

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

# Normative fundraising ethics: A review of the field

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The ethics of fundraising has received scant attention in the academic literature, while there is not a huge amount in the grey and practitioner literature either. There is little that explicitly describes normative theories of fundraising—broad concepts of how fundraising ought to be practised, from which recommendations for applied ethical practice can be drawn. This is the first review of the literature on fundraising ethics, articulating, synthesising and naming (often for the first time) 14 ethical theories/lenses that can be inferred (few are explicitly stated as normative ethical theories) from the literature. In so doing, this review provides scholars and practitioners with a much firmer conceptual foundation for examining and developing professional fundraising ethics, and for analysing applied practice and finding solutions to the ethical dilemmas in applied practice.

## KEYWORDS

ethics, fundraising

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The ethics of fundraising is a topic that has received scant attention from scholars and academics. When ethics is addressed by fundraising practitioners, it generally focuses on solving applied ethical dilemmas, but it often does this without basing this guidance in scholarship. As is expounded below, writing about the ethics of fundraising tends to focus on the domain of applied ethics—what to do in particular ethical dilemmas—rather than normative ethics—general theories about how to practice fundraising ethically.

This is the first review of the field of normative fundraising ethics that attempts a comprehensive review. As such, it is collating the field from scratch, and thus some parameters have been set on the type of papers and other sources that have been included.

First, this review considers only normative theories of fundraising ethics. While the concepts of applied and normative ethics are explored further below, for the purposes of this review, a normative theory of fundraising ethics is one that can be formulated in general terms that could be applied to specific situations, for example:

Fundraising is ethical when it promotes and protects trust in fundraising and unethical when it harms trust.

More formally, these ethical theories can be stated as: Fundraising is ethical when X and unethical when NOT X—where X is a set of conditions such as ‘protects trust in fundraising.’

Few papers state that their purpose is to describe a normative theory of fundraising ethics (or a theory of normative fundraising ethics). Only Kelly (1998) and MacQuillin (2016a)/MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019) state this as their aim. Therefore, this review infers, draws out and synthesises the normative theories—sometimes naming them for the first time. For example, while many writers talk about the importance of trust in and to fundraising ethics, this idea was described and named as a formal theory (the example above) by MacQuillin (2016a).

These normative lenses can be applied to any number of ethical decisions. But the review does not consider in detail examinations of specific ethical dilemmas and how these might be solved—two perennial examples being so-called ‘tainted money’ and commissioned-based remuneration for fundraisers—even if it could be possible to

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reverse engineer from these specific, applied cases a general theory of fundraising ethics that had wider application. Future work on normative fundraising ethics may achieve that.

Second, this review aims to describe the efforts and attempts of the fundraising profession (both academic and practitioner branches) to conceptualise and create its own professional ethics, rather than attempts by those outside the fundraising profession to decide what the ethics of a profession other than their own ought to be, which may be problematic for a number of reasons and invite critique and criticism which is beyond the scope of this review. Further work or future iterations of this review may take this on.

A paper or other source therefore needs to satisfy one of three criteria for inclusion in the review:

- i. It is published in the fundraising literature (academic, grey and practitioner)
- ii. It is written by a member of the fundraising profession, both practitioner and academic branches
- iii. It is intended to be read by a fundraising audience.

For example, papers published in journals such as *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* and *New Directions in Philanthropic Fundraising* are thus considered for inclusion in this review, because they meet criterion i. There is little academic scholarship on fundraising ethics, and so a review such as this must turn to the grey literature and practitioner literature, which also meet criterion i. A paper such as MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019), while published in a non-fundraising specialist journal, is written by members of the fundraising profession, and thus meets criterion ii; and is also intended for a fundraising audience, satisfying condition iii. Condition iii would also be satisfied by, say, a newspaper article written by a regulator or a book written by a donor, which, while not satisfying conditions i or ii, nonetheless intentionally and specifically include fundraisers among their intended readerships. As it happens, only one source (De Bock & Faseur, 2017) that falls under criterion iii substantially contributes to this review. This criterion may become more relevant in subsequent iterations of this review.

It follows that this review considers only papers that are specifically concerned with conceptualising and developing fundraising ethics, or ethics in the specific context of fundraising. It does not consider ethical theories or ideas from non-profit studies generally (e.g., Dart, 2004; Witesman, 2016), public relations ethics (e.g., Parsons, 2016—although Kelly, 1998 has taken just this approach) and marketing ethics (e.g., Smith & Murphy, 2012), nor the ethics of philanthropy/charitable giving (e.g., Illingworth et al., 2011; Woodruff, 2018), and attempt to adapt these to the ethics of fundraising. In other words, this review only seeks to describe ideas that have already been constructed in the context of fundraising ethics and does not seek to create, infer or synthesise new ideas from outside of that context.

Further, even though they may emanate from within the fundraising profession, only ideas that are conceived of in relation to fundraising ethics are considered: this review does not (in the main)

seek to synthesise new ethical concepts from ideas that have not already been presented in the context of ethics. This is further explained in the section ‘What is fundraising?’ below.

It might be helpful to further consider the context of this review by looking at a paper that tackles fundraising ethics but is not included. Hobbs (2017) explores the ethics of using behavioural nudge techniques in fundraising for global poverty, concluding that such methods are unethical because they could have harmful long-term consequences by obviating the need for ‘rational deliberation’ (Hobbs, 2017) on global poverty before giving.

First, this is a case of the ethics of a specific ethical dilemma, and while it might be possible to go backwards to develop a general theory of ethics along the lines of—‘fundraising is unethical when it removes the need for rational deliberation on the purpose of giving,’ or some such—doing so is not within the remit of this review, as defined. (Though see Section 4.1, below, which comes close to such an idea, particularly in regard to the ethics of using ‘scientific persuasion.’)

Second, this article fails to satisfy any of the three criteria for inclusion in the review, having originated from outside the fundraising profession, been published outside the fundraising literature, and not including fundraisers as a primary audience. Of course, this does not mean that the paper—or others that do not meet any of these three criteria—*could not* be included in the review: they could if they presented a good and self-contained position. However, in this case, Hobbs fails to distinguish between acquisition and retention/stewardship fundraising techniques, which are problematic in synthesising a general ethical theory out of this specific case, and doing so would require analysis that is beyond the scope of this review.

As a further caveat, papers dealing with fundraising ethics originating outside the fundraising profession often fail to cite any of the academic scholarship that has been done on fundraising ethics, drawing their citations from their own disciplines (e.g., Venable & Wagner, 2005; Hobbs, 2017; Caulfield et al., 2020, and to an extent, De Bock & Faseur, 2017).

This review is structured as follows. First, there is a discussion of what is meant by ‘fundraising’; until we agree on a definition of ‘fundraising’ it will be hard to decide if what we are doing is ethical. The review then moves on to a brief introduction to ethical concepts, principally distinguishing between applied and normative ethics and outlining the main strands of normative ethical theory: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics. Now the review moves into fundraising ethics proper, looking at the ‘ethics gap’ (MacQuillin 2016a) between theory and applied ethics in fundraising. Then comes the meat of this review—descriptions of the various theories of normative fundraising ethics. We first consider ideas grounded in Aristotelian virtue ethics, before moving on to look at a series of ideas that are built upon consequentialism and deontology. Returning to virtue ethics, we explore ethics in fundraising from the perspective of non-Aristotelian virtue ethics and care ethics, before concluding with the most recent ideas on fundraising ethics deriving from critical theory and decolonisation.

## 1.1 | What is fundraising? Its ethical and moral context

There is no consensus definition of what fundraising is. In 2006, the (now Chartered) Institute of Fundraising provided a succinct description of fundraising (Institute of Fundraising, 2006, p. ix):

‘The principle of fundraising is to raise money by asking for it.’

By the middle of the next decade, the (C)IoF had expanded this to (cited in Breeze, 2017, p. 3):

‘Fundraising is the act of raising resources (especially, but not only money) by asking for it, to fund the work your organisation carries out, including front-line activity and overheads.’

For reasons that are not relevant to this review, this does not qualify as a definition of fundraising, but it nails down two essential and key components of fundraising from which its professional ethics stem: it involves (1) asking someone to (2) donate money to charity. Marion (1994) pp. 54–55 argues the role of fundraisers is to facilitate the transfer of money from a ‘willing donor’ to a ‘worthy cause’ (which implies it is not the role of fundraisers to do this for ‘unworthy’ causes, though who is the arbiter of what counts as ‘worthy’?); and it raises an ethical question about what a fundraiser can do to encourage or ensure the donor’s ‘willingness’; while Pribbenow (1994) p. 28 says fundraisers serve the public interest by raising money for charities that serve ‘important missions’ (but what of ‘unimportant’ ones?).

Davis (2010) p. 94 says that professions are characterised by service to a ‘moral ideal’ in a ‘morally permissible way, beyond what the law, market, morality and public opinion would otherwise require.’ A conception of the moral ideal of fundraising, drawn directly from Davis, is: ‘Ensuring that charities and other voluntary and non-profit organisations have sufficient income to carry out their core charitable purpose and improve the lives of their beneficiaries.’ (MacQuillin, 2017, p. 20). As will be seen, other writers have different ideas about what the moral ideal, or moral ‘commitment’ (Pribbenow, 1994, p. 44) of fundraising ought to be. Nonetheless, underscoring all of this is that it is the fundraiser’s job to raise the money a charity needs, and, since fundraisers are ‘morally required’ to do their jobs (as is everyone), they are morally required to bring in money; in fact it is their ‘primary responsibility’ (Elliott & Gert, 1995, pp. 33–34). Gooch (1995) p. 87 says the same. Ensuring charities are sufficiently funded through voluntary donations is thus a moral duty/responsibility of fundraisers; failing to discharge this duty may be a moral/ethical failure (ibid, p. 34) (it is certainly a professional failure).

There are many conceptions of fundraising that are fuller and go well beyond the (C)IoF’s principle of ‘raising money by asking for it,’ which attract criticism for being too simple and overly focused on money (Breeze, 2017, p. 3). Breeze (ibid, p. 161) has devised a sophisticated concept of the role of fundraisers and fundraising that

captures three key aspects that go further than ‘simply raising funds,’ which she calls the 3Fs. Fundraisers:

1. Foster a philanthropic culture in society and within charitable organisations
2. Frame needs—by establishing the legitimacy of causes and educating potential donors about the existence of credible voluntary solutions
3. Facilitate donations—by providing a trusted, life-enhancing and ongoing conduit for philanthropic giving.

