Chapter 10: Emerging Knowing:

Conversation with a tantric yogi and a mindful buddha Cadell Last, Kevin Orosz, Daniel Dick

Cadell: The three of us have had extensive trialogues, around the concepts of sexuality, masculinity, and God.³⁴³ In some sense those three concepts still help me organise the nature of the spiritual path. Now if there is an equivalent triadic structure in Nietzsche that reflects those three concepts, perhaps we would just need to transform it into sexuality, masculinity, and the Overman to represent the same attempt.

So the connection here, between our previous conversations, and this conversation, seems obvious. I would just like to ask you both questions related to and inspired by Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is such an interesting book, because it gives you a window into the idiosyncrasy and singularity of the spiritual path, in a way that you do not need to copy Nietzsche's path, but learning about it can be helpful for reflecting your own unrepeatable singularity.

In that spirit, I will ask a question related to how the book starts. We find Nietzsche in the mountains, away from human social life, and you get the sense that there was some negativity or imperfection that led to him going to the mountains and differentiating himself in relation to what he might see as ordinary consciousness. In that context, can you describe or relate to the normal aspects of human

357

³⁴³Last, C., Orosz, K., Dick, D. 2020. *Sex, Masculinity, God: The Trialogues*. Ouroboros Publishing.

social life that may have led to the beginning of your spiritual paths?

Kevin: In reviewing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and actually going through your lectures on the book, it made me reflect back on my own experience of first encountering Nietzsche as an undergraduate. Nietzsche was just someone you had to read. I remember visiting Thus Spoke Zarathustra first, because of the mythological angle. At first I didn't really get it, because I wanted a more defined logical or philosophical mediation. But now returning to it, this opening makes so much sense to me. I suppose the best word to describe the experience is alienation combined with a spectrum of anxiety or sadness and light depression at being unable to communicate the most important things in my inner world to peers. I can definitely relate to Zarathustra's motivation to go into the mountains, enter an ascetic life, and turn down the noise of the human social world.

When I read the text itself, I get this idea that Zarathustra has a joyous love of self in solitude. Zarathustra is with his heart in nature and speaks to it as a subject. This is also something I found really beautiful in Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*, which I have to imagine was inspired by this directly. For me personally, it wasn't until I started to really get comfortable with solitude, which started to happen in undergrad, because of the alienation. The practice of just walking in nature, hiking, was an entry point. Later it turned into meditation. It gave me the sense that if I am unable to communicate deeply with the people around me, or connect deeply, despite my best efforts, then I am better off alone. Actually, I gain something from solitude, it's not like it is second best to human social life. solitude, being ok with that, is the beginning of the spiritual journey.

Daniel: I cannot even tell when my spiritual journey started. There is a big marker. This big negativity has been the suicide of my father. The big search after that was the search for the meaning of life. After school, I did a full year of travelling in South America, because that is where some of my family comes from. I just wanted to find the meaning of life itself, as well as my meaning of life. I wanted to know what to do after school. Now I got profound answers to that. I was travelling for one year but I didn't find exclusive solitude. Even in the most remote jungles, sitting on a stone, you are surrounded by so many animals and noises and things. I wanted to be alone, but I had to discover more and more that it was just a feeling, and that you are actually never alone.

In any case, this meaning of life set me on the spiritual path. It resulted to have the meaning of life in life itself, or in the dependency on things that exist, or things that exist and not exist. This is the very short summary of a very long long journey.

Cadell: In the context of both of that, I get the sense, from Kevin, that there is this becoming comfortable with solitude, that opens up here. And in the context of what Daniel said, this negativity of losing the father, is another important dimension here that sticks out, especially if we consider Nietzsche's metaphysical dimension of losing God the father. It is almost as if he is saying the world has lost the father. This loss can be an opening to deep personal meaning, and the quest to find out, in the loss of all meaning, what is meaning for me.

Now I guess from that, the next question I have, that opens up for me, in the context of becoming more comfortable with solitude, losing familial contact: what has been the most difficult aspect of communicating or interacting with the normal human world since deepening

your spiritual path? I think Nietzsche would frame this in relation to the rabble.

Kevin: I think the main tension in going to the mountain top, or going to the Ashram, which for me took the form of travel and backpacking after letting go of the railroad track of a corporate or academic career, is the capacity to bring the spirit you have cultivated back to the world. I remember reaching a point in my quest of being burdened by my wisdom and needing to share my experience with a village. At some point in the solitude, whether it is experienced as a solitude or a oneness, you need to share it.

