholar in Applied Ethics, believes that the roles and responsibilities of professionals are differentiated from ordinary individuals because
professionals are experts in a field, which provides them an advantage over the lay person and that professional's work has the potential to impact, either positively or negatively, the general public at large.’

Buchanan goes on to note that computer professionals (or what she calls ‘information professions’) have the potential to adversely affect an ‘increasingly large and diverse clientele by failing to act responsibly, fairly, timely and appropriately.’ Arguably, these roles and responsibilities differentiate at least certain kinds of computer professionals from ordinary individuals. The extent, to which a computer professional’s roles and responsibilities are highly differentiated, however, is a matter of some dispute. To understand why this is so, it would first help to understand what exactly is meant by the expression ‘computer professional.’

Professional ethics in an organization would mean a set of values, principles and morals followed in the best defined manner governed by broader code of ethics for the given entity. It is these codes of ethics that provides broad guidelines as to what is right and what is wrong, which decision to take and which one to leave. How much can you flex and how much to restrict. Taking professional and

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8 Buchanan, E, and Henderson, K., *Cases in Library and Information Science Ethics*, p. 27.
ethical decisions aren't always easy.⁹ Prof. Mark Miller an American scholar writes:

“Professional code of ethics can be defined as, set of principles that all employees must comply and ensure ethical decision making even in difficult situations. Professional code of ethics is said to be the base platform for every employee to build his career on. Employees define different criteria's, and exceptions based on the heterogeneous situations.”¹⁰

Professional Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct:

Under the definition of professional code of conduct, an unethical behaviour by few employees could cost a lot to the company. It will not only sabotage the employee's career this could bring bad name to the organization as a whole. If the employees of the organization do not behave professionally by following code of ethics, it will reflect badly on the organization's image and this could very damaging overall. It is always advised that the organization must set very high standards for professional code of ethics in order to maintain a stance of trust as well as integrity for which everyone is liable to and everyone can benefit from. This code of professional ethics once imbibed in the culture,

⁹ Mark Miller., *Ethics in Practice*, p. 63.
¹⁰ Ibid., 72.
always reflects various aspects of their lives. Professional code of ethics must be broadly divided into two broad sections:

**Compulsory standard:**

The mandatory standards must apply to all grades of employees working for an organization. It would define that these mandatory standards must be adhered to for professional, legal and ethical reasons. Penalty to the violation of any of these standards must also be an integral part of the compulsory standard.

**Ideal Standard:**

The ideal standard would be defined as the best benchmarking standard available in the market and employees must constantly strive to reach up to that level. It will give the employees a broad outline of what the standardization norm is and not just a division of what is expected and not expected.

A quick example to support this can be the decision making choices such as; to work in favor of the society one lives in, or complying to the data protection act, accountability and responsibility for both success and failure, promising what you can deliver etc. So all these above stated choices and related qualities are subjective and too

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ideal and hence will not give a very clear cut cross sectional analysis and information.

There are multiple ways of imbibing the professional code of ethics in employees.

a) Regular ethics training on professionalism.

b) During induction of a new joiner, companies to imbibe a compulsory security and professionalism training

c) Awarding mechanism for employees who show professional attitudes and behaviours.

d) Penalty violations which could also include firing of a resource for unethical behaviour.

e) Encouragement to set examples for the junior staff on professionalism, integrity and ethics.

f) Framework to encourage reporting of ethical violations to upper management on anonymous basis - such as “Whistle Blower Protection”

g) Professional code of ethics must be a fair blend of respect for co-workers, juniors and seniors, responsibility for one’s role and honesty in the conduct.
Code of Conduct:

In the current contest of globalization companies are bound to operate in various geographies and catering to different societal and ethical demands. However with the recent outbreak of scandals in the corporate world questioned the ethical foundations for such companies and extent of investment made in the “Code of Conduct” for the companies and commitment to train its employees in spreading the culture of ethical conduct among its employees across the globe. Given this background most of the organizations now seem to have a comprehensive code of conduct in place and applicable to all employees. Companies are also creating special focus training modules during induction process for new employees during the induction process. While the companies are free to design their own code of conduct, however they are general guidelines for developing code of conduct such as that it should be clear and written in plain English. It should outline what sorts of behaviour are expected of employees, as well as their responsibilities towards their organization and its customers, clients or service users. A code of conduct does not
imply a generic document, as it will be very different for specific professions.\textsuperscript{12}

