

4th Annual Congress on **MENTAL HEALTH**

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Suffering, the proxy server of death**Rico Sneller***Academy Depth Psychology, Netherlands*

In my presentation, I will share some philosophical ideas on 'suffering,' a central notion when considering (mental) health. When analysed, it implies pure passivity. Even resistance against suffering is permeated by this passivity. My claim is twofold: 1) suffering is constitutive of mental health, and 2) beyond its concrete forms, suffering consists of an encounter with a void. This void brings suffering remarkably close to other void encounters, such as art or birth. (cf Otto Rank) In particular, one might argue that the void encounter inherent to suffering foreshadows death, presumably life's central void. Suffering could be seen as death's proxy server in life.

Reflecting on suffering as a void experience which anticipates death has at least three advantages. Firstly, it contextualises suffering in human life as an inevitable pathway to death. Secondly, it prevents us from seeing suffering as a pure evil that should be eliminated. Thirdly, it might make us reconsider death on the rebound: as an indeterminate encounter, or an encounter with an indeterminate, suffering could suggest that death itself only enhances the encounter – in an incomprehensible way.

Should these suggestions make sense, it will be worthwhile to further endeavour into the experience of suffering in terms of an encounter with a void. Psychoanalytic theories (Rank's notion of birth trauma) and artistic articulations (Lygia Clark's epistolary exchange) can help investigate experiences of suffering, with a close eye on what sets itself through despite pain and anxiety (without, however, implying easy trivialisations)

Biography

Rico Sneller is a lecturer of philosophy and depth psychology at the Academy of Depth Psychology (Nijmegen) and visiting lecturer at Alfarabi University in Almaty (Kazakhstan). He has taught continental philosophy and ethics at Leiden University (NL). He is active on various boards, both nationally and internationally. His current research focuses on exceptional states of consciousness in relation to philosophy. Together with Mahmoud Masaeli (Ottawa University), he edited a series of books on global ethics, development, and spirituality.