This is presented as an aspirational, normative concept for fundraising—how fundraising ought to be practised. But at no point does Breeze present it as an ethical theory of fundraising, and—while it may be possible to construct an ethical theory from her ideas—because she has not done so, it is not considered as such in this review. However, more sophisticated concepts (it is not a definition) of fundraising such as this raise ethical questions of their own. Would it, for example, be unethical for fundraisers not to frame needs as Breeze’s second ‘F’ requires? The charge arraigned by Hobbs (2017) against fundraising with nudge techniques—that fundraising is potentially unethical if it frames needs in such a way that they do not require ‘rational deliberation’ about whether to donate—can be viewed as a failure to frame needs appropriately, as required by Breeze’s second F.

The second F also talks about establishing the ‘legitimacy’ of causes. As previously discussed, Marion (1994) pp. 54–55 says the role of fundraising is to facilitate donations to ‘worthy’ causes, while Pribbenow (1994) p. 28 says the causes fundraisers serve should be ‘important’ ones. This raises questions about the ‘legitimacy’ of causes—are ‘unworthy’ and ‘unimportant’ causes less legitimate, and who gets to decide.

Even when not explicitly presented as ethical theories of fundraising, normative concepts of fundraising nonetheless raise ethical questions about fundraising that they do not, themselves, provide answers to: for example—is it ethical to raise money for a cause that is ‘illegitimate,’ ‘unworthy’ or ‘unimportant,’ assuming criteria for establishing such things can be developed?

## 1.2 | What is ethics?

Dictionaries provide a two-fold definition of ethics<sup>1</sup>:

1. The philosophical study of the moral value of human conduct and of the rules and principles that ought to govern it
2. A social, religious, or civil code of behaviour considered correct, especially that of a particular group, profession, or individual.

The two concepts are not mutually exclusive: Any code of practice and the ethical considerations that derive from it can be—and ought to be able to be—analysed in terms of the principles of the first concept of ethics. Normative ethics attempts to identify the content

of moral judgements, the criteria for right and wrong and to provide general theories of how we ought to live. Normative ethics provides the theoretical and conceptual context for understanding and deciding upon the right (i.e., ethical) course of action in ethical dilemmas in specific applied domains and contexts, such as racial equality or animal rights, and of course, the things we should refrain from doing (Singer, 1986, p. 3). While applied ethics in codes of practice strictly prescribe right and wrong courses of action (MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019), in non-code settings, on in grey areas within codes, normative ethics helps us to understand not just that something is the right thing to do (*what* that right thing is), but *why* it is the right thing to do. Further, grounding applied ethics in normative theory helps to ensure that ethical principles used to make applied decisions are, first, the appropriate ones to be using, and second, that they applied consistently and appropriately (LaFollette, 1997, p. 5).

The three major approaches to normative ethics are: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics.

Consequentialism (sometimes called teleology—e.g., Anderson, 1996) dictates that we are morally obliged to act in a way that produces the best consequences (hence the name) and the moral rightness of an act depends only on its consequences. Perhaps the best-known consequentialist theory is Utilitarianism (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2003).

In contrast to consequentialism (it's 'foil'—Alexander & Moore, 2007/2020) is deontology—or 'duty-based ethics.' Deontological ethics requires us to carry out an act because it is the 'right thing to do' because it conforms to a moral norm, irrespective of the consequences: what is right takes precedence over what is good (ibid, s. 2).

Virtue ethics describes a raft of theories and ideas that 'emphasise the role of character and virtue' in moral philosophy, rather than focusing on bringing about the best consequences or doing one's duty (Athanasoulis, n.d.). In a nutshell, virtue ethics prescribes the right course of action as the one that a virtuous person would take in the same situation (ibid). Virtue ethics comes in two main varieties: Aristotelian, which focuses on the *character* of the agent, and how they act on that character—for example by displaying courage; and non-Aristotelian (Slote, 2001; Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016, s. 2.2), which is based on the motives of agents (it is agent-based: did they have virtuous motives for doing what they did?).

### 1.3 | Applied ethics in fundraising and the gap between normative theory

Much of the literature on fundraising ethics (particularly the grey and practitioner literature) considers applied ethics—resolutions to particular ethical dilemmas in fundraising and/or decision-making frameworks to be able to make such resolutions. However, this is often done in the absence of normative theory in which to ground the applied ethical decision-making. As an example, the first edition of *Ethical Fundraising—A Guide for Nonprofit Board and Fundraisers*<sup>2</sup> (Pettey, 2008) describes itself as providing 'practical and helpful

guidance for all fundraising and nonprofit professionals' (ibid, p. xvi), and contains chapters on 'the appearance of impropriety,' 'rights of donors,' 'tainted money' and 'ethical relationships between grantees and funders.' Yet since the words 'consequentialism' and 'deontology' do not feature once throughout the book's 330 pages, the practical guidance the book does offer is not necessarily explicitly grounded in normative theory.

The range of ethical issues explored in the practitioner and grey literature can also be quite narrow, and is dominated by two issues in particular: commission-based payment and so-called 'tainted money.' Commission-based payment refers to accepting a percentage of money raised as remuneration (e.g., Boris & Odendahl, 1990, p. 1999; Anderson, 1996, pp. 65–68) and is prohibited by most codes of practice (e.g., Association of Fundraising Professionals 1992/2016). Fischer (2000) pp. 20–29 uses this issue as the basis for an ethical decision-making model. 'Tainted money' describes donations from an ethically dubious source or a source that conflicts with a charity's mission (e.g., Payton, 1987; Harrison, 2001; Tempel, 2008; and professional guidance, such as the Chartered Institute of Fundraising, 2018).

Applied ethics is also found in various self-regulatory codes of practice, which contain many common core proscriptions/provisions—such as a ban on payment by commission (Rosen, 2005, p. 177). Codes of practice and standards constitute the skeleton of fundraising's professional ethics, and it would be unethical to perform any action that is expressly prohibited by the code (MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019). However, not all matters of professional ethics can be satisfied by referring to the code of practice, since not all matters of professional ethics can be reduced to a code of practice or standards: there are many grey areas about which codes are ambiguous or silent.

Whereas professional standards set strict liability offences—compliance with which much of the practitioner literature stresses (e.g., Pettey, 2008, 2013)—professional ethics is better conceived of as a set of aspirational principles that signatories strive to achieve (Lloyd & de las Casas, 2006). Professional ethics is thus focused on interpreting and navigating those issues and dilemmas that are not explicitly covered by the code (MacQuillin et al., 2019, p. 11). Professional ethics is thus the muscle and organs that wrap around the skeleton of the code.

The lack of normative ethics underpinning the guidance on applied ethics in fundraising has been described as an 'ethics gap' (MacQuillin 2016a).

## 2 | VIRTUE ETHICS IN FUNDRAISING—ARISTOTLE

Although compared to deontology and consequentialism, virtue ethics is a minority view of contemporary ethicists (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016, s. 4), some of the earliest scholarly writing about fundraising ethics was heavily informed by virtue ethics and, more specifically, Aristotelian virtue ethics, which focuses on the character

of the agent (O'Neil, 1994; Pribbenow, 1994, 2013a; Anderson, 1996, pp. 1–9).

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* describes 12 virtues, including courage, modesty, pride, and so forth. To act ethically is to achieve the virtuous mean between excesses and deficiencies of these virtues. For example, a deficiency of courage leads to cowardice but an excess leads to 'rashness.' Living these virtues will enable a person to live the good life ('*Eudaimonia*') and experience human flourishing.

Aristotle does not include philanthropy *per se* as a virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics*, and rarely uses the noun 'philanthropy'—whenever the adjective 'philanthropic' appears, it is used in the sense of 'benevolent' or 'humane,' but not to connote the giving of aid to a public good or need (Davis, 1996, p. 2). But he does discuss the virtue of 'liberality,' which is the virtue associated with giving small sums and the disposition to 'give for the nobility of giving'. Aristotle talks about 'right giving,' saying the noble will 'give to the right people, and the right amount, and at the right time....,' with 'right giving' stemming from a person's character (as do all Aristotelian virtues). Not giving when appropriate is a failure of 'meanness.' However, giving excessively, to the wrong person or when it is ill-timed, is prodigal. Both are to be condemned (*ibid* pp. 2–3). When giving gradates from large to small sums, the virtue shifts from one of 'liberality' to 'magnificence'—such as lavish gifts to the public good, public banquets and buildings, and votive offerings. While Aristotle stresses that the giver should maintain an appropriate level of 'magnificence' relative to his resources and position in the community—otherwise he succumbs to prodigality—he places no prohibition on the giver receiving benefits in return. Incidentally, magnificence is intended to benefit the city as a whole, but any benefit to the poor 'is at best secondhand' (*ibid* pp. 3–4).

O'Neil (1994) p. 4 sees fundraisers as 'moral trainers' to philanthropists. Fundraisers provide people with 'opportunities and incentives to practice generous acts and therefore become generous' (*ibid*, pp. 4–5); while helping people make 'good decisions about giving...to the right persons in the right amounts at the right time' (which implies that there are 'bad' giving decisions that donors could make), and even deterring people from giving too much if their resources are limited. O'Neil also suggests that the role of the fundraiser is to encourage pleasure in giving. The 'moral significance' of fundraising is therefore to encourage people to become more generous (*ibid*, p. 6) by the 'cultivation of the general habit of altruism' (*ibid*, p. 7), since 'most rich people could use a little push...enter the fundraiser' (*ibid*, p. 6).

That the role of fundraising is to help donors find the virtuous mean ('right giving') of liberality and magnificence is a very Aristotelian idea. Gunderman (2010) argues that the role of fundraisers is to enable people to experience human flourishing by facilitating and encouraging donors' generosity. However, O'Neil does not develop this into an argument that this constitutes ethical fundraising, nor that failing to do this would be unethical; like Breeze's (2017) 3Fs, this appears to be a normative aspiration for the practice of fundraising.

Since Aristotelian virtue ethics is founded on the character virtues of an ethically virtuous person, many writers have attempted to identify the appropriate virtues of ethical fundraisers.

In 2011, the Association of Fundraising Professionals launched the Ethics Assessment Inventory, a tool that fundraisers can use to find out how ethical they are (Shoemaker, 2013 p. 263). Based on a survey of more than 2500 members, the EAI identified the 'six key dimensions or characteristics of ethical fundraising' (*ibid*, p. 267). These are Adherent/Observant, Trustworthy/Sincere, Accountable, Integrity, Transparent, Courageous. They are listed in the order of importance identified by Pribbenow (2013a) p. 6.

Adherent/Observant (considered the most important characteristic of ethical fundraising by Pribbenow) means adhering to the relevant code of practice (Shoemaker, 2013, p. 268), which places this characteristic in the domain of applied ethics.