Every code of conduct should go into realm of business ethics of an organization. These are usually targeted to explain the non-economic values of an organization. Business ethics explain the philosophy of an organization and include the rights and duties of employees and the corporation as a whole, as well as the relationship between the corporation and its stakeholders.\textsuperscript{13}

Codes of conduct vary from one profession to another but always set out the behaviours and ethics that are expected of its employees or members. A good code of conduct is also regularly reviewed and updated, in consultation with the ethicists and employees it covers. Contemporary philosopher on the “\textit{Critical Thinking’}, Richard Paul writes:

“Codes of conduct will focus mainly on expected behaviours that are not related to the profit making of an organization, rather on behaviours that are expected amongst each other, other professionals, the customers/clients/service users and the wider community. A code of conduct will also make it clear to customers/clients/service users what they can expect from the people that they are

\textsuperscript{12} William Roberts., \textit{Professional Codes of Ethics}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{13} William Roberts., \textit{Professional Codes of Ethics}, p. 27.
dealing with, and what is and isn't considered acceptable behaviour in their dealings with them."\textsuperscript{14}

\section*{Moral Responsibility:}

There is a academic debate on the need to separate "moral" and "responsibility", just as to separate the concept "free" from the concept of "will" in order to better understand "free will," Then we may realize the need to go even further and clarify the relationship between free will and moral responsibility. Some philosophers deflect direct discussion of free will and study it only as the "control condition for moral responsibility."

When a person performs or fails to perform a morally significant action, we sometimes think that a particular kind of response is warranted. Praise and blame are perhaps the most obvious forms such reactions could eventually resort to. For example, one who encounters a car accident may be regarded as worthy of praise for having saved a child from inside the burning car, or alternatively, one may be regarded as worthy of blame for not having used one's mobile phone to call for help. To regard such agents (Samaritan principals) as worthy of one of these reactions is to ascribe moral responsibility to them on the basis of

\textsuperscript{14} Richard Paul., \textit{Codes of Conduct}, p. 9.
what they have done or left undone. Thus, to be morally responsible for something, say an action, is to be worthy of a particular kind of reaction—praise, blame, or something akin to these for having performed it.\textsuperscript{15}

A comprehensive theory of moral responsibility would elucidate the following:

(1) The concept, or idea, of moral responsibility itself;

(2) The criteria for being a moral agent, i.e., one who qualifies generally as an agent open to responsibility ascriptions (e.g., only beings possessing the general capacity to evaluate reasons for acting can be moral agents);

(3) The conditions under which the concept of moral responsibility is properly applied, i.e., those conditions under which a moral agent is responsible for a particular something (e.g., a moral agent can be responsible for an action she has performed only if she performed it freely, where acting freely entails the ability to have done otherwise at the time of action); and finally

(4) Possible objects of responsibility ascriptions (e.g., actions, omissions, consequences, character traits, etc.).\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{16} Carlos Moya., \textit{Moral Responsibility}, \textit{The Ways of Skepticism}, p. 64.
Some Historical Background:

The outline of the origins and trajectory of reflection on moral responsibility in the Western philosophical tradition shows that a distinction will be drawn between two concepts of moral responsibility that have exerted considerable influence on subsequent thinkers.

An understanding of the concept of moral responsibility and its application is presented implicitly in some of the earliest surviving Greek texts, i.e., the Homeric epics (circa 8th century BC but no doubt informed by a much earlier oral tradition). In these texts, both human and superhuman agents are often regarded as fair targets of praise and blame on the basis of how they have behaved, and at other times, an agent's behaviour is excused because of the presence of some factor that has undermined his/her control. Reflection on these factors gave rise to fatalism—the view that one's future or some aspect of it is predetermined, e.g., by the gods, or the stars, or simply some facts about truth and time— in such a way as to make one's particular deliberations, choices and actions irrelevant to whether that particular future is realized (recall, e.g., the plight of Oedipus).