The way I related to that, and trained myself through social courage, was gravitating towards the most creative people, the people with libido and charisma on display. Against the undifferentiated background of the rabble, these creatives seemed like real differentiated figures. That to me was a turning point. After being in the chaos of not-knowing, uncertainty around career, finance, legacy, purpose, I found other people like that. It is the classic Timothy Leary adage: find the others! That allowed me to reintegrate with the rabble or the herd, and I had love for everyone, but I became very discerning about who I let into my inner circle. That rule I created for myself is responsible for about 80% of the amazing experiences I have been able to experience.

Daniel: There is a lot to say here. I had a very vivid dream before I returned to normal life after my journey. The dream suggested to me that I should not talk very openly because people would think I was crazy. What happened is that I actually have been shy of exposing everything I have experienced. Even when the university offered fields of study on consciousness and religion, where you could find a lot of open minded people, the

rabble of the university itself turned against this radical professor, who had become my spiritual mentor. So I was always stepping in and stepping back.

After this I started to find myself in a weird situation where I met a lot of people contingently, who started to tell me that they cannot find any others, other than me, to discuss strange experiences. My world became a group of connections and people who can relate to very subjective experiences but have a very precise knowledge of what is happening. The communication has been slowly, slowly, slowly progressing, similar to the rule that Kevin mentioned. I started to make myself visible to people who were also puzzled by their subjectivity and experiences, and open to objective means to reduce confusion. I have had many questions: how to relate my experience to religions, or other systems of knowledge. Now that was my motive to make a bridge between science and spirituality.

The biggest hurdles have involved the over-rationalisation and the mob of the university. I now do not fight those in the university who have not had strange experiences, and to be someone who can rather be open to people searching for communication. In the spiritual path, you have to search, but you don't push it on to someone. Otherwise the mob just gets confused.

Cadell: I think that it is certainly clear in Nietzsche, that there is this disdain for over-rationalisation, and for what he would call scholars. I suppose Nietzsche would group these categories in with the rabble and the herd. Both of your reflections, seem to me, to point towards this separation and differentiation from the rabble, and then returning by finding the others, based on connections with inner subjective and personal dimensions.

How did your relationship to friendship change, before and after finding a more spiritual orientation in the world? For Nietzsche, it is clear that this process towards the overman, is unfolding in and with a group of friends. The main question: what is your relationship to the concept of friend, now?

Kevin: I think early in the journey, when you feel that no one else gets me, or has had these experiences, for example, psychedelic trips, you have the idea that you just will never find another person to share these ideas. You assume that you will just take these experiences to the grave. Of course that is not true. As Daniel said, people will find you. There is a mysterious attractive force that brings these types of people together. The main difference for me in the concept of friend, before and after consciously choosing a spiritual path, is related to moving away from friendship based on history and proximity. In this mode of friendship I just pretended to bond based on fear of being left out of the crowd.

Once I left all those comfort zones, I chose spiritual entrepreneurship, no matter what. For me it was yoga pulling me to Asia. The way I would find friends, who have stayed with me to this day, is based on authenticity. This was a complete reversal from my first mode of friendship. Instead of putting a mask up to fit in with a group, I just developed a radical honest expression. This expression was still attuned to the social field, with skill and awareness of others, but authenticity would create the best friendships. The friendships would always begin in strange, intense circumstances, for example, at a workshop or retreat, or a festival, or in a deep experience that was very liminal. We would share an ecstatic experience, see each other truly, and then when we go back to the rabble, we still saw the light to work towards.

Daniel: It is interesting. As Kevin said, there are these friendships that originated in a common history and proximity, and so on. For those friends, they saw me as the one who was not doing what everyone else was doing. This gave a kind of relief that I could continue doing what I was doing, and a relief for them that maybe they could see some wishes to do crazy things.

On the other hand, there are people who you share experiences with that are very deep. I do not say these two types of groups have to be separate. You can also have deep experiences with friends that are friends just because of proximity. When you share these deep experiences that have an impactful marker on your subjectivity, there is something more true and authentic to it. The love binds you better to the relationship. You feel the other more as your self. Or your self is feeling the other more.

There are only very few, maybe only one friend, that had such a spiritual path, that we only know by hinting to each other that we have had similar experiences because they are so indescribable. He is a good friend to me because we share something that we cannot share. This is tremendous.

Sometimes I see some other people who have been on the spiritual path trying to hit something, or give a hint to something, that you cannot share. I feel a lot of compassion towards that. But in-between there are a whole range of beautiful connections where you show each other your shadows, and are trying to grow with each other. You support when you can, and you feel for the other, and you see your own failures in the other, as well as the other's failures in you. By having this life of being someone not very perfect in this world, you enjoy this connection based on imperfection. It is ok to go alone with each other, balancing these imperfections out.

