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HALF A CENTURY OF PSYCHIATRY

Psychiatria Fennica was created by Kalle Achté, and Jouko Lönnqvist served as the editor-in-chief for 16 years.

“Perhaps we should have taken a more polemic approach“, he ponders.

Sometimes a permanent institution begins almost by chance, from a project that was intended to be one-off or temporary. That also happened to Psychiatria Fennica, a yearbook in psychiatry whose publication began half a century ago.

A book published in celebration of professor Martti Kaila’s 70th birthday in February 1970 was a precursor to the current Psychiatria Fennica. Martti Kaila (1900–1978), the father of Finnish psychiatry, worked as a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Helsinki and as Chief Physician of the Lapinlahti Hospital from 1948 to 1967.

Kaila’s younger colleagues who compiled the commemorative book were convinced that a similar collection of professional articles should be published annually.

“The main driver was the profuse productivity of Kalle Achté [1928–2019], Kaila’s successor. When he started as a professor, he immediately embarked on various reforms in the research field and hospital work. As a result, we got day hospitals, a series of doctoral theses and monographs and, as part of his reformation of the field, Achté also wanted to start a yearbook in psychiatry”, says Jouko Lönnqvist (born in 1943), a Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry.

“Kalle had already established the Finnish Foundation for Psychiatric Research, which started to publish the Psychiatria Fennica together with the University of Helsinki and the Helsinki University Central Hospital”, Lönnqvist adds.

In the early days, the foundation also published works that popularised psychiatry but that branch dried up by the end of 1980s.

Funding for the yearbook was also channelled through the Finnish Foundation for Psychiatric Research. In the first decades, the book featured plenty of drug advertisements, and the advertising revenue paid for most of the printing and distribution costs, but the volume of advertisements has decreased since then.

Right from the start, English became the established language of the yearbook, and the publication has remained free of charge to its readers. At first, the majority of the edition of 300–400 copies was sent to experts in the field around the world – it was a network that Achté was constantly creating and expanding when participating in research conferences on psychiatry abroad.

“Psychiatria Fennica was the first international gambit in Finnish psychiatry, Kalle’s calling card, so to speak”, explains Lönnqvist. “His generation was more familiar with German, but he also boldly communicated in English, a language he learned later in life.”

LONG CAREER AS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Jouko Lönnqvist met Achté through work already in the 1960s, earned his doctorate in psychiatry in 1977 under Achté's guidance and joined the National Public Health Institute as a research professor in 1986. He served as a professor of psychiatry at the University of Helsinki from 2004 to 2011.

For 16 years, from 1992 to 2008, he was the Editor-in-Chief for the *Psychiatria Fennica*.

"I wasn't part of the yearbook's editorial staff from the very beginning. I joined in 1972. During Kalle's time, the yearbook was practically edited at the Psychiatric Clinic of the Helsinki University Central Hospital, but under my leadership, the editorial work was mainly carried out in my department at the National Public Health Institute of Finland in Ruskeasuo, Helsinki."

The yearbook has remained an expert publication but it has gone through changes over time. Today, the size of the edition is 1,500 copies, and free copies are no longer sent to foreign researchers. It was decided recently to distribute *Psychiatria Fennica* to the members of the Finnish Psychiatric Association. At the moment, there are approximately 1,300 members, meaning that a few hundred copies are left to be distributed elsewhere.

The form of publication has also changed. The last printed version was published in 2016, and the first online version was published in the following year.

In 2003, Achté stepped down from the lead role at the Finnish Foundation for Psychiatric Research, to be followed by Lönnqvist. Subsequently, the yearbook still continued to be edited and published according to the established principles – guided largely by the wishes of Achté.

"A strong emphasis remained on the Finnish qualities and our identity. Naturally, we didn't close our eyes to the international trends in psychiatry but there was a clear need and will to keep the yearbook as the first forum of our young specialising psychiatrists", says Lönnqvist.

"We even conducted a reader survey, and the main result was that readers wanted us to keep the same focus."