If some particular outcome is fated, then it seems that the agent concerned could not be morally responsible for that outcome. Likewise,
if fatalism were true with respect to all human futures, then it would seem that no human agent could be morally responsible for anything. Though this brand of fatalism has sometimes exerted significant historical influence, most philosophers have rejected it on the grounds that there is no good reason to think that our futures are fated in the sense that they will unfold no matter what particular deliberations we engage in, choices we make, or actions we perform.

Aristotle (384–323 BC) seems to have been the first to construct explicitly a theory of moral responsibility. In the course of discussing human virtues and their corresponding vices, Aristotle begins with a brief statement of the concept of moral responsibility that it is sometimes appropriate to respond to an agent with praise or blame on the basis of her actions and/or dispositional traits of character.¹⁸

A bit later, he clarifies that only a certain kind of agent qualifies as a moral agent and is thus properly subject to ascriptions of responsibility, namely, one who possess a capacity for decision. For Aristotle, a decision is a particular kind of desire resulting from deliberation, one that expresses the agent's conception of what is good.¹⁹

¹⁷ Irwin Terrance., *Classical Philosophy*, p. 225.
¹⁹ Ibid., 1111b5-1113b3.
The remainder of Aristotle's discussion is devoted to spelling out the conditions under which it is appropriate to hold a moral agent blameworthy or praiseworthy for some particular action or trait. His general proposal is that one is an apt candidate for praise or blame if and only if the action and/or disposition is voluntary. According to Aristotle, a voluntary action or trait has two distinctive features. First, there is a control condition: the action or trait must have its origin in the agent. That is, it must be up to the agent whether to perform that action or possess the trait—it cannot be compelled externally. Second, Aristotle proposes an epistemic condition: the agent must be aware of what it is she is doing or bringing about.\(^{20}\)

There is an instructive ambiguity in Aristotle's account of responsibility, an ambiguity that has led to competing interpretations of his view. Aristotle aims to identify the conditions under which it is appropriate to praise or blame an agent, but it is not entirely clear how to understand the pivotal notion of appropriateness in his conception of responsibility. There are at least two possibilities:

a) praise or blame is appropriate in the sense that the agent deserves such a response, given his behaviour and/or traits of character; or

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\(^{20}\) Ibid., 111a-1111b4.
b) praise or blame is appropriate in the sense that such a reaction is likely to bring about a desired consequence, namely an improvement in the agent's behavior and/or character.

These two possibilities may be characterized in terms of two competing interpretations of the concept of moral responsibility:

1) the merit-based view, according to which praise or blame would be an appropriate reaction toward the candidate if and only if she merits—in the sense of ‘deserves’—such a reaction; vs.

2) the consequentialist view, according to which praise or blame would be appropriate if and only if a reaction of this sort would likely lead to a desired change in the agent and/or her behaviour. ²¹

Scholars disagree about which of the above views Aristotle endorsed, but the importance of distinguishing between them grew as philosophers began to focus on a newly conceived threat to moral responsibility. While Aristotle argued against a version of fatalism, he may not have recognized the difference between it and the related possible threat of causal determinism. Causal determinism is the view that everything that happens or exists is caused by sufficient antecedent conditions, making it impossible for anything to happen or be other than it does or is. One variety of causal determinism, scientific
determinism, identifies the relevant antecedent conditions as a combination of prior states of the universe and the laws of nature. Another, theological determinism identifies those conditions as being the nature and will of God. It seems likely that theological determinism evolved out of the shift, both in Greek religion and in Ancient Mesopotamian religions, from polytheism to belief in one sovereign God, or at least one god who reigned over all others. The doctrine of scientific determinism can be traced back as far as the Pre-Socratic Atomists (5th cent. BC), but the difference between it and the earlier fatalistic view seems not to be clearly recognized until the development of Stoic philosophy (3rd. cent. BC). Though fatalism, like causal determinism, might seem to threaten moral responsibility by threatening an agent's control, the two differ on the significance of human deliberation, choice, and action. If fatalism is true, then human deliberation, choice, and action are completely otiose, for what is fated will transpire no matter what one chooses to do. According to causal determinism, however, one's deliberations, choices, and actions will often be necessary links in the causal chain that brings something about. In other words, even though our deliberations, choices, and actions are themselves determined like everything else, it is still the

21 Ibid.
case, according to causal determinism, that the occurrence or existence of yet other things depends upon our deliberating, choosing and acting in a certain way.22

Since the Stoics (Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early 3rd century BC) the thesis of causal determinism and its ramifications, if true, have taken center stage in theorizing about moral responsibility. During the Medieval period, especially in the work of Augustine (354–430) and Aquinas (1225-1274), reflection on freedom and responsibility was often generated by questions concerning versions of theological determinism, including most prominently:

a) Does God's sovereignty entail that God is responsible for evil?

b) Does God's foreknowledge entail that we are not free and morally responsible since it would seem that we cannot do anything other than what God foreknows we will do?

