



Panpsychism in the West (MIT Press)

David F. Skrbina

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In *Panpsychism in the West*, the first comprehensive study of the subject, David Skrbina argues for the importance of panpsychism -- the theory that mind exists, in some form, in all living and nonliving things -- in consideration of the nature of consciousness and mind. Despite the recent advances in our knowledge of the brain and the increasing intricacy and sophistication of philosophical discussion, the nature of mind remains an enigma. Panpsychism, with its conception of mind as a general phenomenon of nature, uniquely links being and mind. More than a theory of mind, it is a meta-theory -- a statement about theories of mind rather than a theory in itself. Panpsychism can parallel almost every current theory of mind; it simply holds that, no matter how one conceives of mind, such mind applies to all things. In addition, panpsychism is one of the most ancient and enduring concepts of philosophy, beginning with its pre-historical forms, animism and polytheism. Its adherents in the West have included important thinkers from the very beginning of Greek philosophy through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the present.

Skrbina argues that panpsychism is long overdue for detailed treatment, and with this book he proposes to add impetus to the discussion of panpsychism in serious philosophical inquiries. After a brief discussion of general issues surrounding philosophy of mind, he traces the panpsychist views of specific philosophers, from the ancient Greeks and early Renaissance naturalist philosophers through the likes of William James, Josiah Royce, and Charles Sanders Peirce -- always with a strong emphasis on the original texts. In his concluding chapter, "A Panpsychist World View," Skrbina assesses panpsychist arguments and puts them in a larger context. By demonstrating that there is panpsychist thinking in many major philosophers, Skrbina offers a radical challenge to the modern worldview, based as it is on a mechanistic cosmos of dead, insensate matter. *Panpsychism in the West* will be the standard work on this topic for years to come.

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