

Invitation – XXIX Nordic Psychoanalytic Congress

Dear Colleagues,

“Not long ago, I went on a summer walk through a smiling countryside in the company of a taciturn friend and a young but already famous poet. // My conversation with the poet took place in the summer before the war. A year later, the war broke out and robbed the world of its beauties” (Freud, 1916, p. 304-306).

The theme of the upcoming XXIX Nordic Psychoanalytic Congress held from August 13-16, 2026, in Saltsjöbaden outside Stockholm, is **‘Psychoanalysis in catastrophic times – despair and mourning’**.

By opening our invitation to the next Nordic psychoanalytic congress with a quote from Freud’s (1916) essay “On Transience”, we wish to express something of the emotional pain of loss – whether individually or collectively experienced – and the difficult work of mourning. Freud wrote his essay two years into the devastation of a world war, and he continued to explore the topic of loss and mourning the following year in “Mourning and Melancholia”.

The emotional states of mourning, melancholia, and despair are also at the heart of Melanie Klein’s groundbreaking work on the depressive position. This position can be seen as an achievement of morality; yet, at the same time, as an experience of extreme tragedy (Likierman, 1995). In her paper “Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states”, Klein (1935) elaborates on the development of the infant and the patient. Subsequently, these ideas have been applied to the societal level as well.

A successful process of working through of the disillusionment, ambivalence, and guilt of the depressive position, along with the preceding schizoid-paranoid anxieties, lurking in the shadows, eventually leads from despair, through the work of mourning, to hope and faith in the good enough object – the internalized as well as the external. Through our lives, practices, theories, art, literature, and the political scenes of the surrounding society, however, we quickly learn the vicissitudes of this ideal process.

Freud (1917) stated that we tend not to relinquish our love objects easily, but that the work of mourning ultimately will set love free again. He also described the link between the inability to mourn and the state of melancholia or depression. The dramatic intensity of the internal emotional schizoid-paranoid and depressive landscapes is depicted by Klein (1935), and in later theoretical developments many have also stressed the importance of a good enough external object.

When we decided on a theme for our next Nordic congress a year ago, we found it urgent to gather our psychoanalytical understandings of mourning and the omnipresent despair of our catastrophic times. Now, a year later, as we write these lines, we sadly cannot say that the theme of our congress appears any less urgent.

The congress is a psychoanalytic one, and with ‘Psychoanalysis in catastrophic times – despair and mourning’ we refer to the impact of catastrophic times on the small individual and clinical scenes as well as the large collective scenes of society and that of fiction. We thus warmly invite you – dear colleagues – to share your explorations, thoughts, and discoveries on the topic/s, from various angles, theories, and aspects expressed in clinical work, art, literature, society, and the many other perspectives open to the science of psychoanalysis. **Please send your submissions (an abstract of 200 words by December 31) to: helene.c.wolf@gmail.com**

Information on the detailed conference program and registration will follow in the autumn.

In November 2025, on behalf of the Swedish Psychoanalytical Association:

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