
Interview with Philip Kime

Paulo Ney de Souza

Editor's note: This interview took place on 25 July 2020, during the TUG 2020 online conference.



Paulo Ney de Souza: Nice to meet you.

Philip Kime: Yes, a pleasure. It's nice to put faces to all the names I see on the StackExchange.

PN: Exactly, exactly. Can I go for the first question?

PK: Absolutely, please do.

PN: Well, I'd like to start out with some of the stuff that I really learned from David Walden, which is to ask people first to tell us a little bit about your background.

PK: Well, it is a fairly straight sort of academic background in Philosophy. I graduated in Philosophy in, gosh, 1988, the University of Warwick in the UK. Then I went on to teach in mostly Analytic Philosophy and Logic, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Science, that sort of thing, and then I went on to do Artificial Intelligence, in Edinburgh, a Master's degree, and then I went on to do a Cognitive Science PhD in Edinburgh. After that, I sort of had the usual pile of student debt. And so I went on to do IT consultancy to pay off the debts.

This was in the boom period, mid, late 90s in the UK where, if you had a keyboard, you could become an IT consultant. So I did that, and I sort of bluffed my way into a consultancy job with British Telecom, by literally reading a Nutshell book on TCP on the bus on the way to the interview. Luckily they asked me questions to do with what I had just read in the book on the way there. I got the job but I don't remember well what I was doing. We were hacking some Unix systems for British Telecom, and this was 1998.

So I stayed in that sort of area for several years to pay off debts and moved around and did a few years at HP as an external consultant — not as an HP

consultant, but as an external contractor working on an HP site in Scotland. And I knew I didn't particularly want to be doing that forever. It was just useful to pay off bills and then I, I mean my background is Philosophy and I'd been reading a lot of Philosophy, a lot of Psychology, and I ended up looking into becoming a Psychoanalyst. So at that point I went through the stages of looking at where to go to do this. After a lot of reading, I wanted to follow the general Jungian approach.

It turned out the best place to do this if you wanted to still work and actually earn a living was to go to Switzerland to the original Jung Institute. So that's what I eventually planned to do. So I started to do the preliminary work for this. And then there was an IT crash in the UK, early 2000s. And so basically I just ran out of money and then I just had to give up the idea of going to Switzerland and I went to work in the Netherlands and then in Belgium for a while, saving up money and then I eventually said, well, it's now or never. And then I moved to Switzerland and started the training at the Jung Institute which went on for quite a few years with me working in IT, and going back there in rotation. I eventually managed to find a job in Switzerland in IT, so I could do both at the same time. That went on for a few years, and I got married and moved to the US for a few years and did clinical work there and then moved back to Switzerland and a lot of back and forth and messing around. I settled back in Switzerland in 2008. I still did some consultancy IT work, but I finished off the training there at the Institute and eventually I was on the board of directors of the Institute and then became the Vice President for a while.

Now, as a second career, I have a private practice as a Jungian Psychoanalyst in Zürich. So, yes, that's my somewhat peculiar background.

PN: Wow, that's quite a journey.

PK: A lot of moving around. I'm sick of moving countries. I hate it, I really hate it.

PN: How does T_EX fit into it? When did you get interested in T_EX?

PK: That was in '91 when I moved to do my Masters degree in the AI department in Edinburgh at the time ... It's funny to think of it because the department actually burned down years after I had left. It was a big story at the time. It was one of the oldest AI departments in the world, one of the first, and it burned to the ground. I think this was, this was quite a few years ago now. Everything, including the only copy of my Master's thesis, went

up in smoke. *Everything!* This was a big disaster at the University as I recall.