Accountability and trustworthiness (and trust) are two characteristics/dimensions that recur in the discussion of deontological and consequentialist theories of fundraising ethics. A specific question regarding accountability is 'accountability to whom'? The old version of the AFP's International Statement on Ethical Principles in Fundraising (which was replaced in 2018) required fundraisers to be 'strictly answerable' (i.e., accountable), to their donors, beneficiaries and their organisations, but gave no guidance how to manage and balance these accountabilities (MacQuillin 2016a, p. 11). This issue is further explored in the section on Donorcentrism and Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics.

Other lists of virtues of fundraisers have been compiled by: Anderson (1996) pp. 73–75—respect, beneficence and trust (which includes the components of truth-telling, promise-keeping, accountability, fairness, and fidelity of purpose); Fischer (2000) pp. 98–107—-independent judgement, responsibility (which includes accountability), and moral courage; and Marion (1994) pp. 51–52, who applied to fundraising the 10 core values collated by the Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics—honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, fidelity/loyalty, fairness, caring for others, respect for others, responsible citizenship, pursuit of excellence, and accountability. Delivering a paper to the NSFRE's<sup>3</sup> National Forum on Fundraising Ethics in 1988, the Institute's founder, Michael Josephson, added an eleventh value for non-profit organisations and their fundraising departments: safeguarding the public trust (*ibid* p. 52). Marion adds a 12th value—duty, which is a 'special duty to act in best interest of the donor and to advocate on their behalf' (*ibid*, pp. 54–55).

Still more characteristics/virtues/traits of fundraisers are identified by Breeze (2017) through her analysis of 'how-to' fundraising books. These include (among others): authenticity (p. 100), empathy (p. 119), fairness (p. 126), passion (p. 100) and tenacity (p. 126).

The Aristotelian, virtuous character approach is emphasised by Pribbenow (2013b) pp. 259, who believes that too much contemporary fundraising ethics is 'driven by responses to ethical dilemmas rather than deliberation about the sort of people we are, the character we exhibit and practice.' For example, decisions about whether to refuse tainted money should not be based on matters such as whether accepting the gift would damage a charity's reputation (consequentialism) or because doing so conflicts with the charity's mission (deontology) but simply because the money is not virtuous (Anderson, 1996, p. 8).

### 3 | CONSEQUENTIALIST AND DEONTOLOGICAL THEORIES OF FUNDRAISING ETHICS (MAIN IDEAS)

This next section looks at four ideas that are well developed in the literature:

- Fundraising is ethical when it protects public trust (main sources for this idea: Briscoe, 1994b; Anderson, 1996; Sector, 2002; Rosen, 2005)
- Fundraising is ethical when it meets donors' needs (Anderson, 1996; Geever, 1994; Marion, 1994; Pribbenow, 1994, 2013a; Burnett, 2002)
- Fundraising is ethical when it is in the service of philanthropy (Rosso, 1991; Anderson, 1996; Pribbenow, 1994, 2013a)
- Fundraising is ethical when it appropriately balances fundraisers duties to their donors and beneficiaries (Koshy, 2017, 2019; MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019).

#### 3.1 | Trustism

Building and maintaining trust is a core theme in the literature (Anderson, 1996, p. 75; Independent Sector, 2002; Sievers, 2013), particularly trust between donors and fundraisers and the institutions they represent (Elliott & Gert, 1995; Anderson, 1996, who says [p. 75] fundraisers should build 'enduring, trustworthy relationships with donors'). Anderson (1996) p. 75, further says that building trust is a 'fundamental principle (that) underscores the centrality of ethical relationships to fundraising'; while Briscoe (1994b) p. 110 argues that the first stakeholder of any ethical dilemma in fundraising should be the 'endeavour of philanthropy,' which is contingent on public trust. Pribbenow (2013a, p. 14) says fundraisers 'serve' public trust because fundraising is a form of public service. As we have seen, the Josephson Institute added an eleventh value of safeguarding public trust to its list of the 10 core ethical values, specifically for non-profit organisations and their fundraising departments (Marion, 1994, *ibid* p. 52).

Rosen (2005) p. 177 argues that the purpose of the codes is to protect public trust in fundraising: 'One way in which organizations can enhance the public trust is to maintain the highest ethical standards and to communicate this commitment to donors and prospective donors.' Many of the provisions contained in various codes of practice are almost certainly there to protect and maintain public trust in fundraising.

'Trustism' (MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019) is therefore a theory of normative fundraising ethics that states:

Fundraising is ethical when it promotes, sustains, protects or maintains public/donor trust in fundraising and unethical when it damages or harms this trust.

Trustism is therefore a consequentialist theory since ethical actions are based on consequences to public trust.

From a practical consequentialist perspective, the maintenance of trust is vitally important, since people who lack trust in the non-profit sector are significantly less likely to be donors (Sargeant & Lee, 2002a); while trust is a main driver of donor commitment (Sargeant & Lee, 2002b), which in turn is a major predictor of donor lifetime value (Sargeant & Lee, 2004). However, in a meta-review of studies that have explored the relationship between trust and giving, Chapman et al. (2021) p. 18 conclude that the existing research reveals a positive correlation between trust and giving (although accounting for just five percent of the variance in charitable giving decisions) but not a causal relationship; the evidence does not show whether trust is a prerequisite of giving or a consequence of it. However, irrespective of whether there is a causal or correlational relationship, trust in particular organisations and trust in the charity sector are more important than generalised (trusting unknown others) or institutionalised (trusting society's institutions) trust. In a separate study, the same authors conclude there is no evidence that media scandals at individual organisations have harmed trust in the charity sector as a whole (Chapman et al., 2021). The complex inter-relationships between trust and giving revealed by Chapman et al. (2021) suggest that the importance of taking a Trustist ethical lens will vary depending on the context of the dilemma at hand, for example, whether it relates to trust in an individual organisation, trust in the sector, or the impact of negative media; and also, in which country the ethical decision is being made, since trust is more important in giving decisions in non-Western countries (*ibid*, p. 19).

#### 3.2 | Donorcentrism

A prevalent idea in practice is that donors should be at the 'heart' of charity communications (e.g., Orland, 2011; Pegram, 2016), at the 'heart of the decision to donate,' in other words it is fully their choice (Breeze, 2017, p. 8), or at the 'centre of fundraising strategies' (Etherington et al., 2015, p. 63). As one fundraiser describes this concept (MacQuillin, 2016b, p. 12):

'Essentially, this is about placing the donor, or prospective supporter, at the heart of all your activities; planning and executing your fundraising according to what is most likely to strengthen your relationship with them, according to their preferences, rather than what you, the fundraiser, may simply assume will be most beneficial for your charity.'

The term 'donor-centred' had been used sporadically in the early 2000s (e.g., Pitman, 2002; Savage, 2000)—'donor-led' being a previous term to describe these practices (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990, pp. 74–75)—but gained prominence when popularised by American consultant Penelope Burk in her book, *Donor-Centered Fundraising*, in Burk (2003). However, it should be noted that there has been recent pushback against donor-centred fundraising being seen purely as a set of practices. Sargeant (2021) says that 'true donorcentricity' would



require organisations to have regard for the wellbeing and growth of their supporters.

As an ethical theory, Donorcentrism (so-named by MacQuillin, 2016a) has a genesis separate to the development of donor-centred practices, dating from the early 1990s. Central to the normative ethical theory of Donorcentrism is an 'ethical belief in the importance of the donor' that 'recognis[es] that the donor comes first ... *always* putting the donor first in regard to when to ask, how to ask and what to ask for' (Geever, 1994, p. 70, emphasis added); while the 'overriding ethical consideration' for fundraisers is not misbehaviour, but the 'value-laden decisions that donors ... make to further the causes they are passionate about...' (Pribbenow 2013a, p. 2). In the United States in the 1990s, the standards of the National Committee on Planned Giving placed the welfare of the donor above every other interest, including those of the charity (Anderson, 1996, p. 59). Marion (1994) p. 55 says fundraisers have a 'special duty' to donors that takes precedence over their duty to their organisation.

In his book *Relationship Fundraising*—which in its first edition in 1992, sought to identify and apply what later came to be known as 'donor-centred' fundraising—Burnett defines 'relationship fundraising' as (Burnett 2002, p. 38):

'An approach to the marketing of a cause that centres on the unique and special relationship between a non-profit and each supporter. Its overriding consideration is to care for and develop that bond and to do nothing that might damage or jeopardize it. Every activity is therefore geared towards making sure donors know they are important, valued and considered, which has the effect of maximizing funds per donor in the long term.'

As an ethical idea, Donorcentrism stipulates that fundraising is ethical when it puts the interests or needs of the donor first in ethical decision-making. However, is this a consequentialist or deontological idea? Burnett says fundraisers must do 'nothing to damage the bond' between the organisation and supporter, thus creating an ethical imperative, but is it an ethical imperative to protect income—donor-centred activity that is 'geared towards' maximising income—or to do right by the donor as a point of moral principle, irrespective of whether it maximise (or just increases) income?

Geever (1994) p. 70 says that the 'ethical belief' in the importance of putting the donor first can 'dramatically change basic fundraising practices and attitudes.' But she does not say why those practices and attitudes *ought* to change once the donor is put first: is it in order to protect the lifetime value of donors' giving; or is it to do the right thing by the donor who may not want to be asked in particularly ways—recall she says that this ethical belief requires 'always putting the donor first in regard to when to ask, how to ask and what to ask for'? (Ibid)

At the heart of the Donorcentrist approach, then, is an ethical proposition that shades from consequentialism (put the donor first because it raises most money) into deontology (that you ought to put the donor at the heart of what you do and/or satisfy their needs and/or enhance their wellbeing because that is right in and of itself). For example, Sargeant and Bryant (2020) p. 22 say that enhancing donors' wellbeing is a 'good' in its

own right, and that donors with a greater sense of wellbeing can also give more. In this case, is the money so generated a by-product of the end goal of enhancing donor wellbeing; or is enhancing donor wellbeing the means to the end goal of raising more money? From a practice perspective, this might be a matter of semantics—provided donor wellbeing is enhanced and more money is raised, does it really matter which one is the means and which is the end? From the perspective of professional ethics, it is a relevant question.

This tension was apparent in how British fundraisers grappled with the ethics of donor consent following the 2015 fundraising crisis (Hind, 2017; MacQuillin et al., 2019, pp. 55–63) in which some charities switched back and forth between consequentialist (raises more money) and deontological (right thing for donors) justifications of their decision to only contact their donors through mail if they had their consent to do so, even though the law did not require this (MacQuillin, 2019a, 2022).

There are, therefore, two possible alternatives for Donorcentrist fundraising ethics, one consequentialist and the other deontological.

