

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

*Philosophy 1A • Professor Andreas Teuber*

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY • FALL 2013

---

## **REVISED PAPER WITH EXPLANATIONS OF IMPROVEMENTS OVER THE ORIGINAL**

Do creatures like dogs and cats have minds? In this paper I will argue [**'argue', not 'prove'**] that they do.

This does not mean that dogs and cats have minds exactly like those of human beings. For example, most adult human beings can think about abstract subjects like mathematics or ethics, but I don't know of any evidence that cats and dogs can think about these abstract subjects.

**[This is a clearer statement of the idea that cats and dogs lack 'abstract thought'. The author here gives some indication of why this claim is plausible. Additionally, she does not claim to know that cats and dogs lack abstract thoughts - she just says that she won't claim that they do.]**

Still, I will present the reasons [**'reasons', not 'proof'**] we have for thinking that dogs and cats have perceptual experiences (such as pain and visual images) and emotions (such as excitement) [This is a clearer statement of the idea that dogs and cats can 'feel'. It doesn't give a definition of 'perceptual experience' or 'emotion', but it gives some examples which illustrate what the author means by these terms.] This means that dogs and cats have minds of some kind, since having experiences and emotions requires having a mind of some kind.

To begin with, I want to ask what evidence I have for believing that other human beings have emotions and experiences. I have been able to identify two major sources of evidence. [**This is makes the distinction between evidence that a creature has a mind and what it means for that creature to have a mind clear. The author clearly states that she is only claiming that having a brain and behaving in a certain way constitute evidence of a mind.]**

First, other human beings behave in ways that are similar to how I behave when I have perceptual experiences and emotions. This is the sort of evidence which Turing discussed in his paper "Can Machines Think?." Although I don't agree with everything Turing said, I agree that my observations of other people's behavior are an important source of evidence for their having emotions and perceptual experiences. [**This doesn't just assume that everything Turing says was correct, although it still acknowledges the author's debt to Turing.]**

Second, other human beings are physically similar to me in some important ways--in particular, they have brains which are similar to mine. If these similarities are adequate evidence for me to believe that other human beings have minds (which I will assume), then the same should be true in the case of cats and dogs. And both kinds of similarities do obtain in the case of cats and dogs--albeit to a lesser degree. [**This paragraph as a whole presents a coherent view about the relationship between behavioral and neurological evidence for the presence of a mind. It also has a clearer organization than the one we saw in the original paper.]**

Let's start with behavioral similarities. If a dog gets hit very hard on some part of its body, it makes movements and sounds very similar to the ones I make when I experience pain. And when a dog has to get from point A to point B, it can avoid obstacles in its path--just like I can when I see those obstacles in front of me. This doesn't prove beyond any doubt that dogs really experience pain, or that they have visual experiences like I do when I see things in front of me. But it does give us some evidence for this conclusion. Dogs also wag their tails and jump around when their owners return after being away for a long time. Many people think that these behaviors are due to the dog's having the emotion of excitement. Once again, I don't think that this behavior gives us definitive proof that the dog is experiencing excitement, but it does give us some evidence for this conclusion. **[This is good. This describes dogs' behavior in neutral terms, and then says that it reasonable to infer from this behavior that dogs have emotions and sensory experiences.]**

Let's next consider physical similarities. Dogs and cats have brains which are similar to ours in many ways. Although their brains are not as large and maybe not as sophisticated as our brains, they are made out of the same kinds of cells, and on a larger scale they have parts which correspond to many of the parts of our brain. In human beings, the brain seems to be responsible for our ability to have sensory experiences and emotions. Although dogs and cats have brains which are different from ours, the many similarities give us some further evidence that dogs and cats have experiences somewhat like our own. **[The organization of this paragraph is much clearer than the one we saw in the original paper. It makes the same basic claim, but the structure of the argument is a lot clearer to the reader.]**

It might seem like the two sources of evidence I have considered are not very strong. First of all, we might wonder whether it is possible for a mindless robot to display the same behaviors which are present in cats and dogs. And second, we might wonder whether there are creatures with brains that nevertheless do not have minds. I will now consider these two possibilities. [This paragraph was not present in the original paper. It explains the relationship between the preceding paragraphs and the paragraphs that follow. **(Knowing when this is necessary, and when it is just wasting space, is something you just have to learn through practice.)**]

It is true that you could program a robotic dog to wag its tail, or to recoil as if it were in pain. I don't know whether a robot really could feel pain, or have real visual experiences or emotions like the ones that I have. But I don't think that we must accept that a robot could have experiences--or at least that these particular robots do have them--just because we accept that cats and dogs do.

First of all, the robots which currently exist are just following a program. What I mean by this is that their behaviors always conform to a simple routine. For example, some existing robots can use video cameras to navigate around geometrical figures like lines and circles. In contrast, dogs and cats can recognize people, animals, and familiar objects like a leash or a food bowl, and they can tailor their behaviors in ways that are appropriate to these different objects. **[This explains what the phrase 'following a program' means, and gives us some idea of how it could be reasonable to think that dogs and cats have perceptual experiences, even if we think these robots do not.]**

In fact, some dogs have even been known to rescue their owners in life-threatening situations--which shows an ability to adapt their behavior to their circumstances in ways that these robots can't. **[The significance of this observation has been explained, and it has been put in an appropriate place in the paper.]**

A second difference is that the robots do not have brains like ours. Now I do not know what it is about our brains which makes us able to have emotions and experiences. But since a dog's brain is similar to ours in many ways, and since the robot's circuitry is different in many ways, we don't need to know exactly what it is about our brains which makes us able to have experiences. Dogs' brains have a lot in common with ours, and these robots' circuitry has very little in common with our brains--and this is enough for us to be more confident of dogs' minds than we are of robots'. **[This explains how the fact that robots lack brains like ours is supposed to be relevant to the question of whether they have experiences and emotions.]**

It is also true that there are creatures with brains, like earthworms, which I am not so sure have minds. It is possible that these creatures do have minds, but we don't need to accept this just because we think that dogs and cats do. **[This doesn't confuse necessity and sufficiency.]** First of all, the brains of insects and worms are very different from ours. And like I said before, even though I don't know what it is about our brains that accounts for our having minds, the fact that there are so many differences between our brains and an earthworm's can still make it reasonable for us to doubt that it has a mind. And second, insects and earthworms don't behave at all like us, the way that dogs and cats do. These considerations show that we can acknowledge the strength of my argument that cats and dogs have minds, even if we are skeptical that earthworms have minds.