Because they were a very traditional sort of AI department, they had only HP Unix machines. There were no Windows machines, no Word, just old HP Unix machines, and everything, all documentation had to be done in $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, in $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$. There were no nice GUIs anywhere, only X Windows. It was all running in black and white; there were no color screens. It was a very hard core, old school AI department. Everything *had* to be done in $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$. I mean it was just assumed, that was how we were trained to write all documentation, do your thesis, everything. So it was just sort of from day one, we were just pushed into that and I quite liked it because it was, you know, it was documents as code and I quite like that. And so, and this was in the early days before $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X} 2_{\epsilon}$, so that was my Master's degree. We were just forced to do it. We were forced to do it and it was, you know, relatively fun really, and it was the same when I did my PhD in the Centre for Cognitive Science at Edinburgh, that was the same. The only difference was they had Sun workstations instead of HP workstations and everything was $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, my PhD was in $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, everything. And so there was a very, very hardened $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ community there with lots of hackers. And so it was an easy environment to get into it with.

But when I left that, then you know this was in the days before there were any reasonable home distributions of $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$. There was no $\text{MikT}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ really at the time and no $\text{MacT}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ on Mac. Nobody had Macs at that time in the UK anyway, it was too expensive. So I went back to using Word, which was just horribly painful. I mean, I remember just hating it for years, and it wasn't until I started writing the thesis for the Jung Institute in about 2007, that I thought I'd investigate $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ again. So those are significant years in the wilderness of not using $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$.

When I went back to it, I found these marvelous distributions. I found $\text{MiK}_{\text{T}}\text{E}_{\text{X}}$. I moved to Macs because of the Unix subsystem. I found $\text{MacT}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ and said, Oh! And I got back into Emacs again. And so I started using it, there was a whole phase where I moved away from it, and then I came back to it—redemption in about 2007.

PN: How do you mix the two things? You work in psychiatry and you work in $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$?

PK: I don't; I don't really. I mean, I still do IT consulting. So, but even there, you know, it's not used in most large companies anyway. So I don't. It's a totally separate thing and it's quite nice because I always considered the sort of IT side of things and

sort of computing to be a nice concrete non-abstract compensation to Philosophy.

I still do quite a lot of work in Philosophy; Philosophy and Psychoanalytic work is very nonlinear, and you don't generally get nice clean solutions in anything. So it's *nice* to come to a computer where somebody says, here's a bug report and you can just pick something and it's fixed, unlike with people. And so this is, it's a nice compensation, but it has literally nothing to do with the other side of things. I mean, I do all my invoicing and things for my practice myself in $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, but it's not part of work.

PN: Aha! Are you are you doing e-consultations during the pandemic? Are you...

PK: Oh, yes, yes. I mean, in Switzerland, they did it all quite well, they planned it quite well, they're very, very organized in Switzerland, so the health authority immediately got on top of this and authorized, you know, remote sessions immediately for everybody. So yes, I basically stayed at home a lot and did remote sessions with Skype with people, which was actually relatively straightforward.

PN: Can you take a consultation right now?

PK: For you? Yes, yes, what's up, what's wrong?

PN: Well, I mean, I feel extremely tired attending these lectures online.

PK: Oh, yes.

PN: Probably my fourth or fifth conference, and I kind of blame it on the lack of connection with, the lack of seeing the full body language of the person.

PK: It is absolutely, I mean there's research on this. Yes, it's clear that the problem is with, with engaging with the screen. It's that, I mean, for example, I mean, I'm looking outside from my office and now my peripheral vision...

Well, most of my vision of what's going on is peripheral vision. I mean, I can see the whole room—the windows, the trees outside, everything. Right. And when you're physically in a conference and you're physically watching someone, you're generally just watching the person, and you're listening to what's going on in the room. But if you start watching a screen, this isn't the case. There's ambient noise and peripheral noise and distractions, and this takes... So you're basically parallel processing a lot when you're looking at online things, which just takes a lot more energy and it's not a little more, it's quite a lot of energy. I mean, you know, multi-tasking and multi-focusing and maintaining a sort of peripheral awareness of what's going on semiconsciously, just takes up energy. And so, I mean, online

seminars and online courses, it's all very nice, but they actually... There's some quite good research that shows that they're actually more exhausting in, in terms of concentration in cognitive effort because there's just an awful lot more peripheral distraction.