Consequentialist Donorcentrist ethics says:

Fundraising is ethical when it gives priority to the donor's wants, needs, desires and wishes provided that this maximises sustainable income for the non-profit, and unethical when it does not.

This is a conditional argument in which the ethicality of donor-centred fundraising is predicated on its ability to increase income. If it fails to do this, then the act is unethical, because resources are being expended on fundraising activity that does not generate any return on investment.

Deontological Donorcentrist fundraising ethics says:

Fundraising is ethical when it gives priority to the donor's wants, needs, desires and wishes, and unethical when it does not.

Many provisions in codes of practice and other parts of self-regulatory regimes appear to be grounded in Donorcentrist ethics—the AFP's Donor Bill of Rights, for example, and the erstwhile Fundraising Standards Board's Fundraising Promise. How and why this might be so is fully explored in MacQuillin et al. (2019). For example, many self-regulatory fundraising regimes exist primarily to protect the perceived/assumed interests of donors (such as by setting a limit on how much of their donation can be used on overhead costs), who are considered to be 'principal agents' to whom fundraisers owe their primary accountability (ibid, pp. 35–36, pp. 47–48).

### 3.2.1 | 'Extreme' donorcentrism—Conforming to donors' values

Although the foregoing discussion suggests otherwise, De Bock and Faseur (2017) argue that most fundraising codes of practice and ethics rarely consider donors' perspectives, arguing that it is unclear whether such codes 'truly reflect the ethical values ... donors find important.'

Their qualitative study of Belgian donors sought to identify what donors perceived to be ethical and unethical ('ethically unacceptable') in fundraising, and identifies six core values for donors:

Freedom of choice—fundraising is unethical if it restricts donors' choice or exerts *any* (emphasis added) pressure on them to give

Dignity—fundraising is unethical if it represents donors (e.g., fails to recognise donors' 'meaningful role'), beneficiaries (e.g., stereotypical images), or the charity in an undignified way.

Authenticity—fundraising is unethical if it doesn't inspire donors with an 'authentic story,' such as by playing on their emotions (Dean & Wood, 2017) or only being concerned about money (see section on 'Mercenarism,' below).

Long-term relationship—fundraising is unethical if it fails to build long-term relationships and focuses only on gathering short-term money or promoting 'impulsive decisions' (cf Hobbs, 2017, and Kelly, 1998—see Relationship Management, below).

Sense of purpose—fundraising is ethical when it is effective and efficient and unethical when it is not.

Equilibrium—fundraising is unethical when it upsets donors' peace of mind about their donation decision, for example, by making them feel guilty about not donating or uncertainty about overhead costs; donors want to be 'in control.'

Even though De Bock and Faseur point out that the six values often conflict (under 'sense of purpose' donors want fundraising to be effective and efficient, but other values lead them to question fundraising methods that *are* effective and efficient), and that actions that can be seen as ethical through the lens of some values may still be deemed unethical through the lens of others, they nonetheless say that 'it is important and meaningful that fundraisers match their fundraising practices ... to the six key concepts.'

This points to a kind of extreme deontological Donorcentrism (Donors' Values):

Fundraising is ethical when it conforms to the ethical values of donors and unethical when it does not.

The appropriateness of fundraising ethics being set so as to accommodate what the public (donors *and* non-donors) want from fundraisers has been challenged by MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019, pp. 243–244).

### 3.2.2 | Donor dominance

An over-emphasis on donor-centred practices and ethics has a dark side. At the start of the 1990s it was noted that there is more power

granted to donors in the social relationship of philanthropy than is held by the organisations they give to. This results in donor-led philanthropy as fundraisers put in place practices that will access the power that donors have (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990, pp. 74–75). But abusing that power can result in donor-led philanthropy becoming donor-controlled philanthropy (Ostrander, 2007), such abuse having been named 'donor dominance' (Clohesy, 2003, p. 134). There are many ways that donors can and do influence relationships with charities/fundraisers in inappropriate ways, from demanding benefits to which they are not entitled (Hill & MacQuillin, 2019), trying to direct a non-profit's mission in a direction that is of more importance or relevance to the donor (mission creep) (Clohesy, 2003; Bennett, 2018, pp. 15–17)—(Gooch, 1995 p. 90 says donors' wishes should 'never be tail wagging the dog')—through to sexual harassment of fundraisers (Appleby, 2019; Hill & MacQuillin, 2019).

The literature on accountability in NGOs also points to the power imbalance in favour of donors (see MacQuillin et al., 2019); while the literature on corporate fundraising/partnerships describes a similar power imbalance in favour of corporates (Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007; Harris, 2012, p. 896; Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013, p. 667).

## 3.3 | Service of philanthropy

In 1991, the first entry of the statement of ethical principles adopted by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (now the AFP) committed its members to 'serve the ideal of philanthropy' (Briscoe, 1994a, p. 122). The idea that fundraisers should serve philanthropy—'the first and primary stakeholder in an ethical dilemma in fundraising should ... be the endeavour of philanthropy' (Briscoe, 1994b, p. 110)—forms the basis of three ethical variations on this theme (one consequentialist and two deontological). The consequentialist variant focuses on service to the philanthropy of individual donors; the two deontological variants focus in serving the practice of philanthropy and the public good.

### 3.3.1 | Service of philanthropy (meaningful philanthropy)

Philanthropy has been described as a 'social relationship between donors and recipient [organisation]' (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990, p. 74; Ostrander, 2007, p. 356), in which giving is a voluntary act. Fundraising is 'in service to that relationship and act' (Elliott & Gert, 1995, p. 35). Another way of saying this is that fundraising is the 'servant of philanthropy.' This is the term popularised by acknowledged US fundraising 'guru' Hank Rosso, who wrote in the first edition of *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising* (Rosso, 1991, p. 7) that fundraising is 'justified when it is used as a responsible invitation guiding contributors to make the kind of gift that will meet their own special needs and add greater meaning to their lives'—a statement repeated in all subsequent editions of the book.



This is a clear normative statement about how fundraising ought to be practised, and is consequentialist because it specifies that the right course of action for a fundraiser is the one that results in consequences that meet the donors' needs and bring meaning to them—'One of the deepest held principles of private philanthropy is that giving interests should reflect the fundamental convictions of the donors, whether brilliant, inspired, controversial or just wacky' (Sievers, 2013, pp. 335–336). If fundraising is justified when it does this, then it follows that is not justified if it does not do this. Although Rosso's statement does not explicitly create an ethical requirement to bring meaning to donors' philanthropy, it very strongly implies one.

Under Service of Philanthropy (Meaningful Philanthropy) ethics:

Fundraising is ethical when it brings meaning to a donor's philanthropy and unethical when it does not.

It is a moot point if fundraising is unethical when it does not bring meaning to a donor's philanthropy. But it implies it is. For example, it is argued that a fundraiser should refuse a gift if they feel that accepting it would not give the donor sufficient meaning, and, having refused it, then direct the donor to a charity/cause they think *would* bring this meaning to the donor (Gunderman, 2010, pp. 591–592; Sargeant & Jay, 2014, p. 419). Accepting the original gift would therefore be unethical, because it did not bring meaning to the donor.

This means that the Meaningful Philanthropy version of Service of Philanthropy is not contingent on raising money, and thus shares some kinship with Kelly's (1998) Relationship Management ideas (see below). As it is ethical to refuse a gift that does not bring meaning for the donor, following this ethic could result in moral (and professional) failure for the fundraiser by not doing their job of raising money for their organisation (Elliott & Gert, 1995, p. 134).

Rosso's notion that fundraising is the servant of philanthropy has widespread buy-in among practitioners and thought-leaders in fundraising (e.g., Sargeant, 2014; Worth, 2016, pp. 25–27; Breeze, 2017, pp. 21–22; Harris, 2020; Sargeant & Bryant, 2020, p. 28).

### 3.3.2 | Service of philanthropy (public good)

Pribbenow (1994) p. 28 talks about fundraising as 'public service': 'The reason fundraising exists and the purpose it serves is promoting what I will call the public practice of philanthropy.' This is a moral ideal (after Davis, 2010) for fundraising, but different to the one devised by MacQuillin (2017) quoted previously in this article.

In doing so, fundraisers serve both the public good and the public interest. Public interest is the interest that professions serve, and is akin to Davis's (2010) moral ideal, but restricted to the interests of the client group(s) served—in the case of non-profits this would be donors and beneficiaries. Public good however relates to the communal well-being of the whole of society (Pribbenow, 1994, pp. 29–30). Public interest relates to private interests (the interest of discrete beneficiary

and donor groups); public good relates to common needs of all society (ibid, p. 30).

Pribbenow (1994) p. 29, says fundraisers serve the public interest by raising money for important causes (but what of unimportant ones?—they are still important to their private stakeholders: beneficiaries and donors). However, fundraisers are 'stewards' of the public good through the public practice of philanthropy (ibid, p. 40) and fundraisers are 'called to serve' these goals (ibid, p. 43) in a public-oriented, rather than individual-oriented (donors and beneficiaries) role (ibid, p. 30), and doing so requires trust (ibid, p. 39), which connects this idea with Trustism.

This takes us to a deontological variant of Service of Philanthropy ethics. Under Service of Philanthropy (Public Good) ethics:

Fundraising is ethical when it serves the public good through the public practice of philanthropy and unethical when it does not so serve the public good.

Pribbenow explicitly states by use of a case study (pp. 40–41) that fundraising that does not serve the public good would be unethical. This theory—for which it is necessary to distinguish the meaning of 'public good' from 'public interest'—is a deontological concept. Unlike Trustism, which talks about ethicality being contingent on whether it harms public trust, the public good variant of Service of Philanthropy ethics is not contingent on whether harm is done to the public good, only whether that good has been served. Perhaps on many occasions, failing to serve that good *will* cause harm; but serving the public good should be done on a point of moral principle—if no harm is done by not serving it, that does not make it ethical.

It potentially clashes with the Meaningful Philanthropy variant of Service of Philanthropy, since that variant serves public interest but not (necessarily) the public good.

### 3.3.3 | Service of philanthropy (charitable intent)

A third concept of Service of Philanthropy fundraising ethics builds on the concept of serving the public good and draws heavily from non-Aristotelian (motive-based) virtue ethics. Anderson (1996) p. 73, says three ethical 'domains' ought to dominate fundraisers' work: respect, beneficence and trust. The domain of beneficence has two components: serving the (greater public) good and 'charitable intent' (ibid, p. 75). Indeed, beneficence, and its two components, ought to be paramount for all engaged in philanthropy, those who give as well as those who ask, and so it is a fundraiser's role to develop this beneficence in donors (ibid; and cf O'Neil's, 1994 idea of fundraisers as moral trainers—Virtue Ethics, above).

