

A New Mode of Orientation: Planetary Cognitive Ecologies: Abstract

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One of the fundamental tasks of education is to orient learners to the world—geographically, politically, socially, economically, intellectually. At present there are two serious gaps in this orientation process, both stemming from how cognition is conceived, taught, and learned. On the biological side, the attitude continues to prevail that humans are the most important, and perhaps the only, species capable of cognition. This attitude results from confusing cognition with consciousness, especially higher consciousness that includes skills such as language, mathematics, physics, etc. On the technical side, debates continue about whether machines can think, an exhausted and unproductive way to position the question. Both gaps can be addressed by reconceptualizing cognition, defining it as a capability that all living organisms possess in some degree and that many technical systems exhibit as well. Such a reorientation opens possibilities for more accurate, inclusive, and perceptive understanding of how humans relate to the built and organic worlds.