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Contents

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Abstract

Benjamin Franks’ recent contribution to the field of anarchist political philosophy, what he calls ‘prefigurative or practical anarchism’, is introduced partly in response to the critique of ‘metanarratives’ made by writers such as Todd May and Saul Newman. Metanarratives, they argue, are both, in theory, epistemologically suspect and, in practice, repressive of alternative conceptions of the good. This is because metanarratives assert the validity of one goal or end for human society and/or individuals and one morally justifiable mode of acting to achieve this, thus risking the exclusion of other goals and forms of moral agency. Framing social and political action within metanarratives of human nature is regarded by May and Newman, the founders of ‘postanarchist’ theory, as an essential characteristic of the classical anarchisms of the nineteenth century. While Franks, along with many others, is critical of the postanarchist attack on classical anarchisms, he nonetheless shares their rejection of metanarratives and teleology. The practical anarchism he proposes aims to be sympathetic to this concern and does so by adopting and modifying the social practice theory found in the work of Alasdair MacInture. This may come as a surprise given MacIntyre’s position as one of the strongest contemporary defenders of the notion of a *telos* of human life (i.e., that human life has a natural and right end), but it is this exact feature that Franks’ account of social practices eliminates. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to assess the consequences of the rejection of metanarratives and *telos* for Franks’ practical anarchism. Ultimately, I will show that without a teleological approach, practical anarchism collapses into moral relativism and weakens the definition of ‘anarchism’ to such an extent that it becomes useless.

Introduction

In a recent contribution to the field of anarchist political philosophy, Benjamin Franks introduces what he describes as "a prefigurative or practical anarchism" (Franks, 2008: 147), intended partly as a response to the critique of moral and political universalism made by postanarchist writers such as Todd May (1994) and Saul Newman (2001). Universalism, which can be understood as a meta-ethical commitment to one over-arching moral standard against which claims of what is 'good' and 'bad' can be judged to be 'true' or 'false', is argued, by the postanarchists, to be both in theory epistemologically suspect and in practice repressive of alternative conceptions of the good. Explaining social and political action within a universalist framework of human nature is regarded by May and Newman as an essential characteristic of the classical anarchisms of the nineteenth century. While Franks (2007), along with others (e.g., Cohn, 2002; Cohn & Wilbur, 2003; Glavin, 2004), is critical of the postanarchist attack on classical anarchisms, he nonetheless shares in their rejection of moral universalism. The practical anarchism he proposes aims to be sympathetic to this typically poststructuralist concern while at the same time providing a foundation for ethical action, and he does so by adopting the social practice theory found in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre. This may come as surprise given MacIntyre's position (1999: x) in recent years as a staunch defender of the idea of moral universalism, basing his account on a form of biological essentialism whereby human beings are understood as having a natural *telos*, an end towards which their actions ought to aim. However, Franks takes his inspiration instead from MacIntyre's initial work on social practice theory, which echoes poststructuralism's rejection of claims to universal moral truth (Franks, 2008: 138).

In this article, I intend to discuss the implications of the rejection of moral universalism for a social practice based account of anarchist ethics. If it is the case, as the later MacIntyre argues, that

open to the charge of relativism which makes its theoretical and practical application problematic.

