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All Animals are Conscious: A New Premise in the Cognitive Science of Consciousness

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Abstract

The Distribution Question (DQ) asks: Can we know which animals beside humans are conscious? The current best practices for answering DQ rely on a version of a marker approach, which seeks to find some observable features that indicate consciousness. I argue that the marker approach all but guarantees a positive answer regarding any animal selected for investigation-including sponges. This makes answering the DQ currently unachievable. What will turn it into an achievable goal is to have a robust theory of consciousness, which, I argue, requires we adopt the premise that all animals are conscious.