Now-a-days, approximately fifteen doctoral theses in psychiatry are examined annually in Finland. The yearbook is a natural start for the publication path of people working on their doctoral thesis and post doc researchers.

OPEN BUT NOT VERY SOCIALLY-ORIENTED

Lönnqvist looks at his long career as the Editor-in-Chief serenely. There were no other publications like *Psychiatria Fennica* in the Nordic countries but similar annual and clinic publications have been compiled in the universities around the world, starting from Harvard. The tradition exists.

According to Lönnqvist, open diversity is the encompassing principle of the yearbook. "We inherited this principle from Achté, just like he wanted. He had, after all, a conciliatory personality but in the scientific sense he was also an eclectic who let all the flowers bloom in psychiatry, so why not also in *Psychiatria Fennica*", describes Lönnqvist.

"The yearbook equally featured psychoanalysts, social psychiatry and biological psychiatry."

According to Lönnqvist, the more social trends of psychiatry, such as antipsychiatry, did not gain a foothold in the yearbook. The neo-leftism of 1960s did not end up on the pages because it was more inclined towards social science.

"In their hearts, all psychiatrists veer towards the left in the sense that compassion towards people who suffer is an essential element of our work", he says. "And I'm speaking of seeing and understanding human misery, not following any social or economic doctrines."

A PINCH OF SELF-CRITICISM

Lönnqvist gives a concise summary of the lasting significance of *Psychiatria Fennica*.

"At first, it was essential to build an international network to open up our rather insular attitude towards psychiatry."

"Our second task was to encourage our Finnish colleagues to become international, follow the trends in the field and to make connections."

"The third task was, and still is, to offer a sort of a training ground for new writers."

“I think that we have succeeded rather well in these key tasks.”

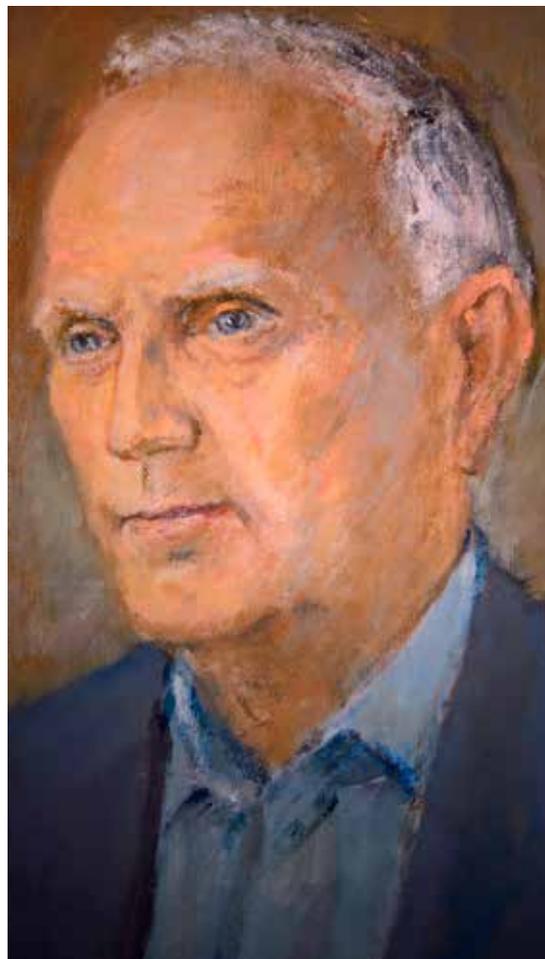
Jouko Lönnqvist is also willing to engage in self-criticism. “When looking back, I think that we could and should have popularised the yearbook. Instead of being a purely scientific publication, we could have taken a more deliberative, even a polemic approach. We have not seen any debates, let alone disputes or arguments“, he ponders. “That would be more suitable for an online publication.”

In his opinion, the publication language could be switched to Finnish because international networks are built differently today.

But now let the publication speak for itself, in one language or another.

Veli-Pekka Leppänen

The writer is a Doctor of Social Sciences, a researcher in history and a freelance editor.



Jouko Lönnqvist