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cial practices, for both Franks and MacIntyre, play in their respective understandings of our social world, discussing the relevance of both the notion of language games and metanarratives to this picture. While MacIntyre begins by rejecting metanarratives and the notion of a single, fixed *telos* for human life, in recent years he has changed his position and argues that there is a single correct and natural end for human life. Franks, however, argues for a complete rejection of a single human *telos*, locating anarchist practices in a historically and ethically contingent space, within which internal goods and virtues do not derive their legitimacy from anything other than the contingent workings of the practice they are inherent to. The second section focused on the notion of multiple *telē* that is used by Franks to highlight the fact that while anarchist social practices are teleological, they are not all subject to one teleology, but to multiple, perhaps irreducible teleologies. The final section discussed the implications of Franks' rejection of one teleology in favour of many. These consequences are, I argued, a relativistic attitude to both the ethics of anarchism and the very use of the word in describing practices. While this moral relativism may not seem so problematic on Franks' account, I have tried to show that in fact it restricts the moral agency involved in practices in the same way that, the postanarchists argue, the assertion of one, universal *telos* does. This is because for agents embedded in social practices, the available resources for moral evaluation make questioning the *telos*, internal goods and virtues of that practice problematic. The only way to evaluate these features is through methods 'designed' to legitimise them. Thus, Franks' practical anarchism, as an alternative to moral relativism or universalism, would appear to collapse into the former. The solution to this, I would suggest, is not to reject practical anarchism completely. Indeed, the introduction of social practice theory into anarchist ethics is an incredibly promising move and has much to offer the anarchist movement in terms of ethical alignment. However, without the inclusion of some level of moral universalism, as with the later MacIntyre, it is

such an ethical theory is left lacking without a universal teleology that is common to all social practices and which informs the ethical actions of the agents involved therein, then Franks's practical anarchism will be open to critique. Ultimately, I will show that without an appeal to universalism, practical anarchism collapses into moral relativism and, in addition, weakens the very definition of "anarchism" to such an extent that it becomes useless.

1: Social Practices and the Rejection of Moral Universalism

MacIntyre (1985: 187) describes social practices in the following, oft-quoted way:

> By 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods are systematically extended.

The two most important aspects of this definition for MacIntyre's ethics as a whole are, firstly, the notion of goods internal to practices and, secondly, the standards of excellence appropriate to the practice. The second of these, the standards of excellence, are specific virtues which ethical agents can display. The first, the internal goods, are certain objectives of the practice which can only be achieved by the agent displaying a virtuous character. MacIntyre (1985: 191) writes, "A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those

goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such good." The goal of this article is not to assess the concept of virtue or internal good in MacIntyre's or Franks' ethics, but rather to examine what both authors appeal to in order to show how certain virtues and certain internal goods are justified morally. In order to do so, it is necessary to take a look at how social practices operate in the social world of human beings. One way to understand what MacIntyre means by social practices is to examine the parallel arguments, made by Ludwig Wittgenstein among others (Midgely, 1974; Winch, 1958), that the social world is composed of a series of formations which have much in common with games.

Wittgenstein famously criticises traditional, representationalist accounts of language which have it as a collection of words which derive their meaning through linking up to things in the world; in other words, that words are names for objectively existing meanings. All instances of language, on this account, can be unified because they all represent the world, and the difference between two languages is the same as the difference between two sets of labels: they can both be reduced to representing the same meanings (Quine, 1968: 186). In contrast to this representationalism, Wittgenstein proposes that language be understood as operating as a series of games, by which he means a number of local language communities in which meaning is determined not by having words link up with objective reality, but by tacit agreement among language users such that the use of words by any one member of the community is understood by any other. This relativism also applies to practices of justification, which may be appealed to in the event of disputes about meaning; if language users disagree about the meaning of a statement, then the justificatory practices they appeal to are similarly agreed on tacitly and have no special claim to objective truth. The crucial point to take from this is that a statement is not to be seen as something which can be judged as 'true' or 'false' in reference to some external ruler (i.e., objective reality), but which

