

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy 1A • Professor Andreas Teuber

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SAMPLE PAPER

Do creatures like dogs and cats have minds, or consciousness, or a degree of intelligence?

This question has plagued mankind since we first began to reflect on our own capacity for conscious thought, and it has perplexed humanity's greatest thinkers even to the present day.

In this paper, I will prove that cats and dogs do have a mind. They do not have minds which are exactly like ours. For example, they are not capable of abstract thought. Still, I will prove that a dog can feel. This means that dogs and cats have a mind of some kind.

As Turing showed with his Turing Test, we can only know that other humans have minds because of how they behave in response to their environments. And in addition to this, other people have brains.

Dogs show their emotions through their behavior, and they have brains which are similar to ours. Some dogs have even been known to rescue their owners from life-threatening situations. This shows that having a mind is a matter of having a brain, and of being able to behave like humans do in response to their environments.

Webster's Dictionary defines perception as "the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses."

Based on this definition, it is obvious that dogs can have perceptions.

Dogs can perceive objects in their environment and react to them, for example when they see food in their bowl and run over to it to alleviate their feeling of hunger. They also recoil in pain when something is hurting them.

I have also observed my dog Winston's emotions, which shows that he has a mind. When I came home from a long trip to the Bahamas when I was 13, Winston wagged his tail excitedly, since he had been really lonely without me. Winston also loves to lie on my lap and be petted. And he gets excited when he knows he is about to get a treat. He also loves to go for walks, and to chase squirrels in our back yard.

Dog brains are not as large and sophisticated as our brains. But do their brains differ so much from ours that it prevents them from having minds?

We can see that this argument is pretty weak, since even human brains come in different sizes. This shows that since dogs have brains, they have experiences, even if their brains are smaller than ours.

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Dogs are not like robots. Dogs can perceive and have emotions, while a robot just follows a program. What if you made a robotic dog that wags its tail?

Would it be excited, like a real dog? We can see that this argument is also pretty weak, because dogs have brains, and they aren't following a program.

Not every animal with a brain has a mind, like dogs and cats do. An earthworm has a brain, but I have claimed that dogs and cats have minds because they have emotions. If so, then an earthworm does not have a mind because it does not have emotions like cats and dogs do. For example, if you had a pet earthworm, it would not be excited to see you when you came home. So this is no objection to my argument.