During the Modern period, there was renewed interest in scientific determinism; a change attributable to the development of increasingly sophisticated mechanistic models of the universe culminating in the success of Newtonian physics. The possibility of giving a comprehensive explanation of every aspect of the universe–

including human action in terms of physical causes now seemed much more plausible. Many thought that persons could not be free and morally responsible if such an explanation of human action were possible. Others argued that freedom and responsibility would not be threatened should scientific determinism be true. In keeping with this focus on the ramifications of causal determinism for moral responsibility, thinkers may be classified as being one of two types:

1) An incompatibilist, about causal determinism and moral responsibility, is one who maintains that if causal determinism is true, then there is nothing for which one can be morally responsible.

2) A compatibilist is one who holds that a person can be morally responsible for some things, even if both who she is and what she does is causally determined.\(^{23}\)

In Ancient Greece, these positions were exemplified in the thought of Epicurus (341-270 BCE) and the Stoics (3\(^{rd}\) Century BC), respectively. Above, an ambiguity in Aristotle’s conception of moral responsibility was highlighted–that it was not clear whether he endorsed a merit-based vs. a consequentialist conception of moral

responsibility. The history of reflection on moral responsibility demonstrates that how one interprets the concept of moral responsibility strongly influences one's overall account of moral responsibility. For example, those who accept the merit-based conception of moral responsibility have tended to be incompatibilists. That is, most have thought that if an agent were to genuinely merit praise or blame for something, then he would need to exercise a special form of control over that thing (e.g., the ability at the time of action to both perform or not perform the action) that is incompatible with one's being causally determined.

In addition to Epicurus, we can cite early Augustine, Thomas Reid (1710-1796), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) as historical examples here. Those accepting the consequentialist conception of moral responsibility, on the other hand, have traditionally contended that determinism poses no threat to moral responsibility since praising and blaming could still be an effective means of influencing another's behaviour, even in a deterministic world. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), David Hume (1711-1776), and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) are, along with the Stoics, representatives of this view. This general trend of linking the consequentialist conception of moral responsibility with compatibilism about causal determinism and moral responsibility and
the merit-based conception with incompatibilism continued to persist through the first half of the twentieth century.

Recent Work on the “Concept of Responsibility”

The issue of how best to understand the concept of moral responsibility is important, for it can strongly influence one's view of what, if any, philosophical problems might be associated with the notion, and further, if there are problems, what might count as a solution. As discussed above, philosophical reflection on moral responsibility has historically relied upon one of two broad interpretations of the concept:

1) The merit-based view, according to which praise or blame would be an appropriate reaction toward the candidate if and only if she merits—in the sense of 'deserves’—such a reaction.

2) The consequentialist view, according to which praise or blame would be appropriate if and only if a reaction of this sort would likely lead to a desired change in the agent and/or her behavior. Though versions of the consequentialist view have continued to garner support work in the last 50 years on the concept of moral responsibility has increasingly focused on:

a) Offering alternative versions of the merit-based view; and
b) Questioning the assumption that there is a single unified concept of moral responsibility.\textsuperscript{24}

Increased attention focusing on the stance of regarding and holding persons morally responsible has generated much of the recent work on the concept of moral responsibility. All theorists have recognized features of this practice specifically, inner attitudes and emotions, their outward expression in censure or praise, and the imposition of corresponding sanctions or rewards. However, most understood the inner attitudes and emotions involved to rest on a more fundamental theoretical judgment about the agent's being responsible. In other words, it was typically assumed that blame and praise depended upon a judgment or belief (pre-reflective in most cases), that the agent in question had satisfied the objective conditions on being responsible. These judgments were presumed to be independent of the inner attitudinal/emotive states involved in holding responsible in the sense that reaching such judgments and evaluating them required no essential reference to the attitudes and emotions of the one making the judgment. For the holder of the consequentialist view, this is a judgment that the agent exercised a form of control that could be influenced through outward expressions of praise and blame in order to

\textsuperscript{24} Oderberg, David S., \textit{Applied Ethics: A non-Consequentialist Approach}, p. 45.
curb or promote certain behaviours. For those holding the merit view, it is a judgment that the agent has exercised the requisite form of metaphysical control, e.g., that she could have done otherwise at the time of action.