Charitable intent refers to the motive (which makes this a non-Aristotelian idea) for the gift being for the right reasons (Anderson, 1996, pp. 9–13), and it is the fundraiser's role to 'ensure the worthiness' of charitable motives 'above other purposes that may serve personal and organizational interests' (ibid, p. 75). Anderson says that unless the motive is to be charitable, the act is not

beneficent (ibid, p. 9) and a gift made without charitable intent has 'no ethical merit' (ibid, p. 8). Anderson decries the 'flagrant marketing of donor recognition'—for example, naming capital projects after benefactors (as does Gunderman, 2010 p. 591)—as an act that diminishes the charitable intent behind a gift and 'demeans the spirit of giving' (Anderson, 1996, pp. 10–11). Fundraisers act unethically when they diminish the charitable intent behind the gift (or 'displace charitable motives'—ibid, p. 60), such as by incentivising it through naming rights, or through tax incentives (ibid, pp. 60–61). Similar arguments have been levelled against cause related marketing (Eikenberry, 2009; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). Anderson (1996) p. 67 says that fundraisers should be 'guided above all' by the 'charitable intent of a prospective donor'—because this attests to the donor's character (ibid, p. 10), bringing us back again to Aristotelian virtue ethics. Protecting the charitable intent behind a donation is a deontological principle because encouraging gifts that 'demean the spirit of giving' is unethical, irrespective of any good consequences such as gift might have.

Service of Philanthropy (Charitable Intent) ethics thus says:

Fundraising is ethical when it encourages and enhances the charitable intent behind a gift and unethical when it diminishes charitable intent.

It is very closely related to Fischer's (2000) concept of the philanthropic gift economy and fundraising's role within it (see Section 5.1 below).

### 3.4 | Rights-balancing fundraising ethics

The foregoing discussion of Donorcentrist and Service of Philanthropy fundraising ethics demonstrates that much theorising about professional ethics in fundraising makes the donor the central and primary stakeholder (MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019). For example, Marion (1994) pp. 54–55 says fundraisers have a 'special duty' to act in the interests of donors. Similarly, Anderson (1996) p. 2 says fundraisers are 'agents of philanthropy' who are 'responsible to the donor, to represent his or her best interests in the exchange of private funds for the organization's values.' Marion (1994) p. 54 describes a professional 'hierarchy of loyalty' of, in decreasing order of prioritisation: philanthropy, donors, organisation, profession and self; while Briscoe (1994b) p. 110 lists a similar hierarchy of: enterprise of philanthropy/public trust, 'altruistic' donors, 'non-altruistic' donors, organisation or institution, individual fundraiser.

As has been discussed, much self-regulation of fundraising is founded upon the concept of the donor being the 'principal agent' whose interests the self-regulatory regime must protect and to whom those being regulated (i.e., fundraisers) are primarily accountable (MacQuillin et al., 2019, pp. 37–39, pp. 49–53, pp. 59–60). In 2016, the UK's Direct Marketing Association claimed that donors are the 'most important people in the entire charity process' (Direct Marketing Association, 2016). The stakeholder missing from most theorising

and writing about ethical fundraising is the beneficiary, the very stakeholder charities exist to help (MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019).

Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics (MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019) is a concerted and deliberate attempt to develop a theory of normative fundraising ethics that seeks to make the beneficiary a central stakeholder. As it was first developed in response to the UK's 'Fundraising Crisis' (Hind, 2017; MacQuillin et al., 2019, pp. 57–58), the original formulation of Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics was (MacQuillin 2016a, p. 16):

Fundraising is ethical when it balances the duty of fundraisers to solicit support on behalf of their beneficiaries, with the right of the donor not to be subjected to undue pressure to donate.

'Undue pressure' is prohibited by the code of practice in the United Kingdom (Fundraising Regulator, n.d., s1.2.1)—which thus implies that some pressure is 'due' or permissible (MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019, p. 243). 'Unreasonable persistence' in asking and 'unreasonable intrusion' into privacy are similarly prohibited by s1.2.1 of the UK code, suggesting that some intrusion and some persistence is reasonable.

The later, more comprehensive, formulation of Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics—taking it beyond the context of pressure in the solicitation—is (Rogare, 2021, p. 6):

Fundraising is ethical when it balances the duty of fundraisers to ask for support (on behalf of their beneficiaries), with the relevant rights of donors, such that a mutually beneficial outcome is achieved and neither stakeholder is significantly harmed.

Writers have previously hinted at or come close to arguing for such a balancing act in fundraising ethics, without actually articulating formally that fundraisers ought to strive for such balance in order to be ethical. Briscoe (1994b) p. 113, describes ethical dilemmas in terms of 'rights'—for example the right of a person not to be interrupted by a telephone fundraiser during their dinner, which the telephone fundraiser would argue is 'less important than another value, namely the right of the charity to present its case for funding' (ibid). Mirroring the old version of the International Statement, Shoemaker (2013) p. 268 says fundraisers should be accountable to donors and beneficiaries. Pribbenow (2013a) p. 12 says fundraisers ought to 'balance the needs of donors with the needs of organisations.' When balance is hinted at, it is generally the 'needs' of donors that are argued ought to be balanced against the 'needs' of organisations (e.g., Rosso, 1991, p. 7; Wentworth, 1995, p. 10; Pribbenow 2013a, p. 12).

In balancing donor needs with the needs of the organisation and/or its beneficiaries, the donor is generally seen as the primary stakeholder, while beneficiaries are relegated. Donors, fundraisers themselves, their institution and the general public are included in a suggested stakeholder analysis in fundraising ethics to identify whose

rights might have been violated (Briscoe 1994b, p. 109), but charity beneficiaries are not. Similarly, Fischer's (2000) pp. 24–25 ethical decision-making framework assesses the impact of relationships with donors, colleagues, volunteers and 'community members,' but it is not made clear whether 'community members' encompasses charity beneficiaries. Rosen's (2005) adaptation of Fischer's framework specifically adds beneficiaries. Even when donors may not be considered as the primary stakeholder, they may still be regarded as an equal stakeholder to beneficiaries: for example, in cases where charities adopt a 'philanthropic orientation,' the 'organisation as a whole cares quite genuinely about the needs of its donors, and the satisfaction of those needs is considered of equal importance to the satisfaction of the needs of the beneficiary' (Sargeant & Bryant, 2020, p. 21). Such donor needs include connectedness with others, experiencing growth as an individual and exercising autonomy in achieving outcomes (ibid, pp. 21–22).

Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics is different to previous attempts at balance, as its focus is on balancing the rights of particular stakeholders, and therefore fundraisers' duties that fall out of those rights, not the needs of stakeholders. Because rights regularly come into conflict, the moral dilemmas that result require constant balancing, and there is 'little disagreement among ethicists' that this is so (Koshy, 2017, 2019). The question is whether fundraisers actually do have a duty to their beneficiaries. Koshy (2017) grounds fundraisers' duty to ask in the concept of 'role rights'—those rights and duties that are specifically related to a person's role in society.

The rights of donors are enshrined in codes of practice, such as the Donor Bill of Rights, and Donorcentrist and Service of Philanthropy ethics. Much of the time this is designed to protect the donor from any harm at all. Whereas the UK code of practice prohibits 'undue' pressure, the old version of the AFP's International Statement on Ethical Principles in Fundraising prohibited any kind of pressure whatsoever (MacQuillin 2016a, pp. 10–11). A letter by charity CEOs to the *Sunday Times* in the wake of the 'Fundraising Crisis' said that 'no one should ever feel pressurised into giving' (Institute of Fundraising, 2015). Not being subject to *any* pressure was an ethical value of donors described by De Bock and Faseur (2017) (see Donorcentrism, above). It is also suggested that any attempt at 'persuasion' is potentially unethical (Burnett, 2016). These are 'negative, non-interference rights' (Koshy, 2017). Koshy argues fundraisers have duties to donors that extend beyond upholding these negative rights, specifically a duty to 'inform them of the risk of threat to the common good that can be prevented through their voluntary action,' a duty that derives from the potential donors' 'right to know' and to be informed (ibid).

Against Pribbenow's (1994) concept of service to the public good, Koshy (2017) argues that individual fundraisers are never fundraising for the general common good, but for a specific element of it—a specific cause that has a discrete set of beneficiaries for whom the fundraiser advocates. In other words, Koshy argues that fundraisers serve the 'public interest' but not the 'public good.' Because the beneficiary cannot (mainly for logistical reasons) petition for help on their own behalf, the fundraiser is the advocate who takes on that

responsibility on behalf of the beneficiary. (Breeze, 2017 p. 142 says fundraisers take on the 'obligations' of beneficiaries—such as to accept a donor's gift and express gratitude for it—but does not say that fundraisers do or ought to advocate *on behalf of* beneficiaries.) The rights of the beneficiary—constructed by a threat to their specific domain of the common good—place a duty on the fundraiser to ask for support: 'Failure to discharge this duty violates the trust placed in the fundraiser to act on (the beneficiary's) behalf.' (Koshy, 2017). Koshy (ibid) adds: 'The duty of care to the beneficiary is the same principled duty that a lawyer has to her client or a physician has to her patient.'

Koshy (2019) further argues that fundraisers' duties to beneficiaries meet the three tests for moral obligations set by the Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics (2017):

Law-based moral obligation—a fundraiser is contacted to help specific beneficiaries.

Promissory obligation—the fundraiser commits to helping the beneficiaries that their organisation serves: it would be unethical for a fundraiser for one organisation to solicit donations for a different organisation, which clashes with certain elements of the Meaningful Philanthropy variant of Service of Philanthropy ethics. Moral principle as the basis of moral obligation—which takes us back to the idea that professions serve a moral ideal beyond what ordinary morality requires, the moral ideal for fundraising being: 'Ensuring that charities and other voluntary and nonprofit organisations have sufficient income to carry out their core charitable purpose and improve the lives of their beneficiaries.' (MacQuillin, 2017, p. 20).

Koshy (2019) describes the 'imbalanced donorcentric thesis' as 'the most serious threat to fundraising,' having taken ideas of donor-centred fundraising practice into 'places it ought not go'—that is, fundraising ethics.