PN: Talking about peripheral distraction and peripheral noise, I have seen some other interviews of yours, where there is a beautiful sound of a clock that interferes when...

PK: Yes, the church. That's the church opposite. This is a very Swiss thing.

I live in a small village and I live right opposite the church, and this is one of those churches that makes no concessions to the modern world whatsoever, so it rings every single quarter of an hour. It rings once on the quarter hour, twice on the half hour, three times on the three quarters, and then it rings the hour, and it does that 24 hours a day without exception. And not only that, the special times which coincide with what used to be farming signals — that is, a lot of rural Switzerland is farming, it's still very farming oriented — so for example, if it rings, it rings a two-minute ring at six o'clock in the morning, again at 23 minutes past seven. And these tiny Swiss churches have GPS in them so that — I'm not joking — they have GPS, so they ring *exactly* at 23 minutes after. I mean, you can set your watch by the movement. And they do that also at one o'clock and, sorry, 23 minutes past one — I don't know what the 23 minutes past thing is — five o'clock, eight o'clock and 11 o'clock, and so it's constant bells. And I really like it now. I mean actually people visiting just said it drives them mad.

But when it stops and they do maintenance on the clock, I think that there is something wrong with the world. I think something's missing. What's going on? And you don't know what it is for a few hours. Oh, the bells are not ringing. So it's, you get used to it. So I really like it, but some people, it drives them absolutely mad.

PN: I just don't want to, I just want to advise our listeners that if it rings, you know, whoo! Stay put!

PK: Well, what time is it now? No, you're all right. It's only going to ring the hours and you won't really hear it in this room, but if there's a, you know, if it was 23 minutes past you'd hear it for a while.

PN: That's absolutely beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

PK: Oh, it's lovely. Yes.

T_EX, BIB_LA_TE_X, and Biber

PN: So moving over to T_EX. You already said a little bit about, you know, how your relationship to T_EX evolved, but I want to ask a more specific question, how production of documents evolved during your lifetime. To me the first time that you started producing documents, up to now, because I see that you do produce a lot of documents yourself and...

PK: It's strange, because I, in some respects, I feel, I mean, apart from sort of development work on Biber and BIB_LA_TE_X, I don't actually... I'm not much of a sort of T_EX, you know, power user really. I mean, I have a set of templates. I use bits and pieces for publishing papers and things, but, you know, I feel a bit of embarrassed sometimes when I see some of the incredibly complicated questions coming in for BIB_LA_TE_X, and I think, I have no need for this feature at all. I will never, ever use this, nothing even close. But I'm happy to, you know, make it work for somebody else. But I will never need anything that complicated because my needs are quite basic, really.

And in the humanities publishing world in journals and books, I do everything in L^AT_EX. But then I always end up having to use some dreadful piece of software from Adobe or something that converts it into a Word file from PDF, because nobody will accept, you know, they won't even accept PDF. A lot of humanities publishers, you have, you have to send them Word documents, which is just awful. My document production went from doing a lot of complicated L^AT_EX stuff for my PhD, with all sorts of stuff with this special logic system which required this special... It was a very odd notation, called (what was it called?) Discourse Representation Theory and Situation Theory, which had all these boxes and stuff. And we did all of it in L^AT_EX. And the lecturers would provide special macro packages and it was quite complicated. And now, I mean, you know, if I have to put something in bold, it's exciting. I don't really do particularly exciting typesetting any more. So I get my sort of fix and exciting typesetting from working on BIB_LA_TE_X and reading T_EX.StackExchange.

PN: I wanted to ask you a question about... You seem to have come to Biber first and then...

PK: Now that was a bit of a strange story, because I... So in about 2000 and... So when I was writing my thesis for the Jung Institute I needed to... oh, no, no, it wasn't that. I was sending a paper to a journal and they required American Psychological Association bibliography format. And so, you know, I went back into BibT_EX for the first time in years,

and I was looking around. I quite quickly came across `BIBATEX` and thought, this is better, I'll use this instead.