quire an appeal to universalism. Rather than locate the source of the prohibition of restrictions on moral agency and the creation of moral hierarchy in universal and objective propositions, one could locate them in the contingent truths of a particular moral community, a community which incorporates multiple practices. Thus, values can be said to transcend particular practices and constitute a moral reality which, while contingent, can nonetheless act as a universal for the members of the moral community in question. The arguments against moral universalism can be grounded in the shared moral commitments of a community; in this case, the community of anarchists. So, when one argues, as Franks does, that moral universalism limits moral agency and creates moral hierarchy, the move to justifying its rejection on these grounds can be said to be valid because within the particular moral community of anarchists, restrictions on moral agency and the creation of moral hierarchy ought to be avoided. While this doesn't demand a belief in an objective moral reality, it does require that these norms be common to all the members of the anarchist moral community. Rather than arguing that universalism is absolutely wrong, one could argue that it is wrong insofar as we are anarchists. In other words, to be a consistent anarchist, one must act in accordance with the principles of liberated moral agency and moral non-hierarchy; and as the above has shown, these principles could be found in a *telos* that spans the range of anarchist practices. Of course, this cuts against Franks' assertion that there are no *telē* or principles that all anarchist practices share, but without either this commitment or the belief in some objective moral reality, I don't see how the moral arguments against universalism can have any force.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to summarise the argument that has been made here. In the first section, I attempted to highlight the role so-

content of objective moral reality limited to the facts that liberated moral agency and moral non-hierarchy are good, then it wouldn't seem to fall prey to its own moral judgement. In other words, if liberated moral agency and moral non-hierarchy are objectively good, external to the peculiarities of any practices or language games, then it makes no sense to say that this universalism results in a limiting of moral agency and a creation of moral hierarchy.

Of course, the particular universalism Franks has in mind is a teleological one whereby a correct and natural *telos* for human beings is asserted as objectively true, and his argument, following the postanarchists, is that this specific type of universalism has the potential to limit moral agency and create moral hierarchy. This, however, would still have to be re-articulated, if a universal prohibition on these evils is to be appealed to, such that one type of universalism is used to challenge and reject another; namely, a universalism of non-hierarchy and liberated moral agency (which sounds deontological) being used to reject a universalism of teleology. One could respond however by attempting to rephrase the prescriptions of the 'good' universalism in a teleological manner. For example, the natural end for all human beings is a life of unrestricted moral agency, free from moral hierarchy. On this account, therefore, all action ought to tend towards this end, and anything that stands in the way of this end or diverts human beings away from it (e.g., a false *telos*) is considered 'bad'. What seems at first to be an argument against universal teleology, can in fact be made into an argument against one type of teleology, from the perspective of another. I would suggest, therefore, that Franks' moral arguments against universalism are in fact arguments against a specific formulation of universalism, and that they are actually consistent with a universalism that, on either deonotlogical or teleological grounds, prohibits the limiting of moral agency and the creation of moral hierarchy.

There is, however, a second option which would allow the arguments to maintain their moral force, but which would not re-

achieves a truth value depending on the specific language-rules of the community, or language game, in which the statement is made. What warrants these social formations being called games is that they operate according to a specific set of rules and that, in virtue of this, they are social affairs involving more than one language user (Wittgenstein, 2001: §256–71; Winch, 1958: 24–65).

Social practices, for MacIntyre, share the key features of language games; namely, they operate according to a specific set of rules (specific, that is, to that practice), they are necessarily social and they involve a local or contextual account of truth. A comparison can be drawn between MacIntyre's account of practices and that of narratives common to the work of many poststructuralist and postmodern writers. For example, Jean-François Lyotard (1984: xxiv) writes that a defining feature of the contemporary, 'postmodern' age is a rejection of the belief in any one over-arching system that can justify claims about truth. These grand systems he calls 'metanarratives'. In place of metanarratives, like that of representationalism, postmodernism and poststructuralism theorise the social world as a patchwork of local narratives in which truth and justification operate in the same way as in Wittgenstein's language games. What is considered true in one narrative is only assessable within the justificatory practices of that narrative, which are based upon the tacit agreement of the members of that narrative community, and not in reference to a metanarrative. Lyotard (1984: xxiv) describes this picture in explicitly Wittgensteinian terms: "There are many different language games — a heterogeneity of elements." What is particularly interesting about the treatment of metanarratives by poststructuralist writers is the focus on their ethical and political dimensions. Essentially, they see the critique of metanarratives of justification as applying to both ontological truth claims and moral truth claims. Thus, moral universalism (whereby statements about what is 'good' and 'bad' can be assessed in line with a universal principle, such as in the case of utilitarianism or that of deontological ethics [see, e.g., Franks, 2008: 138–40]) is rejected

and replaced with a view according to which moral truth is specific to local narratives.

