Over three decades ago, in a brief but provocative essay, Paul Ziff argued for the thesis that robots cannot have feelings because they are "mechanisms, not organisms, not living creatures.  There could be a broken-down robot but not a dead one.  Only living creatures can literally have feelings."  Since machines are not living things they cannot have feelings. Ziff's claim that machines cannot have feelings and the more general thesis that life is necessary to mind, which I will tag the LNM Thesis, seem to have the backing of common sense.  Few of us would regard "animated" figures which we know to be mechanical automata as being conscious or sentient, even when they are artfully contrived to appear human.  Although the thesis that there is a connection between life and mind has common sense appeal, it is surprisingly difficult to spell out that connection persuasively.  That life is necessary to mind was disputed by philosophically astute critics at the time Ziff wrote, and it has become increasingly controversial as both hardware and software have become more sophisticated.  If an organism is a complex physical entity whose consciousness arises from its electrochemical activity, then it seems that an appropriately designed system of nonliving electronics could harbor consciousness as well.  Therefore, the LNM Thesis requires careful defense if we are to have philosophical warrant for Ziff's conclusion that no computer, for example, could ever be made to think and feel, or, in the broadest sense, to have a mind.   
 In the first half of what follows I will review Ziff's arguments against the idea that robots could be conscious, especially his appeal to our linguistic usage.  In the second half I develop the idea that the active behavior of living animals and human beings, unlike the motions of inanimate mechanisms, carries special psychological significance.  Machines cannot think or feel because they are different in kind from living human beings and animals, a difference which is obscured when we focus on the superficial fact that they are all highly structured "material systems."