Pribbenow (1994) p. 38 says there is a 'clash' between the 'moral end economic' objectives of fundraising (1994, p. 38). As the moral objectives according to Pribbenow are, as we have seen, serving the public good through the practice of philanthropy, the clash is between this service and raising money. Elliott and Gert (1995), p. 34 say that fundraisers are morally required to raise money, 'but not at any cost.' However, they may be permitted to do so at 'some' cost, such as by reasonable persistence or reasonable intrusion into privacy; and Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics seeks to balance that cost against the good it can achieve, by weighing the harm done to donors by using 'pressure' (or guilt, or persistence or intrusion into privacy) against the potential harm done to beneficiaries if the ask is not made. In doing this, it is sometimes permissible to override certain of donors' negative, non-interference rights (Koshy, 2017; MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019).

Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics is thus a consequentialist doctrine, since the right action is contingent on the outcomes to both its principal stakeholders: donors *and* beneficiaries.

## 4 | CONSEQUENTIALIST AND DEONTOLOGICAL THEORIES OF FUNDRAISING ETHICS (NICHE AND UNFORMED IDEAS)

There are still a couple of ideas we still need to consider that are based in consequentialist or deontological ethics, but these are either niche ideas (in the case of Relationship Management), or far from fully developed (Mercenarism and Income Maximisation).

### 4.1 | Relationship management

'Relationship Management' is an idea that derives directly from public relations theory, which defines PR as: 'The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics on whom its success or failure depends.' (Cutlip et al., 2006, p. 9).

Building on this definition of public relations, Kelly (1998) p. 8 says fundraising is 'the management of relationships between a charitable organization and its donor publics,' and that: 'The purpose of fundraising is not to raise money, but to help charitable organizations manage their interdependencies with donor publics who share mutual goals and objectives.' (Ibid, p. 9).

Kelly (ibid, pp. 155–192) further borrows from academic PR theory in her analysis of the history of fundraising in the USA, in which she describes four practices that predominated during four eras. These are borrowed directly from the work on the 'excellence theory of public relations' (Grunig, 1992, p. 18; Grunig & Grunig, 1992, pp. 285–326). The four models of PR/fundraising are:

Press agency—uses persuasion and manipulation to influence people to act and behave as the organisation wants them to. Truth is secondary to gaining favourable publicity, or 'propagandizing a cause' (Kelly, 1998, p. 156).

Public information—disseminates accurate and truthful information about the organisation through press releases, reports and so forth.

Two-way asymmetrical—uses scientific research to understand public behaviour and uses that to structure the organisation's communications to better influence the public to do what it wants them to do. This method employs 'scientific persuasion' (Dozier & Grunig, 1992, p. 404). Nudge giving (Hobbs, 2017) might be considered to be such 'scientific persuasion.'

Two-way symmetrical—rather than trying to persuade people (cf Burnett, 2016), much less manipulate them, public relations is the mediator that negotiates with the public to resolve conflict and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organisation and its stakeholders. In the two-way symmetrical model, all parties benefit, not just the organisation.

Kelly contends that although press agency, public information and the two-way asymmetrical model describe how fundraising is practised in the United States, 'only the two-way symmetrical model provides a normative theory of how fundraising *should* be practised to be ethical and effective' (Kelly, 1998, p. 157, emphasis added). That is because, she says, this is the only model that allows for the building of genuine relationship with donors.

Under a Relationship Management approach to fundraising ethics:

Fundraising is ethical if, and only if, it conforms to the two-way symmetrical model of public relations theory, and unethical when it does not.

This is deontological, since conforming this model is a matter of principle, irrespective of the consequences.

Kelly's definition of a 'fundraiser' is 'someone paid to manage donor relationships' (ibid, p. 7), not someone who is paid to raise money: 'Those who only solicit and do not manage relationships are *not* fundraisers' (ibid—emphasis added). She thus says that the use of paid solicitors—her example is telephone fundraisers working for universities, but it would also apply to street fundraisers and doorstep canvassers—is unethical, and such paid solicitors should not actually be considered to be fundraisers and should be barred from membership of professional organisations (ibid, pp. 278–79).

She further implies that, 'because fundraising is more than solicitation,' methods of fundraising that only encompass solicitation cannot actually be 'fundraising' because they do not contain a relationship building stage (ibid). If correct, all types of direct marketing fundraising—such as phone, mail, SMS, email and face-to-face (direct dialogue)—would necessarily be considered unethical, as would capital appeals, which Kelly says also derive from asymmetric methods (ibid, p. 29).

Only the two-way symmetrical model of fundraising is compatible with building public trust, Kelly says, but three asymmetric models, which all use 'manipulation' (ibid, p. 157) to solicit donations, damage public trust (ibid, p. 168).

Despite a similar name (given to it by MacQuillin, 2016a), Relationship Management fundraising ethics should not be confused with the practice of relationship fundraising (Burnett, 2002), nor relationship marketing. For further clarification and avoidance of doubt, the term 'Relationship Management' as described in this review of the field refers *only* to its use in fundraising ethics, and does not refer to any practice or theory of managing relationships in public relations or marketing.

### 4.2 | Mercenarism

As stated in the previous section, Kelly (1998) p. 9 states that the purpose of fundraising is 'not to raise money, but to help charitable organisations manage their interdependencies with donor publics who share mutual goals and objectives.' She does not say that the *primary* purpose of fundraising is *not* to raise money—meaning that it could be a secondary purpose; or that fundraising is not *just* about raising

money. She clearly states that the purpose of fundraising is *not* to raise money. This could be rephrased in a way that keeps this precise meaning: It is not the purpose of fundraising to raise money. (According to Kelly, the purpose of fundraising is managing relationships.)

The notion that fundraising is 'not about money' or not 'just' about money is prevalent in professional practice. Entering the term 'fundraising is not about money' into a search engine will demonstrate this. It is not within the scope of this review to consider why this view has such prevalence. The sense that fundraising is 'not about money' in the practitioner literature is that it is about more than 'asking' for money—encompassing things such as stewardship of donors (Kelly, 1998) and fostering a philanthropic culture (Breeze, 2017).

Gunderman (2010) however, comes very close to arguing that fundraising is unethical when it prioritises raising money, arguing that 'mere money making' cannot be an adequate basis for human conduct in the non-profit sector (ibid, p. 590), and a fundraising professional is 'not someone who brings in a lot of money' (ibid, p. 589): 'Mercenary servility cannot be the rallying cry of a community of fundraising professionals' (ibid, p. 590), and the 'monetization of philanthropy is a profound threat' (ibid).

The problem with prioritising asking for money above all else, as identified by Gunderman, is that so doing does not allow generosity to flourish, so preventing people from living an Aristotelian 'good life' (Eudaimonia), (ibid, p. 592); to enable them to do so, fundraisers need to service donors' needs and their philanthropy to better understand how they can make a difference in ways that are important to them (ibid). But instead of asking themselves 'how can we do our best to relieve suffering and promote flourishing?' Fundraisers ask, 'where is the money and what must we do to get it?' (ibid, p. 589).

This idea is named 'Mercenarism' in this article (since Gunderman uses the term 'mercenary'). Mercenarism says:

Fundraising is unethical when it prioritises raising money above other factors.

This is a deontological idea.

It is not simply an application of Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics that identifies that the balance is wrong (tilted too far towards asking for money and thus unreasonably infringing on the donor's negative non-interference rights); rather this is the deontological principle that asking for money should not be the main concern of fundraisers at all. Paraphrasing Kelly (1998) p. 9: It is not the purpose of fundraising to raise money. Mercenarism elevates this principle to make raising money unethical if it overrides any other concern. To put this more colloquially, fundraising is unethical when it is 'just' about money.

### 4.3 | Income maximisation

The polar opposite of Mercenarism is Income Maximisation. This is the idea that the only ethical objective of fundraising is to raise as much money as is possible. Nowhere in the literature is this seriously

argued, though the charity sector press is replete with articles about how charities can 'maximise' their income. This author will therefore illustrate this idea with an anecdote. When he worked for the Public Fundraising Regulatory Association—the body in the United Kingdom that regulated street fundraising until its absorption into the Institute of Fundraising in 2016—he was told by someone working at an agency that the agency should be allowed to station 25 fundraisers at 10 yard intervals if this would recruit the most donors to the cause. It was a serious suggestion.

Although the above anecdote is extreme, a sense that such a doctrine might inform fundraisers' work can be gleaned from the literature. One source of tension between fundraisers and other departments is how images of beneficiaries are used (MacKeith, 1992, p. 9). One fundraiser interviewed by MacKeith (ibid) told her that it was not his job to consider the wider implications of using 'negative' images, because 'everything I do is geared to what raises the most money, that's all'. The debate about whether direct mail ought to be able to contain enclosures of a sufficiently high value (such as umbrellas or gardening gloves) that they encourage a donation out of a sense of reciprocal financial guilt (Burrows, 2008), can be interpreted in the context of Income Maximisation 'ethics'.

Whereas Elliott and Gert (1995), p. 34) argue that fundraisers' moral responsibility to raise money cannot be discharged 'at any cost,' Income Maximisation<sup>4</sup> states that any cost is permissible: It states:

Fundraising is ethical when, and only when, it maximises income.

This is a consequentialist idea.

It is stressed that Right-Balancing Fundraising Ethics cannot be used as a justification of anything that maximises income (MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019, p. 249).

Phillips (2016) argues that a form of practice has been operating—almost hidden in plain sight—that follows 'income maximisation' principles. He calls this 'organisation-centred fundraising' (MacQuillin, 2021), arguing that organisation-centred fundraising has adopted practices designed to maximise income to the goal of organisational growth, for the sake of growth (Phillips, 2016). At the start of the 1990s, MacKeith (1992) p. 8 reported that fundraisers regarded 'organisational growth' and the quantity of services provided as a greater priority than the quality of those services. Further, decrying the lack of 'true donorcentricity' in fundraising practices, Sargeant (2021) argues that in its place there is a 'focus on donations and an orientation to technique that will maximise that primary goal.'

## 5 | VIRTUE ETHICS REVISITED

### 5.1 | Philanthropic virtue

Whereas many, if not most, treatments of virtue ethics in fundraising have sought to describe the most appropriate virtues fundraisers



ought to have, Fischer (2000) has constructed an entire thesis about how fundraising ought to operate founded upon virtue ethics.

Fischer (ibid, p. 11) conceives of philanthropy as a type of gift economy, similar to those described by Mauss as operating in the South Sea Islands (Mauss, 1925/1990). As a gift economy, philanthropy is not a market exchange and the exchange of gifts is not a *quid pro quo* (Fischer, 2000, p. 11—all subsequent citations are from Fischer except where stated). Reciprocity is expected, but it is not expected to the giver: in accepting a gift, the person is then obligated to become a giver themselves and pass that gift on to a third person (p. 11)—beneficiaries are obligated to become donors to ensure gifts keep flowing around the gift economy.