This focus on moral relativism is important because it is this feature which is central to MacIntyre's early account of social practices, represented best by his book *After Virtue* (originally published in 1981). MacIntyre agrees here with both the language game theorists and the poststructuralists that the social world is composed of multiple practices with potentially irreducible differences, and which cannot be subsumed under one metanarrative of moral justification. After providing examples of competing moral claims about just war, abortion and private education and the arguments used to justify those claims, he writes (1985: 8):

> Every one of these arguments is logically valid or can be easily expanded so as to be made to be so; the conclusions do indeed follow from the premises. But the rival premises are such that we possess no rational way of weighing the claims of one as against another. For each premise employs some quite different normative or evaluative concept from the others, so that the claims made upon us are of quite different kinds.

Thus, the moral landscape of society is one in which different narratives contain their own justifications of moral claims. For example, one narrative may never justify warfare as morally good, while another may justify it as good if and only if it is waged with the aim of liberating oppressed groups (MacIntyre, 1985: 6). This is not to say, of course, that moral agreement between narratives (even those separated historically and/or geographically) is impossible, only that when agreement is reached, it is only contingent and not founded upon some objectively existing moral reality.

In his early writings on social practices, MacIntyre argues that morality, rather than being based on supposedly universal principles, should take root in the teleologies that are found in dif-

darity with radical animal rights organisations) which has its specific internal goods and virtues. The collective has been involved in this practice for some time now and has become fully part of the moral and linguistic game that this practice is. Accordingly, the collective, being explicitly anarchist, calls the practice an anarchist practice, and recognises the specific *telos* of the practice. The entire toolkit the members of the collective have at their disposal for moral evaluation is also a part of the practice, for as Franks notes (2008: 143), "different social practices have their own distinctive discourse and mode of reasoning." So, the only way the members of the collective can evaluate whether the internal good of the practice is worth pursuing is in relation to the *telos* of the practice or using reason which is also part of the practice. This seems to restrict the moral conduct as much as a universal *telos* does, for there is still just one standard against which things can be judged. In fact, the reliance on local or practice-based modes of evaluation might even be more restrictive, as it precludes the goods of other practices being at all meaningful unless there is some contingent resemblance.

Another point of critique can be made in relation to the first two arguments Franks employs against moral universalism. As I noted above, these arguments, that universalism creates the potential for a restriction of moral agency and the introduction of a moral hierarchy, are moral in nature; that is, they challenge universalism on the grounds that it is immoral. Applying a charge of immorality against a position can, I would suggest, come in two ways. Firstly, it could appeal to a moral universalism. In the case of the arguments made by Franks, limiting moral agency and facilitating the creation of moral hierarchies would be considered universally bad, and so any morally good position would have to avoid these. This raises the paradoxical prescription that if universalism is true, then it should be rejected as false. However, this is only paradoxical if the content of the objective moral reality is such that it would restrict moral agency and create moral hierarchy. Indeed, were the

a core feature of their concept of anarchism, for contemporary anarchists (at least in the post-industrial countries and regions) this is not such a relevant fight, and so this feature has shifted to the periphery. Franks' notion, on the other hand, that there is no *telē* common to all anarchist practices precludes defining some practices as anarchist and others as not.

