

**Caution: This outline was almost entirely generated by ChatGPT. As such, the inaccuracies that we discussed in class should result in a healthy bit of skepticism about the reliability of GPT in regards to explaining complex philosophical works.**

## I. Introduction

- a. Overview of the paper's main arguments
  - i. Dreier's paper is an exploration of two controversial positions in ethical theory, moral relativism and moral nihilism. He argues that both positions are more plausible than they are often given credit for, and that they are not as problematic as their critics suggest.
- b. Definition of moral relativism and moral nihilism.
  - i. Moral relativism is the view that moral truths are relative to the beliefs, values, and practices of particular cultures or societies. Moral nihilism, on the other hand, is the view that there are no moral truths at all, and that all moral claims are therefore meaningless.
- c. Importance of the topic for ethical theory
  - i. The debate between moral relativism and moral nihilism is significant for ethical theory because it challenges the idea that there are objective moral truths that apply universally. It raises important questions about the nature of morality, the role of culture and society in shaping moral beliefs, and the possibility of moral motivation and obligation.

## II. Moral Relativism

- a. Explanation of moral relativism
  - i. Moral relativism is the view that moral judgments are not objectively true or false, but are instead relative to the beliefs, values, and practices of particular cultures or societies. According to moral relativism, there are no universal moral truths that apply to all people and all cultures.
    - 1. "Good and bad are relative to standards; right and wrong are relative to rules. When standards or rules are built into a concept, questions of bad and wrong can be answered 'absolutely' because they can be answered relative to the standards that everyone accepts by virtue of their conceptual or semantic competence. In questions of morality, no such standards seem to be available."  
(pg 4)
- b. Criticisms of moral relativism
  - i. The problem of moral disagreement: Critics of moral relativism argue that it cannot account for the fact that people from different cultures or societies often disagree about moral issues. If morality is relative to culture, then how can we explain these disagreements?
  - ii. The problem of moral progress: Critics also argue that moral relativism cannot account for the fact that some societies have made moral progress over time. If morality is relative to culture, then how can we explain why some societies have changed their moral beliefs and practices for the better?

- iii. The problem of moral evaluation: Finally, critics argue that moral relativism cannot provide a basis for moral evaluation. If all moral claims are relative, then how can we say that one culture's beliefs or practices are better or worse than another's?
  - c. Dreier's response to criticisms of moral relativism
    - i. Moral relativism is not committed to denying the existence of moral progress or evaluation: Dreier argues that moral relativism does not preclude the possibility of moral progress or evaluation. While moral relativism holds that moral judgments are relative to culture, it does not deny that some cultures may be morally better or worse than others.
    - ii. Moral relativism can explain moral disagreement without resorting to moral skepticism: Dreier also argues that moral relativism can provide a plausible explanation for moral disagreement. Rather than denying the existence of moral truth or assuming that one culture's beliefs must be mistaken, moral relativism can explain disagreement by pointing to the diversity of moral beliefs and practices across cultures.
- III. The Argument from Disagreement
  - a. Explanation of the argument from disagreement
    - i. The argument from disagreement is the claim that moral disagreements among people and cultures are evidence that there are no objective moral truths.
  - b. Criticisms of the argument from disagreement
    - i. The problem of non-moral disagreement: Dreier argues that the argument from disagreement conflates moral disagreements with non-moral disagreements, such as disagreements about factual claims or practical matters.
    - ii. The problem of self-referential inconsistency: Dreier also criticizes the argument from disagreement for relying on a premise that undermines its own validity.
  - c. Dreier's alternative view: moral agreement and disagreement
  - d. Dreier argues that moral agreement and disagreement can be accounted for without resorting to moral relativism or nihilism. He proposes that moral disagreements can be understood as disagreements about the scope of moral principles or the application of moral principles to particular cases, rather than disagreements about the truth or falsity of moral claims.
    - i. The scope of moral principles: Dreier argues that moral principles can be understood as having different levels of generality or specificity, and that moral disagreements can arise when people disagree about the appropriate scope of a principle.
    - ii. The application of moral principles: Dreier also argues that moral disagreements can arise when people disagree about the proper application of a moral principle to a particular case, even if they agree on the general principle.

#### IV. The Argument from Cultural Diversity

- a. Explanation of the argument from cultural diversity
  - i. The argument from cultural diversity is the claim that the wide range of moral beliefs and practices across different cultures is evidence that there are no objective moral truths.
- b. Criticisms of the argument from cultural diversity
  - i. The problem of false generalization: Dreier argues that the argument from cultural diversity relies on a false generalization about the nature and scope of moral diversity across cultures.
  - ii. The problem of epistemic access: Dreier also criticizes the argument from cultural diversity for assuming that we have access to an unbiased and complete picture of moral beliefs and practices across cultures.
- c. Dreier's alternative view: moral convergence and divergence
  - i. Dreier proposes that moral convergence and divergence across cultures can be explained without resorting to moral relativism or nihilism. He argues that moral convergence can be attributed to shared moral principles that are widely recognized across cultures, while moral divergence can be attributed to differences in cultural practices, values, and historical contexts.
    - 1. Shared moral principles: Dreier argues that there are certain moral principles, such as prohibitions against murder and theft, that are widely recognized across cultures.
    - 2. Differences in cultural practices: Dreier also argues that moral disagreements can arise from differences in cultural practices and values, even when there is agreement on the underlying moral principles. For example, he suggests that disagreements about the appropriate treatment of the dead in different cultures can be understood as differences in cultural practices rather than disagreements about the underlying moral principles.

#### V. Moral Disagreement and Rationality

- a. Explanation of the problem of rationality and moral disagreement
  - i. The problem of rationality and moral disagreement is the question of how to reconcile the fact that rational people can have sincere and deep moral disagreements with the idea that there are objective moral truths.
- b. Criticisms of the problem of rationality and moral disagreement
  - i. Dreier criticizes the problem of rationality and moral disagreement for assuming that moral disagreements cannot be rationally resolved, and for failing to consider alternative explanations for moral disagreements.
- c. Dreier's alternative view: moral progress and justification
  - i. Dreier proposes that moral disagreements can be resolved and moral progress can be made through moral justification and argumentation. He argues that rational reflection and argumentation can lead to a convergence of moral views and the discovery of objective moral truths.

1. Moral justification and argumentation: Dreier argues that moral justification and argumentation can provide a basis for resolving moral disagreements and making moral progress.
2. The discovery of objective moral truths: Dreier suggests that the process of moral justification and argumentation can lead to the discovery of objective moral truths, even if they are not immediately evident. (**remember, this is what GPT claimed which is false**)

VI. Conclusion: Implications for Moral Philosophy (**GPT claims this; how did you interpret the reading tho?**)

- a. Summary of Dreier's arguments
  - i. Dreier argues that moral relativism and moral nihilism are not viable options for addressing moral disagreement and cultural diversity, and that alternative views based on moral agreement, convergence, and justification are better equipped to account for these phenomena.
- b. Implications for moral philosophy
  - i. Dreier suggests that his alternative view has important implications for moral philosophy, including the need to focus on the process of moral justification and argumentation, the recognition of the possibility of objective moral truths, and the rejection of moral relativism and nihilism as plausible positions. He also emphasizes the importance of engaging with empirical research on moral disagreement and cultural diversity to inform philosophical discussions about morality.