And this was in the days when a chap called Philipp Lehman, the original author of `BIBATEX` was around but he mysteriously disappeared about ten years ago. This is why I took it over. He was heavily involved in it when I started and I looked for an APA `BIBATEX` style that would work but there wasn't one. So I thought, well, okay, I'll write the style for that. I started to write the style for the APA and then I came across some things that needed to be done to implement the APA style which I just couldn't work out how to do. And I contacted Philipp Lehman, then we had a discussion, and he said, well, you can't really do this in `BIBATEX`, it has to be done by the backend, which currently is `BibTEX`. He then said that there was another chap who was implementing a special backend for `BIBATEX` called Biber, this chap, François Charette, who originally started Biber, the very early phases of it. And he said, why don't you contact him and see how that's going. So I contacted him. And it turned out that he was, he was writing this custom back end for `BIBATEX` called Biber, and so I tried it out. I found a bug with it and I submitted a bug report and he said, why don't you help me develop this because we need this. `BIBTEX`'s too limited for what `BIBATEX` needs. So I said yes, and this was in 2009, early 2009.

And so I started helping him develop Biber a bit. Then it really snowballed and we started developing that together heavily in 2009 and that went on for a year or so, with us collaborating with Philip Lehmann on `BIBATEX`.

And then François Charette didn't have the time any more, and he just left it to me. So I, . . . and eventually it got completely rewritten, so there isn't a line of the original code left in Biber any more. That was sort of late 2009, early 2010, I believe. And so, yes, I was involved in Biber first, and then for a few years, it was just Philipp Lehman on `BIBATEX`, and me on Biber. We were just collaborating on timing releases of both of them for a while.

And then he disappeared. He just stopped answering emails and I tried to contact him, and I still don't know to this day what happened. He just disappeared. And because I knew more about the `BIBATEX` code than most people, because I've been closely involved with him working on it, there was really no choice. And I sort of, you know, did the whole messing around with GitHub and SourceForge at the time to get ownership of the project, and took it over in about 2012, something like that.

I want to say one thing, quickly here, before I forget. I want to say a big thank you to Moritz Wemheuer. I think he's probably watching us. I saw his name on the participant list. In the last couple of years, he's come on board the `BIBATEX` team and he's done fantastic work, particularly with localization and styles and things like this. So he's really taken on, I mean, a serious load of the `BIBATEX` development in the last couple of years, and without that it wouldn't have been possible, because it was getting too much.

PN: Are the two entities married to each other, Biber and `BIBATEX` today? Or are there other clients for Biber?

PK: There are. There are other clients because Biber has this. . . I mean, basically, they *are* married, I mean they, they developed in lockstep and they're. . . I mean, you know it's, 90% of it is, is a complete marriage of technology. So it's not really Biber as a standalone tool. It's possible because we implemented quite a few years ago now a Tool Mode in Biber which allows you to take in `.bib` files and spit out `.bib` files and do various things to them in the process. So you can mess around with your bibliography databases without actually typesetting anything, and this is known as Tool Mode in Biber and it's reasonably sophisticated now. You can do all sorts of things to read, format and mess around with the data semantically. So there *is* a user base outside of that, but it's not particularly large, I would say.

Unicode and publishing

PN: Let me move over to Unicode and ask you a few questions. What are the hardest parts of dealing with Unicode and implementing sorting and making both of them understand Unicode well?

PK: That was one of the hardest things. However, I can't claim much virtue in this respect, because I use a very nice Perl module, which is part of the standard Perl distribution — the `Unicode::Collate` module — which was written by a Japanese chap, and it's very, very good. And that follows the Unicode updates and standards quite closely so the actual implementation of the Unicode collation algorithm, I have not done that because that would be insane. I submitted some enhancements and bug reports over the years just to get some of the features we wanted into Biber, but I basically use a library that implements the Unicode collation algorithm.