This comes out in Franks' assertion that not all anarchist practices involve a rejection of hierarchy. He says (2008: 148) that "there are contexts in which goods are immanently developed but a challenge to structures that maintain inequalities of power is not generated — for instance, children playing in a sandbox." The inclusion of this particular example is perhaps intended to highlight the fact that, according to practical anarchism, not all practices share a rejection of hierarchy. But is the suggestion then that children playing in a sandbox is an anarchist practice? Without the claim that all anarchist practices share some *telos* or *telē*, it's actually impossible to say whether children playing in a sandbox is anarchist or not. More worryingly, perhaps, it becomes impossible to say that practices which claim to be anarchist, such as those of so-called anarcho-capitalists or autonomous nationalists, are in fact not anarchist. The upshot of this is that just as there is no way of morally acting in a non-contingently, meaningful anarchist way without a *telos* or set of *telē*, neither is there any way of using the words 'anarchist' or 'anarchism' that is not contingent and based purely on the accidental language game the agent is presently in. Moral action and use of the word anarchism would be possible, but only within contingent practices and language games.

Where this characterisation of practical anarchism as morally relativistic is a problem is insofar as it falls victim to one of the very critiques Franks makes of an ethics based of a fixed, universal *telos*; namely, that it limits the potential for moral agency. I return to the above example to explain this point. Say the collective came to some contingent agreement and decided to support the animal rights group. They have thus entered into a practice (showing soli-

ferent practices. His claim is that every practice entails a teleological conception of the agents engaged therein and that those agents can thusly act in a moral way. In acting to realise the good end of human life, "human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realised-its-*telos*", agents can act in a morally praiseworthy way. This draws on Aristotle's understanding of *telos*, whereby the 'good' end for human life is something natural and common to all human beings: *telos* is a property of a "metaphysical biology" (MacIntyre, 1985: 162). However, for the MacIntyre of *After Virtue*, this deep metaphysical commitment is misguided (as I will highlight below, MacIntyre has retracted this position in recent years). Instead, *telos* is to be considered a property of agents only in so far as they are engaged in practices. In one practice, a particular form of agency is constituted, in another practices, the form of agency constituted may be quite different. These practice based forms of agency include a particular *telos* for the constituted agent. Thus, a human being will, as they move from practice to practice, engage in them as different forms of agency with different *telē*. To use MacIntyre's example (1985: 188), when engaged in the practice of chess, a person will have the agency of the chess player, with which comes a particular *telos*, that of doing good in the role of the chess player. What this doing good in a practice-specific role consist of, according to MacIntyre, is acting virtuously. Therefore, rather than hold to a fixed table of virtues, MacIntyre's account of social practices entails different tables of virtues for different practices, each informed by the *telos* specific to the form of agency involved in that practice (1985: 162–3). Where a *telos* can be said to transcend individual practices, it is still contingent and a property of an agency common to a network of practices (MacIntyre, 1994: 288). This latter point will prove to be important to Franks' practical anarchism.

2: *Telos* or *Telē*

The rejection of a single, fixed *telos* is something MacIntyre's and Franks' accounts of social practices have in common. Franks' practical anarchism shares with MacIntyre the perspective "that the social world is constructed out of intersecting social practices with their own histories and traditions" (Franks, 2010: 155). Franks' (2008: 147) description of practical anarchism is as follows:

> Practical anarchism is based on a social account of the virtues (based on a revision of MacIntyre's virtue theory). This identifies goods as being inherent to social practices, which have their own rules, which are negotiable and alter over time. It stresses the immanent values of particular practices rather than the externally decided (consequentialist) values that will accrue.

In addition to the rejection of an over-arching teleology of human life, therefore, practical anarchism shares with MacIntyre's account of social practices the idea of there being goods that are internal to practices. Franks writes too that "each anarchist practice produces [its] own standards", and this can be taken as referring to the standards of excellence (virtues) in MacIntyre's theory. Thus, both accounts of social practices also incorporate the notion of virtuous behaviour, the successful display of which can be seen in agents achieving those goods that are internal to a particular practice. To see the importance of this account of social practices, and in particular the notion of teleology which is central to it, it may be helpful to rehearse Franks' arguments against holding a single, fixed teleology; for he does not follow the later MacIntyre of, for instance, *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999) in reinforcing the normative force of social practice theory with a return to an Aristotelian metaphysical biology (MacIntyre, 1999: x).

