Yixuan Huang’s Paper Outline

Philo 5800, Spring 2023

I will make an argument for Chalmers’s view in his paper, Vulcans. My paper will focus on four aspects. First, I will argue Chalmers definition of moral status. Second, I also want to argue his description about Zombies and Vulcans. Third, I think I will criticize his trolley problem examples. And finally, I would like to give my arguments about moral patient.

Part I: Moral Patient

What Chalmers discusses in his paper is not moral status, but moral patient which is the passive part of moral status. It is important to separate those two definitions when we talk about morality, because having consciousness is enough to becoming moral patient, but how to determine whether an object has consciousness requires an object to have moral obligation.

Part II: Zombies and Vulcans

Chalmers says that a Zombie is defined as an unconscious being who may be similar to conscious beings in other respects, while a Vulcan is defined as “a conscious creature who experiences no happiness, suffering, pleasure, pain or any other positive or negative affective states.” (343)

But the problem is even conscious beings themselves, they may be quite different from each other. Does Chalmers create a unique Zombie every time he wants to compare with a conscious being in his trolley problem examples?

Part III: The Trolley Problem Examples

Chalmers uses several trolley problems to prove his argument that consciousness is necessary and sufficient for moral status. However, I do not think the trolley problem is compared in terms of just one factor of consciousness, instead the trolley problem compares two objects based on values the objects contains and pick up the more valuable one. So, I would like to make an argument for Chalmers and explain why his argument is imprecise.

Part IV: My argument for moral patient

I think consciousness is necessary and sufficient for moral patient, and I will give my argument to support my opinion. I will try to give some examples to help me explain my reason. (Still not find a real better explanation than Chalmers)