The difficulty was implementing a reasonable multi-field sorting algorithm for bibliography data. You want to have it so that people can sort bibliographies on arbitrary bibliography data in the most

flexible way possible, which means you have to have a proper multi-field sorting algorithm. So you want to be able to sort, for example, by author, then by title, then by year, then by volume, then by whatever, all of those. You want to be able to do those descending and/or ascending on each of the fields. You want to be able to turn off case sensitivity in each of the fields independently. You want to be able to switch your sorting locale, which we need, of those fields independently, all of which you can do with it.

And the difficult part also is, for names, basically constructing the data. The data structure for sorting is quite hard. The Unicode collation algorithm is very nice, and allows you to just sort arbitrary strings, but you have to somehow construct a data structure and the strings in that data structure in order to sort them. And that was the difficult bit, in order to do this in a consistent way. That took a few iterations. It's now quite a complicated data structure with a lot of optimizations in it so that we can short circuit sorting. It's by far the most compute-intensive thing that Biber does.

If you profile it, most of the time is spent in the collation algorithms for any large bibliography, so it took a bit of a while to get that sorted out. It was one of those painful excursions into sorting algorithms and things like this. I'm not really, you know, a low-level algorithmic hacker at all. So it was somewhat painful to have to do that.

But it's reasonably nice now and all I really have to do now is follow updates in this, in the modules that implement the Unicode collation algorithm and release new versions of Biber with the updated modules. And I don't have to mess about too much with the actual sorting algorithms themselves inside Biber because they're quite stable now. As of about four or five years ago, I settled on a particular way of doing it, which seems to be fairly stable.

PN: And any updates, you just import through the Perl package maintained by this Japanese guy?

PK: Yes, yes. I mean, because all that really does is it just pulls in the latest UCA updates and the latest key generation algorithm in the key generation data files and so I don't really maintain any of that. That would be, that would be an awful job to do.

PN: Do you think the ecosystem, the \TeX ecosystem needs a revolution to stay relevant or do you think that this is going to exist forever?

PK: Well, I think there's there's pretty much a good underground movement that requires a certain level of typesetting, and there always will be. And that, so it's not going to go away.

From my point of view, the thing that's really made a difference is things like Overleaf and Share \LaTeX , historically. You need GUIs. I mean, you just, you have to make it appealing to people with GUIs. And that's the way the world is now, and has been for some time. So, in general terms, I think you're going to need to hide code from people. I mean, that's just the way everything goes now.

But, in terms of academic publishing and specialist publishing, which will always be there, then I think it's always going to be relevant. Because you just can't do certain things outside of that ecosystem. It's incredibly difficult to do decent typesetting in any of the standard High Street packages for any of this stuff. It's just awful and, and...

So I don't see it's going to particularly grow until you can just isolate people from seeing any code at all, because the last couple of generations of kids, I mean, they're used to apps. And there, you're just tapping stuff, tapping bright colorful buttons, and that's not going to change for generations. So I don't see any particular growth there.

One thing that would make a big difference, which I'm not seeing a lot of movements on but I'm not particularly familiar with what's going on there, in terms of journal publishing, academic publishing, when I know a lot of technical journals, for example, use \TeX workflows, but for bibliography management, a lot of those are based on \BIB\TeX and that's partly because it's very hard to change, you know, historically complicated pipelines for journal publishing. But also there's a technical limitation with \LaTeX because when you run \BIB\TeX , you get a file that is the typeset representation of your bibliography. Your `.bb1` is just a document and you include it. And that's it. That's the typeset bibliography.

\BIB\LaTeX does this completely differently, and the `.bb1` that you get out of it is not a typesettable document. It's effectively a \TeX macro database of your bibliography and then you have to still apply a style to that during the final PDF output. And that makes it an awful lot more flexible, and you can do things you can't do in \BIB\TeX , but it also makes it very difficult for people, for journals to implement in their pipeline when they want someone to just send them the typeset bibliography. There are hacks to sort of do this I've been kicking around, but there's no easy way of doing this.