Franks, inspired by postanarchist writers but also early twentieth century anarchists such as Errico Malatesta (e.g., 1977: 267)

something necessary or even essential to those practices (2010: 142):

> This is not to say that an identical teleology exists across the range of anarchisms; indeed a careful reading would identify changes in the framing of purpose of anarchism across its histories and contexts. However, what joins most of the contexts in which anarchism developed are shared narratives [and teleologies] promoting the autonomous actions of the oppressed to (albeit temporarily and incompletely) challenge, alleviate or avoid hierarchies and create more enriching social practices.

This raises, in addition to the question of moral relativism, the question of how, if there is/are no essential feature/s of anarchist practices, how are we to identify them and, further to this, use the term anarchism at all?

Franks own proposal (2010: 139–40) is to apply Michael Freeden's method of definition which eschews necessary and sufficient conditions and instead proposes that one "study and identify the inter-relationship of core and periphery concepts, and to locate these concepts spatially and temporally, exploring the manner in which concepts shift historically from core to periphery (and vice versa)." However, this actually contradicts Franks' claim that anarchist practices don't essentially share either one *telos* or a set of *telē*. Following Freeden's method, if we use it in relation to teleology, it is possible to say that what anarchist social practices share is a commitment to multiple *telē*, which taken together, are definitive of anarchism. These *telē*, however, need not be present in each practice in the same way and to the same extent, but to call these practices anarchist, at least one must be present. For example, while many anarchists in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century may have prioritised the struggle against religion and held that as

without such an external guide, deliberation seems meaningless. If the first group claims in support of their position that it measures up to the contingent *telos* that solidarity should be primarily with the animal rights movement, and the second group claims that theirs measures up to the *telos* that solidarity should be with anti-racism, then there is no way for agreement to be reached. It is impossible to order the potential goods of practices. Furthermore, even if some agreement is made, were a third party to question the prioritising of one internal good over another, no support could be given except from within the practice, which begs the question.

Ultimately, it would seem, there is no way of resolving conflict between goods and virtues, or between practices. This highlights the practical problem with rejection an objective *telos* in the way that practical anarchism does. The ethical dimensions of this theory are reduced to moral relativism. Franks wants to propose a point between moral relativism and moral universalism, but it seems that this point isn't to be found. Of course there can be a *telos* that spans several interconnected practices, but this would be similarly contingent and would still not aid the agent in deciding whether to engage in one group of practices or another.

This last point is especially pertinent to Franks' practical anarchism, because in some places he seems to arguing that certain practices will share a common teleology that distinguishes them as anarchist practices; namely, that they aim to challenge and eliminate hierarchical and capitalist relationships. For example, he writes (2010: 146) that "anarchist prefigurative methods are identifiable as they are the types of practices that would collectively build up to create their anti-hierarchical version of the flourishing society." Indeed, he offers a definition of "ideal type" anarchism as involving the rejection of capitalism and the free market and having an interest in the freedom of others as part of creating non-hierarchical social relations (2006: 112–13). However, he is consistent with MacIntyre's early take on social practices in that he stresses that this shared teleology is contingent, and not

