Panpsychism and the Origins of Dualism

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TIME: October 15, 10am-12
PLACE: Bankstown, Building 1, Room 1.1.114

ABSTRACT: Western thought, being broadly dualist in outlook, is inclined towards a materialist view of the nature of reality. This in turn inclines it towards an instrumental attitude in its dealings with the natural world. Feminists have traced this dualism to the patriarchal values of ancient Greek and Hebrew societies. But there have been ancient societies that were patriarchal yet not particularly dualistic in their legacies. Ancient China, for instance. So what are the origins of dualism? Is it ultimately the philosophical impulse itself that is responsible for the subject/object divide that gives rise to mind/matter dualism and hence to instrumental attitudes to the world?

BIO: Freya Mathews is currently Adjunct Professor of Environmental Philosophy at Latrobe University, where she coordinates the Environmental Culture and Sustainability Research Cluster. She has published widely in the area of environmental philosophy, with a focus on metaphysical and epistemological aspects of environmental thought, but with attention to ethics and politics as well. She has a particular interest in certain indigenous perspectives, notably those of Chinese Daoism and Aboriginal Australia. She has published widely in all these areas. Recent books include For Love of Matter: a Contemporary Panpsychism (SUNY 2003) and Reinhabiting Reality: towards a Recovery of Culture (SUNY 2005).

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