Your bibliography is not a standalone typesettable file. It's all pulled in from, you know, various bits and pieces during the final processing.

PN: So that, that's what, that's what keeps the publishers away from \BIB\LaTeX ?

PK: It certainly will keep some of them away, yes, because when you submit the bibliography they just want a typesettable file that's using one of their .bst files, and there's really no easy way of doing that with BIB_{La}T_EX unfortunately, unless they redid their whole pipeline, which for most publishers, given that the margins are so small, particularly academic publishers, that motivation for redoing their entire publishing pipeline is incredibly small.

PN: Do you use T_EX to submit your papers?

PK: I write them all in T_EX, but I almost always have to convert them from PDF to Word or something horrible in order to send them because they just won't...

If a lot of them are using, particularly for example, Routledge or Blackwell, they use these very quite sophisticated online submission things for journals now, and they're quite nice and they work very well. But you have to send it all in Word. They work natively with Word, and that's it.

PN: How do you feel, putting this work into a document and it's not coming out in the finished product?

PK: Well, I don't think any of us like that. I mean it's a bigger topic, about certain types of cultural phenomena that I often have with, sometimes with patients and often with students in the past that...

There are a certain sort of sophistications and discriminated positions that matter independently of whether they are practical or not. And so it, yes, it would be easier for me to just write all this stuff in Word and just submit it, but... There are some things that, typesetting and making things look nice is intrinsically, it's intrinsically more structured and more developed than not doing it. And so there's an intrinsic value in that, which it doesn't really matter to me whether it's practical or not. I know it sounds a little bit abstract, but I tend to think that's a rather important principle in general.

You shouldn't try to be too efficient in life. There are consequences for doing that. So I'm quite happy with, you know, "wasting" time typesetting something in a really nice way and then having to export it to Word which loses everything. That's all right.

PN: I am a producer of publishers' workflows and for the first time in my life I'm producing a work for a publisher down in Brazil, which uses BIB_{La}T_EX.

PK: Aha!

PN: ... exactly because they have problems sorting bibliographies which use Portuguese and they are

sick of BIB_{La}T_EX because of the sorting algorithms, and they have this explicitly asked for BIB_{La}T_EX and this was my first. I was in fact very, very surprised. I thought they were...

PK: Nice to hear it. I'm glad to hear it.

PN: But is there anything that can be done to ease the path? Because it's really painful to be able to use the facilities of programmable bibliographies and not seeing some of the results later on.

PK: Yes.

PN: Anything that we can do to ease that?

PK: I've thought about it a little bit. I mean, there have been some suggestions I've noticed on StackExchange of trying to, you know, extract the processing of the bibliography out to a file, to a separate file, but this is... I'll be honest, I'm not a particularly brilliant T_EX hacker. I think Philipp Lehman, the original author of BIB_{La}T_EX, was a lot better at it than I am, and a lot of other people are. I think there have been some comments... I don't know if Joseph Wright is on here but I mean it will require Joseph Wright levels of skill to do that kind of hacking on the underlying page, page dumping algorithms to actually get, you know, something like BIB_{La}T_EX's output from BIB_{La}T_EX. I don't think I've got the skill to do that. But maybe we will be able to, you know, have some kind of thought about this, but as I remember, it somewhat depends on some of the L_AT_EX3 stuff coming out. So, and we've already started to move BIB_{La}T_EX toward L_AT_EX3 a little bit but...

Yeah, that's going to be a bit of a job to get it all over. And once it is, I think there's a few more options in that direction. But right now it's a discussion thread for StackExchange.

Q&A

PN: Well, I'd like to invite people that if they have any questions to ask you to come and join us. I mean, the panelists can do that by themselves, and the attendees all over the world can wave and I can upgrade them to a panelist so that they can ask the question themselves, would you mind that?

PK: That's fine.

PN: So, if you have any questions, just please unmute yourself.