who argues similarly against any teleological account of human beings, rejects the idea that there is one *telos* against which all action can be judged as 'good' or 'bad'. Instead, as the above section shows, he argues for multiple *telē* such that different social practices and, as the case may be, contingent networks of social practices, have internal goods that, for their achievement, demand that the agent act virtuously. The virtuous character is the teleological end for moral agency within that practice. Franks' argument against positing a single, fixed *telos* comes in three parts. Firstly, he argues that even if there were an observable teleology, a moral universal, it would be undesirable as it would limit the moral agency of people and groups, and potentially impose the coercion that anarchists traditionally seek to eliminate. Indeed, a universalist account makes room for the role of moral authorities: individuals or groups who are able to indicate to others what internal goods and standards of excellence should be pursued. It is characteristic of anarchisms (both classical and contemporary) that such authority be rejected, regardless of meta-ethical commitments to universalism. Mikhail Bakunin (1973: 134–5), for example, who argues for the authority of *science* as a mirror of the natural law found in nature, still rejects the authority of *scientists*. "If there are universal, set standards," writes Franks (2008: 141), "then moral agents would have to live up to these, and thus be denied the freedom to determine their own values." The second argument made by Franks against the teleological position is that it entails the potential for the introduction of a moral hierarchy, because if there is a universal standard of moral conduct, and some agents are more capable of measuring up to that standard than others, they will be privileged. "Rules which apply to all regardless of context ignore, and therefore disadvantage, those who are in an unequal position to begin with" (Franks, 2008: 142).

These first two arguments are moral in nature. The final argument, on the other hand, is that a teleological and universalist position falls on epistemological grounds (Franks, 2010: 144):

> A fixed concept of what it is to be human is epistemologically suspect, as there seems to be no appropriate methodology for discovering what constitutes humanity's universal quintessence. Nor is there any agreement among those who commit to essentialism on what constitutes humankind's fundamental nature.

This final argument echoes that of MacIntyre against the positing of a single *telos*. He writes (1985: 162–3) that universalism "ignores the place in our cultural history of deep conflicts over what human flourishing and well-being do consist in[.]" Indeed, MacIntyre (1985: 181–6) highlights the numerous accounts of the good life that can be found in different periods of human history. With these arguments in place, Franks rejects the universalist position that the internal goods and virtues of particular practices can be justified in line with an objective moral reality.

However, as noted above, MacIntyre has, in the last ten years or so, performed an about-face on the issue of teleology and now argues that context-specific *telē* are not enough to provide the moral guidance agents require in dealing with conflicting practices and virtues (MacIntyre, 2006: 262):

> [I]t is only because human beings as rational animals have the specific end that they have that questions about how the should act have determinate answers, answers that are true or false. Withdraw the concept of an end and those moral judgements that formerly presupposed it will continue to mimic judgements that are true or false, but will in fact only function as expressions of attitude. […] To speak of the end of human beings is to speak of the goods to which they are directed by their nature[.]

MacIntyre's current position, therefore, is that for social practice theory to avoid moral relativism, whereby statements about

what is right and wrong have as much claim to objective truth as statements about what is fashionable in clothing or music (i.e., their truth value is determined by contingent agreement among the members of the practice-community), it must posit a universal *telos* for human beings in general. This *telos* can thus be used to help agents decide definitively and correctly between practices and virtues that may conflict. Franks' practical anarchism, given that it rejects such a universalism, would seem to be open to the charge of relativism. I will now attempt to show that this is in fact the case and, furthermore, that this poses a potential problem for the adoption of a non-universalist social practice theory as an anarchist ethics.

3: Moral Relativism

While Franks rejects a single *telos* that transcends different practices, he also notes that for deliberation in ethics to exist in any meaningful way at all, there must be "a shared moral discourse that can evaluate and select between rival tactical options" (Franks, 2008: 145). The problem is that his rejection of a *telos* common to every agent or every context is that this moral discourse becomes incredible problematic. To see why this is the case, I propose to introduce an example. Suppose that an anarchist collective which runs a social centre comes to a disagreement in the course of one of their monthly meetings. Some of the members claim that the collective should provide a subsidy to a direct action group involved in the animal rights movement, while the others claim that the subsidy should go to an anti-racist organisation. Each option entails a different internal good and so a different virtue. If the universalist is right and there is a fixed *telos* (or set of *telē*), and the members of the collective are aware of this *telos* (or set of *telē*), then they will be able to measure the conflicting goods against this objective yardstick and decide which good takes priority at that time. However,