If holding responsible is best understood as resting on an independent judgment about being responsible, then it is legitimate to inquire whether such underlying judgments and their associated outward expressions can be justified, as a whole, in the face of our best current understanding of the world, e.g., in the face of evidence that our world is possibly deterministic. According to incompatibilists, a judgment that someone is morally responsible could never be true if the world was deterministic; thus praising and blaming in the merit-based sense would be beside the point. Compatibilists, on the other hand, contend that the truth of determinism would not undermine the relevant underlying judgments concerning the efficacy of praising and blaming practices, thereby leaving the rationale of such practices intact.

Free Will to Moral Responsibility:

In his landmark essay, ‘Freedom and Resentment,’ contemporary philosopher P. F. Strawson (1962) sets out to adjudicate the dispute between those compatibilists who hold a consequentialist view of responsibility and those incompatibilists who hold the merit-
based view.\textsuperscript{25} Both are wrong, Strawson believes, because they distort the concept of moral responsibility by sharing the prevailing assumption sketched above – the assumption that holding persons responsible rests upon a theoretical judgment of their being responsible. According to Strawson, the attitudes expressed in holding persons morally responsible are varieties of a wide range of attitudes deriving from our participation in personal relationships, e.g., resentment, indignation, hurt feelings, anger, gratitude, reciprocal love, and forgiveness. The function of these attitudes is to express “…how much we actually mind, how much it matters to us, whether the actions of other people—and particularly some other people—reflect attitudes towards us of good will, affection, or esteem on the one hand or contempt, indifference, or malevolence on the other.”\textsuperscript{26}

These attitudes are thus participant reactive attitudes, because they are: a) natural attitudinal reactions to the perception of another’s good will, ill will, or indifference expressed from the stance of one who is immersed in interpersonal relationships and who regards the candidate held responsible as a participant in such relationships as well.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p.5.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 10
Strawson argued in 1962 that whatever the deep metaphysical truth on the issues of determinism and free will, people would not give up talking about and feeling moral responsibility - praise and blame, guilt and pride, crime and punishment, gratitude, resentment, and forgiveness. These "reactive attitudes" were for Strawson more real than whether they could be explained by fruitless disputes about free will, compatibilism, and determinism. They were "facts" of our natural human commitment to ordinary inter-personal attitudes. He said it was "a pity that talk of the moral sentiments has fallen out of favour," since such talk was "the only possibility of reconciling these disputants to each other and the facts."

Strawson himself was optimistic that compatibilism could reconcile determinism with moral obligation and responsibility. He accepted the facts of determinism. He felt that determinism was true. But he was concerned to salvage the reality of our attitudes even for libertarians, whom he described as pessimists about determinism. "What I have called the participant reactive attitudes are essentially natural human reactions to the good or ill will or indifference of others towards us, as displayed in their attitudes and actions. The question we have to ask is:
“What effect would, or should, the acceptance of the truth of a general thesis of determinism have upon these reactive attitudes? More specifically, would, or should, the acceptance of the truth of the thesis lead to the decay or the repudiation of all such attitudes? Would, or should, it mean the end of gratitude, resentment, and forgiveness; of all reciprocated adult loves; of all the essentially personal antagonisms?”\(^{28}\)

Since Peter Strawson changed the subject in 1962 from free will to moral responsibility, there has been an increasing tendency to equate free will with moral responsibility. From the earliest beginnings, the problem of "free will" has been intimately connected with the question of moral responsibility. Most of the ancient thinkers on the problem were trying to show that we humans have control over our decisions that our actions "depend on us", and that they are not pre-determined by fate, by arbitrary gods, by logical necessity, or by a natural causal determinism.

