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Editorial ('Death': Mindfully Regarded)

Why Dirt? Why Death? Why Decay? Continuing our foundational series (*Foundations I, II, III, IV*) and examination of basic existential behaviors and their intersectionality with questions about human ecology and “ecopsychology,” the present issue focuses on various notions of dirt, death, and decay from transdisciplinary perspectives. In this issue, we begin with Dr. Violeta Schubert’s work on the semiotics of dirt. Continuing her work on the semiotics of decay, her present contribution focuses on the multi-stratal meaning-relevance that is “dirt”:

The earth, ground is a core material substance perceived as indisputably evident as real (a *realtruth*) and thus readily lends itself to being a material-semiotic. The idea of something being able to be demonstratively evident as *realtruth* by reference to ground, grounded or connected to dirt is evident in the semiotic range of many languages. Why is ‘ground’ truth, why is ground ‘real’? Further, in many cases, truth is perceived as the absence of dirt but the real is not the absence of dirt (2023: 2, this issue).

Schubert’s article is followed by a necessary historical correction, an erudite and timely historiography by Dr. Pedro Aullón de Haro – an historical revisionism that aims to elucidate contrasting ideas of “self” as they emerged prior to and in parallel with competing notions of more romantic and even nihilist tones in German and later on American *Romantik* ideas. The erudite sophistication of Dr. Aullón de Haro’s inquiring prose necessitated a serialization of his contributions. Part I is included in this issue.

In his work and other essays, the core argument is that ideas of “self,” emerging from and being subjected, as they were, to historical-political necessities, run the gamut from confabulation with persistent Scholasticist orthodoxy, to assertions and affirmations of personal agency in turbulent times, and to the many flavors of “individuality” that continue to erase any hopeful distinction between duty to human-*special* basic requirements for existence and an inevitable, or so it seems, arbitrary explosion of “identities,” and counting, all competing for a cultural diminishing spotlight – their bizarre conflagration already having a deleterious impact on politics, education, and the social sciences. Aspects of these bizarre conflagrations are evident in white and green-washed *indigenism*, admixtures of supra-natural wishful thinking and pseudo-science, and the narrowminded insistence that the infinitely complex and impersonal reality that is “nature” should conform to a limited and subjective (uninformed) set of culturally bound preferences.

The more nuanced processes of an ever changing “self” or “selves” forever in flux and morphing -- dying and decaying and from a rubbish pile of emotional and transitory states, adapting to, if resilience wins the day, the very real conditions of “life” -- are passed over for the insistence of the centrality of an ego bent on the next and proximal act of consumption.

A sensible and necessary approach to the death discourse follows: Death Cafés. Authors Carlos Laranjeira, Maria Anjos Dixe, Ana Querido, and Jennifer Moran Stritch offer a compassionate and realistic approach to broaching topics that most people would ordinarily avoid.

We are very grateful to Isabel Cidoncha for sharing samples of her personal vision and interpretations of the interface between being and nature: their affirmation and transcendence. Her obvious mastery of photography is guided by her keen philosophical training.

We are thankful and indebted to all the reviewers who provided invaluable feedback and to those who continue supporting our efforts.

George Conesa, Editor-in-Chief, Skagit City, WA