Gifts need structural channels through which to flow and so non-profits are 'transfer points,' transforming gifts of time, skill and money into services that benefit the community (p. 122). Gifts do not belong to the charity, but are passed on and kept in motion; non-profit organisations are therefore just the stewards of the gifts they receive (p. 133).

The 'goal of philanthropy is to sustain and enrich the gift economy' (p. 5), while the 'primary purpose' of fundraisers is to 'keep the spirit of the gift alive' and 'sustain and enhance the cycle of giving' (p. 16): fundraisers are 'facilitators' and 'educators' (cf O'Neil, 1994), who take 'extra care of the virtues that nourish the spirit of the gift' (p. 16). If the 'spirit of the gift dies, philanthropy becomes a version of the market economy' (p. 44) and Fischer says it is 'objectionable' to think of donor relationships primarily in terms of what the donor gets, such as name recognition and free gifts in mail packs (p. 44), similar sentiments to those expressed by Anderson (1996, p. 10–11)—see Service of Philanthropy (Charitable Intent), above. This raises an obvious conflict between Fischer's ideas and Donorcentrist and Service of Philanthropy (Meaningful Philanthropy) ethics, which are predicated on serving donors' needs.

As does Anderson (1996), Fischer places a deal of importance on the charitable intent motivating a gift, saying that if 'philanthropic (i.e., charitable) intent is not at the centre of a fundraiser's relationship with a donor, the gift economy of philanthropy is damaged' (p. 127). The 'spirit of the gift' is therefore giving for the 'right reasons,' and Fischer describes the virtues that help to 'nourish' this spirit, both virtues of outgoing gifts (giving—the virtues of generosity, 'charity' and compassion) and of gifts as return (receiving—virtues of gratitude and mutuality) (p. 42). Not all these virtues are discussed in this article.

Generosity encourages informed thoughtful giving, where giving is pleasurable. As facilitators and educators, fundraisers can help people give the right amounts at the right time (pp. 45, 46, 47), as O'Neil (1994) also calls for—as we have seen, an idea grounded in Aristotelian thinking. To give the wrong amounts to the wrong causes at the wrong time would be wasteful (p. 47), raising the question of whether a fundraiser ought to turn down a 'wasteful' gift?

Gratitude is the expression of 'emotional links of appreciation' for those who have given (p. 54). However, charity beneficiaries do not so much owe a debt of gratitude to donors but are 'trustees' of that gratitude, which they return to the gift economy by becoming donors themselves (p. 55). Charities and non-profits are 'channels

through which moral energy can flow' giving people the opportunity to fulfil their responsibilities as trustees of gratitude (p. 55).

Mutuality relates to the wellbeing of the individual and the community, combining a sense of responsibility for the continuing health of the whole (public good), with appreciation of how one's own wellbeing (*Eudaimonia*) is a gift from the community (p. 55). Mutuality is the virtuous mean between an excess (narcissism) and a deficiency (self-effacement) (p. 56) and it thus another Aristotelian idea.

When fundraisers exercise these virtues and design fundraising practices that encourage these virtues in others, philanthropy can flourish as a gift economy (p. 58); and recall that Breeze (2017) p. 142 argues that fundraisers take on the obligations of beneficiaries. This takes us to the only theory of normative fundraising ethics that can be classed as a virtue ethical theory. Fundraising ethics as philanthropic virtue says:

Fundraising is ethical when it encourages the virtues that nourish the spirit of the gift and keeps the gift economy alive and unethical when it damages the gift economy.

It could be argued that this is a deontological idea—that nourishing the spirit of the gift and keeping alive the gift economy is a moral principle. Nonetheless, this review classes it as virtue ethical since it focuses so heavily on the underlying virtues necessary to keep the gift economy moving and flourishing.

## 5.2 | Care ethics and the role-differentiated virtues of a fundraiser

The lists of virtues of fundraisers previously compiled are generally lists of virtues that any good person ought to exhibit to help them achieve *Eudaimonia*. Aristotelian virtues such as honesty, respect, trust and beneficence are expected of everyone, not just people operating in the role of a professional fundraiser. This can present a potential ethical quandary because some professions or occupations are deemed to be less than virtuous, such as business or marketing, and yet people occupying those roles are still expected to behave as ethical or moral human beings (Swanton, 2007). Swanton (2007) argues there is no such conflict if we think of a professional exhibiting virtues that are differentiated to their professional role—a concept (role rights) used by Koshy (2017) to derive a fundraiser's duty to ask.

MacQuillin (2019b) attempts to derive role-differentiated fundraising virtues from care ethics, a variety of virtue ethics that came out of feminist ethics in the 1980s, and that aims to maintain relationships by contextualising and promoting the well-being of care givers and care-receivers in a network of social relations (Sander-Staudt, 2011). 'Care' is a virtue (ibid) but a non-Aristotelian one, since a 'caring person has appropriate *motives* to care for others and participates adeptly in caring practices' (Held, 2006, p. 4, emphasis added).



As a practice, care is considered to have four elements (Fisher & Tronto, 1990):

1. Attentiveness—A proclivity to become aware of need
2. Responsibility—A willingness to respond and take care of need
3. Competence—Skill of providing good and successful care
4. Responsiveness—Consideration of the position of others as they see it, and recognition of the potential for abuse in care.

There is also a distinction between ‘care’ and ‘service.’ Care is about meeting the needs of others who cannot meet their own needs, whereas service is about meeting the needs of others who are capable of self-care (Bubeck, 1995). This suggests that fundraisers have a duty to care for their beneficiaries (cf Koshy, 2017—see section on Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics) but not for their donors, who are, mostly, capable of caring for themselves. If this is correct, then Donorcentrist and Service of Philanthropy (Meaningful Philanthropy) ethics need not extend as far as ‘caring’ for donors.

MacQuillin (2019b) identifies the following role-differentiated virtues that a fundraiser ought to possess ‘in order to discharge her duties in an ethical manner.’

Caring—Ensures care can be provided for those who need it, which is probably care for beneficiaries rather than service to donors, though this in no way precludes providing service to donors in an ethical manner.

Judicial—Can exercise independent judgement (Fischer, 2000, pp. 98–107) or ‘professional autonomy’ (MacQuillin, 2017, pp. 12–14) in balancing her duties to her donors and her beneficiaries (Koshy, 2017, 2019; MacQuillin 2016a; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019).

Competent (professional)—Possesses sufficient professional knowledge and skill to successfully discharge her role. Fisher and Tronto (1990) specifically list competence as a component of the virtue of care.

Empathetic—The ability to understand both the needs of donors and beneficiaries (since Donorcentrist ethics and donor-centred practice is about meeting those needs).

## 6 | COMMUNITY-CENTRIC FUNDRAISING ETHICS

A recent development in normative fundraising ethics has built on the concept of decolonisation of wealth (Villanueva, 2018), having been inspired by the writings of American non-profit thought leader Vu Le in a series of blogs starting in 2015 (e.g., Le, 2017/2020). Community-Centric Fundraising (CCF) posits that fundraising and philanthropy need to be rebuilt according to 10 principles that aim to ground both in racial and economic justice (Community-Centric Fundraising, 2020).

A major component of the CCF idea is a critique of donor-centred fundraising practice and Donorcentrist and Service of Philanthropy (Meaningful Philanthropy) ethics, since, according to CCF, by focusing on and serving the needs and wants of donors, they pander to the most privileged people in society who already hold most power, and

thus reinforce attitudes of white saviourism, white ideology and donor dominance. Instead of prioritising donors as ethical stakeholders, CCF prioritises the needs of ‘the community’ as an entity, above donors, and even above individual charity missions (CCF Principle 2). A formulation of CCF ethics would therefore be (MacQuillin, 2020, p. 14):

Fundraising is ethical when it prioritises and/or serves the needs of the community, and unethical when it does not.

CCF as a movement is relatively new, and the normative ethics that fall out of it have not yet received much attention. For example, Principle 2 states that fundraisers ought to decline donations if they feel those donations would better help a different part of the community. How a fundraiser ought to make such a decision, which effectively means foregoing a gift that would benefit one section of the community (and thus has the potential to harm it) so that a different section might benefit, is yet to be articulated (ibid, pp. 14–16). This is similar to the question posed under Service of Philanthropy (Meaningful Philanthropy) ethics that fundraisers should turn down a donation and direct it elsewhere if that is more meaningful for the donor. The objective is different; but the ethical questions are similar.

As the central charge of the CCF movement is that fundraising is not grounded in racial and economic justice, and needs to be rebuilt so that it is, an alternative formulation of CCF ethics is (MacQuillin, 2020, p. 14).

Fundraising is ethical when it is grounded in racial and economic justice and unethical when it is not.

This is a charge against the normative ethical context in which the practices of fundraising sit, practices for which most of the theories of fundraising ethics described thus far seek to provide a normative grounding. In this wider conception, CCF ethics aims to radically change the whole paradigm of fundraising ethics; whereas the existing consequentialist and deontological lenses of fundraising ethics are all part of the existing—and, according to CCF, discredited—paradigm of fundraising ethics. It is a moot point whether change to ethical practices comes by changing the paradigm; or whether changing practices results in a change in the paradigm.

It is also important to realise that CCF is talking about ‘the community’ (definite article)—society as a whole. It does not mean therefore that its tenets can be made compatible with other ideas, particularly with donorcentricity, by talking about fundraisers’ duties to ‘communities,’ as opposed to *the* community, since CCF’s critique of donor-centred fundraising still applies to communities in which donors might be the most powerful partners.