But to say that today "free will is understood as the control condition for moral responsibility" is to make a serious blunder in conceptual analysis and clear thinking. Free will is clearly a prerequisite for responsibility. Whether the responsibility is a moral responsibility depends on our ideas of morality.

Here are some recent examples of conflating free will and moral responsibility, which we regard as an ethical fallacy. Contemporary American philosopher, John Martin Fischer says:

“Some philosophers do not distinguish between freedom and moral responsibility. Put a bit more carefully, they tend to begin with the notion of moral responsibility, and "work back" to a notion of freedom; this notion of freedom is not given independent content (separate from the analysis of moral responsibility). For such philosophers, "freedom" refers to whatever conditions are involved in choosing or acting in such a way as to be morally responsible.”

It is not clear that there is any single thing that people have had in mind by the term "free will." Perhaps the dominant characterization in the history of philosophy is that it is something like the freedom condition on moral responsibility. Another contemporary American philosopher Prof. Manuel Vargas says:

“Roughly, the idea is that to be morally responsible for something, you had to have some amount of freedom, at some suitable time prior to the action or outcome for which you are responsible. That sense of freedom – whatever it amounts to – is what we mean to get at by the phrase "free will."
However, there may be things for which free will might be important or other senses of free will that are independent of concerns about moral responsibility. For example, philosophers have worried whether free will is required for some human achievements to have a special worth or value, or for there to be values and valuing in any robust sense. According to him “Although I think much of what I will say can be applied to other aspects of thinking about it, I will primarily concerned with free will in its connection to moral responsibility, the sense in which people are appropriately praised or blamed.31

For some Naturalists, the equation of free will and moral responsibility is driven by their goal of eliminating punishment and what they see as a "culture of vengeance." The fallacious reasoning goes something like this - "If free will is required for moral responsibility, we can deny moral responsibility by denying free will."

Naturalists seem to naively accepted the ancient religious arguments that free will is an exclusive property of humans (some religions limit it to males). One strand in the naturalist argument then is to say that humans are animals and so lack free will. It will be interesting to see how they react to the establishment of a biophysical basis for

31 Manuel Vargas., *Four Views on Free Will*, p. 129.
behavioural freedom in lower animals. This behavioural freedom is conserved and showed up in higher animals and humans specifically as freedom of their wills.

Consider the question of how we go from being unfree agents to free agents. This is a puzzle faced by all accounts of responsibility, but there is something pressing about it in the case of libertarianism. As children we either had the indeterministic structures favoured by your favorite version of libertarianism or we lacked them altogether. If we lacked them as children, we might wonder how we came to get those structures. We might also wonder what the evidence is for thinking that we do develop those said structures. Suppose the libertarian offers us an answer to these questions, and the other empirical challenges I raised in the prior section. We would still face another puzzle. What, exactly, does the indeterminism add? What follows the discussion is not so much a metaphysical concern as it is a normative concern. It is a concern about what work the indeterminism does in libertarianism, apart from providing a way to preserve our default self-image as deliberators with genuine, metaphysically robust alternative possibilities.\footnote{Manuel Vargas., \textit{Four Views on Free Will}, p. 148.}
Equating free will with moral responsibility, then to use spurious arguments to deny free will, and thus to deny moral responsibility - in order to oppose punishment - is fine humanism but poor philosophy, and terrible science. Children have free will from birth. It is part of their biological makeup. The solution to the Vargas puzzle is that it is moral responsibility that children “come to get” at some age.

Strawson's concept of moral responsibility yields a compatibilist account of being responsible but one that departs significantly from earlier such accounts in two respects. First, Strawson's is a compatibilist view by default only. That is, on Strawson's view, the problem of determinism and freedom/responsibility is not so much resolved by showing that the objective conditions on being responsible are consistent with one's being determined but rather dissolved by showing that the practice of holding people responsible relies on no such conditions and therefore needs no external justification in the face of determinism. Second, Strawson's is a merit-based form of compatibilism. That is, unlike most former consequentialist forms of compatibilism, it helps to explain why we feel that some agents deserve our censure or merit our praise. They do so because they have
violated, met, or exceeded our demand for a reasonable degree of good will.