PK: I can say while we're waiting that I did make a vague promise last October at the DANTE talk in Germany that we would be releasing an experimental multi-script version of BIB_{La}T_EX and Biber early this year, and support much more multilingual stuff.

So you can have bibliography entries that contain different scripts in the same field, which has been a long requested thing for multilingual use and that now does exist.

PN: OK, I can attest to that. I am the author of a book here in Berkeley called “Berkeley problems in mathematics” which is sort of the entrance exam for the PhD in mathematics. And the book recommends, you know, cites a lot of other books that you should read in order to prepare for this particular exam. And this book exists in many translations, to Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean. . .

PK: Right, right.

PN: Spanish, sometimes Portuguese, French and German, and then we cite all those. And what I have, the hoops that I have to jump through to do that in Bib \TeX , are tremendous.

PK: Yeah, it’s painful. Well, the whole point of the multilingual stuff is supposed to be to make that possible. We have an experimental branch, it should be, it was an awful job to actually implement it and it should be completely backwards compatible, but it has a whole new syntax in the `.bib` file for multilingual data database entries. So, we have a manual for it and everything. So this is going to be a bit of a push probably early next year.

PN: Thank you. Thank you. There’s one question that came up. How are people with social anxiety doing with remote sessions? I guess somebody is trying to get an e-consultation out of you!

PK: Well, it’s a good question.

Generally speaking, people with social anxiety do better with remote sessions because they’re less social. The remote sessions are a different beast entirely. They are, I generally don’t like them that much because the kind of depth psychology I do, it’s not, it’s not just purely sort of chatting, there’s a lot more of what you call tracking, a lot more of a kind of feeling tension in the room and things like transference considerations which is very difficult to do remotely.

But there also are benefits. I mean, one thing you find, I found when I was training and seeing patients in the US, it was quite funny. One thing you find quite quickly is when you’re having a phone conversation, particularly with no video, just a phone conversation with somebody, instead of being in the room. One thing you find is people are prepared to say things they would never, ever say to you face to face. And it’s also, to a lesser extent, through video. There are research papers on the fact that, working with social anxiety, doing it remotely, doing it by

telephone, it’s actually better very often because it’s a way to lead people in because there’s simply less social signaling going on, and there’s just less in the environment to trigger anxiety. So generally quite well is the response to that.

PN: People stay in their own environment.

PK: Right. Yes. And they are not exposed to unpredictability and other environments. And so it’s generally not so bad.

PN: Interesting.

This has been quite a nice conversation. I loved the interview and I hope we can do this in person at some point in time.

PK: Yes. When the world stops burning and being crazy. Yes. Maybe.

PN: There is a question by Michael Topp, and he asks, “Philip. I’m going to translate a couple of books and I want to do it with L^AT_EX, of course, and bibliography, and it’s an art book. So is it really hard to sell them to publishers?”

PK: Well, not necessarily. I mean, it just depends on what their workflow is. I mean, I mean some publishers will just be perfectly happy if you provide them with a very nice PDF. And so it doesn’t matter how you create that. So then you’re fine, it just depends. If they have a L^AT_EX workflow that you have to somehow fit into, the chances of them using the packages you want are quite small usually, but it just depends what they want. I mean, it’s not that hard to sell them. . . I mean, look at what I do. I mean, I don’t even tell them I use L^AT_EX, they just want some kind of, you know, Word thing at the end. And generally, I just produce a nice PDF and then I just use some sort of Adobe tool that creates, that turns PDF into Word. And while that’s a fairly unpleasant thing to do, I mean, I get it to work in the way I want, and then I get to deliver it in the format they want. So it’s not so bad.

But it just depends what they do. I mean, no it’s not, it’s only hard to sell it to people who have very particular requirements and their own `.bst` styles with Bib \TeX usually. Then it’s a bit hard to sell it to them.

PN: Well, on that note, I’d like to thank you very, very much and hope to join you in person, when there’s some time for a continuation.

PK: Thank you very much.

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