By making ‘the community’ the focus of ethical decision-making, CCF ethics places the collective good of ‘the community’ ahead of the good of individual charity missions (and by extension, their beneficiaries) (CCF principle 2). It should also be noted that CCF is not the first ethical theory of fundraising that has sought to elevate society as an ethical stakeholder: both Service of Philanthropy (Public Good)

**TABLE 1** Normative ethical theories of fundraising summarised. Text in plain roman indicates a strong (in)compatibility; italicisation represents a weaker, more speculative, ambiguous or partial (in)compatibility

Ethical theory	Type	Formulation	Primary duty	Other duties	Compatible with	Not compatible with	Main sources
Community-centric 1	Consequentialist	Fundraising is ethical when it prioritises and/or serves the need of 'the community'	• The community	• NPOs • Community members	• CCF 2 • Philanthropic virtue • Relationship management • Rights-balancing • Service of philanthropy (PG) • Trustism	• Donorcentrism (all) • Income maximisation • Mercenarism • Service of philanthropy (MP & CI)	• Le (2017/2020) • CCF (2020)
Community-centric 2	Deontological	Fundraising is ethical when it is grounded in racial and economic justice	• The community	• Community members	• CCF 1	• All except CCF 1. Because all are operating in a paradigm that needs to be replaced, as seen from the CCF 2 perspective.	• Le (2017/2020) • CCF (2020)
Donorcentrism (consequentialist)	Consequentialist	Fundraising is ethical when it gives priority to the donor's wants, needs, desires and wishes provided that this maximises sustainable income for the non-profit, and unethical when it does not.	• Donor	• Organisation • Public trust	• Mercenarism • Relationship management • Rights-balancing • Trustism	• CCF 1 & 2 • Donorcentrism (D & DV) • Income maximisation • Philanthropic virtue • Service of philanthropy (all)	• Burnett (2002)
Donorcentrism (deontological)	Deontological	Fundraising is ethical when it gives priority to the donor's wants, needs, desires and wishes, and unethical when it does not.	• Donor	• None	• Donorcentrism (DV) • Mercenarism • Relationship management • Service of philanthropy (all) • Trustism	• CCF 1 & 2 • Donorcentrism (C) • Income maximisation • Philanthropic virtue • Rights-balancing	• Anderson (1996) • Geever (1994) • Marion (1994) • Pribbenow (1994, 2013a)
Donorcentrism (donors' values)	Deontological	Fundraising is ethical when it conforms to the ethical values of donors and unethical when it does not	• Donor	• None	• Donorcentrism (D) • Mercenarism • Relationship management • Service of philanthropy (all) • Trustism	• CCF (1 & 2) • Donorcentrism (C) • Income maximisation • Philanthropic virtue • Rights-balancing	• De Bock and Faseur (2017)
Income maximisation	Consequentialist	Fundraising is ethical when, and only when, it maximises income.	• Organisation/ NPO/charity	• Beneficiary	• None	• All	• None
Mercenarism	Deontological	Fundraising is unethical when it prioritises raising money above other factors.	• Donor	• NA	• Donorcentrism (all) • Philanthropic virtue • Relationship management • Service of philanthropy (all) • Trustism	• CCF (1 & 2) • Income maximisation • Rights-balancing	• Gunderman (2010) • Kelly (1998)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Ethical theory	Type	Formulation	Primary duty	Other duties	Compatible with	Not compatible with	Main sources
Philanthropic virtue	Virtue ethical (Deontological?)	Fundraising is ethical when it encourages the virtues that nourish the spirit of the gift and keeps the gift economy alive, and unethical when it damages the gift economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gift economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community (society)</li> <li>Donors</li> <li>Self</li> <li>Colleagues</li> <li>Organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 1</li> <li>Mercenarism</li> <li>Relationship management</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (PG &amp; CI)</li> <li>Trustism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 2</li> <li>Donorcentrism (all)</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> <li>Rights-balancing</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (MP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fischer (2000)</li> <li>O'Neil (1994)</li> </ul>
Relationship management	Deontological	Fundraising is ethical if, and only if, it conforms to the two-way symmetrical model of public relations theory, and unethical when it does not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship type</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 1</li> <li>Donorcentrism (all)</li> <li>Mercenarism</li> <li>Philanthropic virtue</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (all)</li> <li>Trustism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 2</li> <li>Rights-balancing</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kelly (1998)</li> </ul>
Rights-balancing	Consequentialist	Fundraising is ethical when it balances the duty of fundraisers to ask for support (on behalf of their beneficiaries), with the relevant rights of donors, such that a mutually beneficial outcome is achieved and neither stakeholder is significantly harmed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donor</li> <li>Organisation</li> <li>Public trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 1</li> <li>Donorcentrism (C)</li> <li>Trustism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 2</li> <li>Donorcentrism (D &amp; DV)</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> <li>Mercenarism</li> <li>Philanthropic virtue</li> <li>Relationship management</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (all)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MacQuillin (2016a)</li> <li>MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019)</li> <li>Koshy (2017, 2019)</li> </ul>
Service of philanthropy (meaningful philanthropy)	Consequentialist	Fundraising is ethical when it brings meaning to a donor's philanthropy and unethical when it does not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donorcentrism (D)</li> <li>Philanthropic virtue</li> <li>Relationship management</li> <li>Trustism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>Donorcentrism (C)</li> <li>Rights-balancing</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (CI &amp; PG)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rosso (1991)</li> </ul>
Service of philanthropy (public good)	Deontological	Fundraising is ethical when it serves the public good through the public practice of philanthropy and unethical when it does not so serve the public good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 1</li> <li>Donorcentrism (D)</li> <li>Philanthropic virtue</li> <li>Relationship management</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (CI)</li> <li>Trustism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 2</li> <li>Donorcentrism (C)</li> <li>Rights-balancing</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (MP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pribbenow (1994)</li> </ul>
Service of philanthropy (charitable Intent)	Deontological (Virtue ethical?)	Fundraising is ethical when it encourages and enhances the charitable intent behind a gift and unethical when it diminishes charitable intent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motive behind the gift</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercenarism</li> <li>Philanthropic virtue</li> <li>Relationship management</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (PG)</li> <li>Trustism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF (1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>Donorcentrism (all)</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> <li>Rights-balancing</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (MP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anderson (1996)</li> </ul>

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Ethical theory	Type	Formulation	Primary duty	Other duties	Compatible with	Not compatible with	Main sources
Trustism	Consequentialist	<i>Fundraising is ethical when it promotes, sustains, protects or maintains public/donor trust in fundraising and unethical when it damages or harms this trust.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donor</li> <li>Organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 1</li> <li>Donorcentrism (all)</li> <li>Mercenarism</li> <li>Philanthropic virtue</li> <li>Relationship management</li> <li>Rights-balancing</li> <li>Service of philanthropy (all)</li> </ul> <p>NB Trustism is compatible with most other ideas since if any of these ideas can show they improve trust in fundraising then they are compatible with Trustism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCF 2</li> <li>Income maximisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anderson (1996)</li> <li>Briscoe (1994b)</li> <li>Independent Sector (2002)</li> <li>Rosen (2005)</li> </ul>

(Pribbenow, 1994) and philanthropy as a gift economy (Fischer, 2000) talk about serving the public good ahead of the needs of donors.

## 7 | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This article has reviewed and described the various strands of normative ethical theories in play in the fundraising sector—the first time such a comprehensive review has been attempted. Few authors have specifically and deliberately set out to formulate a bespoke theory of normative fundraising ethics. Rather they have presented various ideas that this review has used to infer and synthesise the ideas as they are presented here. Fourteen such ideas are described, and are summarised in Table 1, which also shows their compatibility or incompatibility with other ethical theories (in these columns, text in plain roman indicates a strong (in)compatibility; italicisation represents a weaker, more speculative, ambiguous or partial (in)compatibility.

There are limitations to this review, which confined itself to papers written by and for members of the fundraising profession. The rationale for doing so was previously explained, and since this article sought to review a field that had not previously been mapped, it needed to start with a defined area to map. These self-imposed limitations therefore mean that this review should not be thought of as comprehensive, and there are undoubtedly new ideas about fundraising ethics contained in other domains and disciplines that can be amalgamated into the body of theory in future.

These limitations notwithstanding, some general findings can be drawn and reported. First, the study of fundraising ethics does not follow or pursue a coherent or consistent research agenda; ideas are not formally described and collected (this article is the first to attempt such a comprehensive review); and so new ideas about ethics in fundraising often do not build upon previous ideas.

Practitioner writing about fundraising ethics is not often couched in the context of normative ethical theory; while academic writing often does not explicitly state its normative foundations either.

Aristotelian virtue ethics exerted a strong influence on the early conceptualising of fundraising ethics, in which fundraising was conceived of a way of helping donors to achieve Eudaimonia. This entailed that both donors and various aspects of the practice of philanthropy, such as the public good or the charitable intent or ‘spirit’ motivating a donation, were given priority as stakeholders in ethical decision-making, and even extended as far as intimating that focusing on or prioritising the raising of money would be unethical.

Donorcentrist ethical thinking has coupled with the rise of donor-centred fundraising practice to cement the donor's place as the primary ethical stakeholder since the start of the 21st century, extending into the regulation of fundraising, which often sees its role as protecting the interests of donors as ‘principal agents.’

Only recently has thinking about the ethics of fundraising attempted to branch out the main Donorcentrist paradigm, by formally introducing the beneficiary as an ethical stakeholder of at least equal—and probably greater—importance to/than the donor; and

through critiques of the power and privilege Donorcentrist ethics and donor-centred practice is said to embody.

A potentially even-greater shift in thinking comes from steps to build theories of fundraising ethics based on care ethics, and the development of other relational theories of fundraising ethics (of which CCF may be one). Care ethics has developed as a reaction to the dominant 'rationalistic' moral theories of consequentialism and deontology, which are founded upon 'liberal individualism' and the rights of individuals, and thus operate according to universal abstract principles and rules, which must be consistently applied (Held, 2006, pp. 9–17). Care ethics moves the locus of ethicality away from the individual, and the moral rules that protect them (such as negative non-interference rights), to meeting the needs of those for whom we take responsibility, which takes highest priority (ibid, p. 9). Care ethics is thus located in the 'moral value and importance' of relationships and the 'values of caring relationships,' and then examining social arrangements in light of those values (ibid, p. 12).

As is apparent, most of the ethical ideas described in this review fall within the paradigm of 'rationalist liberal individualism,' and Rights-Balance Fundraising Ethics is couched in the language of rights. While many ideas might purport to be grounded in 'relationships'—such as the various forms of Donorcentrism and Service of Philanthropy—they nonetheless firmly embed the rights of donors within those relationships, which Rights-Balancing Fundraising Ethics does challenge. Care ethics thus provides the possibility of a total reconceptualisation of the notion of 'relationship' fundraising.

This is an exciting time for the development of fundraising ethics. Its limitations notwithstanding, this article is the first review of the field of normative fundraising ethics. It describes a rich—probably far richer than many realised—and broad spectrum of thought, the linkages between the ideas, and start of the gradual evolution and shift in fundraising's professional ethics to introduce primary stakeholders other than the donor, towards truly relational theories of fundraising ethics. The door is now open to build upon this review to create an even richer body of theory.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has declared no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

There is no data associated with this article as it is compiled from secondary sources.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ethics>
- <sup>2</sup> The second edition of this book in 2013 changed the title to *Nonprofit Fundraising Strategy*, with a tag line of 'A guide to ethical decision-making and regulation for nonprofit organisations,' thus rather downplaying the ethics focus of the book in favour of strategy development.
- <sup>3</sup> National Society of Fund Raising Executives—the forerunner of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.
- <sup>4</sup> The name 'Income Maximisation' was first used in this context by this author in lecture materials for the University of Plymouth in 2017.

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