**Developments after Strawson:**

Most agree that Strawson's discussion of the reactive attitudes is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the practice of holding responsible, but many have taken issue with his contentions about the insular nature of that practice, namely that:

a) since propriety judgments about the reactive attitudes are strictly internal to the practice (i.e., being responsible is defined in relation to the practice of holding responsible), their justification cannot be considered from a standpoint outside that practice; and

b) since the reactive attitudes are natural responses deriving from our psychological constitution, they cannot be dislodged by theoretical considerations. Responding to the first of these, some have argued that it does seem possible to critique existing practices of holding responsible from standpoints outside them. For example, one might judge that either one's own existing community practice or some other community's practice of holding responsible ought to be modified.  

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such evaluations are legitimate, then, contrary to what Strawson suggested, it seems that an existing practice can be questioned from a standpoint external to it. In other words, being responsible cannot be explicated strictly in terms of an existing practice of holding responsible. This then, would suggest a possible role to be played by independent theoretical conditions on being responsible, conditions which could prove to be compatibilist or incompatibilist in nature.

Objecting to the second of Strawson's anti-theory contentions, some have argued that incompatibilist intuitions are embedded in the reactive attitudes themselves so that these attitudes cannot persist unless some justification can be given of them, or more weakly, that they cannot but be disturbed if something like determinism is true.

Here, cases are often cited where negative reactive attitudes seem to be dispelled or mitigated upon learning that an agent's past includes severe deprivation and/or abuse. There is a strong pull to think that our reactive attitudes are altered in such cases because we perceive such a background to be deterministic. If this is the proper interpretation of the phenomenon, then it is evidence that theoretical considerations, like the truth of determinism, could in fact dislodge the reactive attitudes.34

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34 Nagel, Thomas., *The View From Nowhere*, p. 125.
Versions of Strawson's view continue to be very ably defended, and shortly, more will be said about the significant way in which his work continues to shape contemporary discussion of the concept of responsibility. However, many have taken objections of the above sort to be decisive in undermining the most radical of Strawson's anti-theory claims. Incompatibilists, in particular, seem largely unpersuaded and so have continued to assume a more or less traditional merit-based conception of moral responsibility as the basis for their theorizing. A number of compatibilists also remain unconvinced that Strawson has successfully shown independent theoretical considerations to be irrelevant to ascriptions of responsibility. It is noteworthy that some of these have accorded the reactive attitudes a central role in their discussions of the concept of responsibility. The result has been new merit-based versions of compatibilism.  

It is likely that Strawson and others writing on moral responsibility have traditionally seen themselves as attempting to articulate an account of responsible agency that would map onto what was presumed to be a unitary and shared concept of moral responsibility. However, more recently a number of authors have suggested that at

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least some disagreements about the most plausible overall theory of responsibility might be based on a failure to distinguish between different aspects of the concept of responsibility, or perhaps several distinguishable but related concepts of responsibility.

Broadly speaking, a distinction has been drawn between responsibility understood as attributability and responsibility as accountability. The central idea in judging whether an agent is responsible in the sense of attributability, say for an action, is whether the action discloses something about the nature of the agent's self.\textsuperscript{36} Some hold additionally that a judgment of responsibility in this sense includes an assessment of the agent's self as measured against some standard (though not necessarily a moral standard)-i.e., that our interest is in what the action discloses about the agent's evaluative commitments.\textsuperscript{37} Perhaps the clearest example of a conception of responsibility emphasizing attributability is the so-called “ledger view” of moral responsibility. According to such views, the practice of ascribing responsibility involves assigning a credit or debit to a metaphorical ledger associated with each agent. To regard an agent as praiseworthy or blameworthy in the attributability sense of responsibility

\textsuperscript{36} Watson, Gary., \textit{Two Faces of Responsibility}, p. 228.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 235.
is simply to believe that the credit or fault identified properly belongs to the agent.\textsuperscript{38}

To be responsible for an action in the sense of being accountable (or “appraisable” according to the terminology of some) presupposes responsibility in the sense of attributability. However, to judge that an agent is responsible in the further sense of being accountable entails that the behaviour properly attributed to the agent is governed by an interpersonal normative standard of conduct that creates expectations between members of a shared community (whereas the standard invoked above may or may not be thought to generate interpersonal expectations). In this way, the concept of moral responsibility as accountability is an inherently social notion, and to hold someone responsible is to address a fellow member of the moral community.\textsuperscript{39} By emphasizing the way the reactive attitudes were tied to expectations of goodwill grounded in our interpersonal relationships, Strawson drew attention to this social aspect of responsibility. Recent attempts to further articulate how best to understand the relevant notion of holding responsible and its relation to being accountable reflect his on-going influence.

An agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy, in the sense of accountable, if one is warranted, or justified, in holding her responsible. On one popular view, holding someone responsible is interpreted as regarding him or her as an apt candidate for the reactive attitudes and possibly other forms of reward or censure based on what the agent has done.\textsuperscript{40} On another view, holding someone responsible is fundamentally a matter of making a moral judgment accompanied by an expectation that the agent who performed the act acknowledge the force of the judgment or provide an exonerating explanation of why he/she performed the action. To hold someone responsible is thus to be one to whom an explanation is owed. On this view, the reactive attitudes and associated practices are grounded in this more fundamental expectation.\textsuperscript{41}

Since the reactive attitudes and associated practices may have consequences for the well-being of an agent (especially in the case of those blaming attitudes and practices involved in holding someone accountable for wrong-doing), they are justified only if it is fair that the agent be subject to those consequences.\textsuperscript{42} The fairness of being

\textsuperscript{39} McKenna, Michael., \textit{The Limits of Evil and the Role of Moral Address}, pp. 123-142.
\textsuperscript{40} Watson, Gary., \textit{Two Faces of Responsibility}, p.235.
\textsuperscript{41} Scanlon, T.M., \textit{What We Owe to Each Other}, pp. 268-271.
\textsuperscript{42} Wallace, James., \textit{Excellences and Merit}, pp. 103-117.
subject to those consequences has often, in turn, be interpreted as the
source of the idea that praise and blame are justified only if they are
merited in the sense of deserved.43
The recognition and articulation of diversity within the concept (or
amongst concepts) of moral responsibility has generated new reflection
on the nature of and prospects for theories attempting to spell-out the
conditions on being morally responsible. While some continue to
believe that a plausible unified theory can be offered that captures the
conceptual diversity sketched above, a number of others have
concluded that at least some of the conditions for the applicability of
our folk concept are in tension with one another;44 For example, some
have argued that while a compatibilist sense of freedom is necessary
for attributability, genuine accountability would require that agents be
capable of exercising libertarian freedom. A rapidly expanding body of
empirical data on folk intuitions about freedom and responsibility has
added fuel to this debate.45

If there are irreconcilable tensions within the concept of
responsibility, then the conditions of its application cannot be jointly

43 Watson, Gary., Two Faces of Responsibility, pp. 238-239.
44 Honderich, Ted., Determinism as True, Both Compatibilism and Incompatibilism
as False and the Real Problem, Vol. 2. Ch. 1.
45 Vergas, Manuel., Responsibility and the Aims of Theory: Strawson and
Revisionism, pp. 218-241.
satisfied. Of course, there have always been those—e.g., hard determinists—who have concluded that the conditions on being morally responsible cannot be met and thus that no one is ever morally responsible. However, a noteworthy new trend amongst both contemporary hard determinists and others who conclude that the conditions for the applicability of our folk concept cannot be jointly satisfied has been the move to offer a revisionist conception of moral responsibility and its associated practices rather than to reject talk about being responsible outright.\footnote{Revisionism about moral responsibility is a matter of degree. Some revisionists seek to salvage much if not most of what they take to be linked to the folk concept, while others offer more radical reconstructions of the concept and associated practices.}

The future direction of reflection on moral responsibility is uncertain. On the one hand, there has been a resurgence of interest in metaphysical treatments of freedom and moral responsibility in recent years, a sign that many philosophers in this area have not been persuaded by Strawson’s central critique of such treatments. On the other hand, discussion of the place and role of the reactive attitudes in

\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Pereboom, Derk., \textit{Living Without Free Will}, pp. 199-212.}
human life continues to be a central theme in accounts of the concept of responsibility.

What is clear is that the long-standing interest in understanding the concept of moral responsibility and its application shows no sign of abating. This critical analysis of moral responsibility in the above historic and didactic perspectives holds the framework for analysing the contemporary global issues within the realm of Applied Ethics and more so, on the subjects related to Code of Ethics and specifically with emphasis on the Professional Ethics.