This middle range, friends which are difficult to categorise, is that you have deep feelings and you know about your interconnectedness, and share the same values and goals, going to the same meetings or festivals or supports. But still there are not too many people I would consider inner circle. The one's I can share deeply my own experience, I can only say there is one. I cannot tell him. He cannot tell me. But we both know.

Cadell: I think there is this dimension, or distinction, that Kevin mentioned, about the transition from pretending to authenticity, and also linked to that, meeting in institutional space versus meeting in liminal space, which is interesting. Also, Daniel, I like the way you mentioned mirroring shadows, where oftentimes, in institutional or normal contexts, we try to mask up the shadow, as opposed to mirroring the shadows, and we try to appear successful, as opposed to seeing failures in the one and the other through mirroring.

What connects so nicely here, is not only the way the spiritual path has to navigate these other types of friendships, which may seem strange from the outside, but appear to go deeper on the inside, is how can you both reconcile this spiritual path with desires for sexual life and family life? That is also something that comes up a lot in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Nietzsche himself has a very strange relation to these dimensions, as many people on the spiritual path do. So how has this dimension manifested in your paths?

Kevin: This is fascinating. I don't know which specific strand, but one of the Vedic philosophies of India goes into one of the major decisions that a man has to make. This decision involves whether a man wants to be a householder in the marketplace, which includes finding a

wife or wives, building assets and a business, and existing in the market (regardless of class), versus going all in on sadhana, which you can look at in terms of ascetic, a yogi or monk, but also the creative sadhana, the great minds of art and music. They went all in on art and music. For this second category, if they did have families, it would be secondary.

I always resonated with that second path. For most people I know leaning in the direction of the spiritual path, it is often that creating a family is delayed or postponed, either intentionally or through circumstance. And also, their sexual style is usually anything but vanilla. So whether they do explore non-monogamy, or they have many relationships and go into many realms, whether that is tantric spaces, sacred sexuality, Neo-Tantra, or they go into the direction of BDSM or kink, these various styles. That comes with the spiritual path because as you progress on the path of self-inquiry and self-analysis, no matter what slice of life, you come up against the real of sexuality. The real of sexuality is just so massive, so to enter a relationship where you follow the rabble lifeline, is not satisfactory. I have thought I was going to follow that over 10-12 years ago, and guickly realised that I would be miserable to commit to that path, because there was just so much more I wanted to explore in terms of having partners. I also just realised the practicality that if I am going to practice my sadhana, writing, teaching, speaking, whatever modality, to rush into a householder position with a mortgage, kids, commitments, I knew that I would not be able to hold that as a central priority.

Now looking back on my friends in high school, almost all of them from my home town are married with multiple children, in a stable career. Certainly some of them are in a spiritual work, but the vast majority are not. They may not even know what they don't know. They are really happy there, maybe it is serving them. For the three of us, it is just not the case. The relationship to sexuality is so deep and full of shadow work, understanding more limitations through pleasure, your emotional blockages, your attachment to others, your Mother and Father imagos, are just massive. Not to mention the positive side, of just falling in love, and exploring that, and going all in, in rapturous ecstasy, but not leading to a family.

I think for me it is a burden in some sense, because it can get lonely. Especially for a man, it is about legacy. You want to have a loving devotional wife and partner that you can rely on. Children are your literal offspring building up your house and your name. To not have that, it can be lonely and challenging. And there is great tension and freedom of expression which I ultimately think, serves the spiritual path.

Daniel: This is a big, big question. From the Buddhist tradition, there are three paths: you can become a monk, a yogi, or a medicine man or like a doctor who is living with a wife in a household and has an economic exchange. From a more metaphysical perspective, the question I have always had, especially related to the *Sex, Masculinity, God* book, related to having to find the divine in the other, inside oneself. What I mean is this very Buddhist perspective, you are a deity, and you are having sex with a deity, and you become one or non-dual. But the ultimate non-duality is emptiness and happiness.

Our souls have every type of desire, attachment, ignorance, and hatred. As long as you are not free from this attachment and desire, this hatred, you will keep having these shadow mirrors that are more bluntly put into your face if you have relationships that you desire, and attach to, and you feel hate because you love it. There is, beneath all of that, the non-dual emptiness, but as long as

you have this unconscious drive towards a sexual being, which is you too, you will always find the other.

You can see it from two sides. On the one hand, there is no other way out but to go through the sexual drive, but on the other hand, you can start very fresh by conditioning your mind towards the sexual drive, and feel like there is actually something life bringing that is very meaningful. This brings me back to the beginning of our discussion about the meaning of life. In other words, it could be that the sexual drive is the end of the spiritual path, that ok, we just have to be alone; but it could also be the beginning of that end, to say yes, I want to recreate life, and go through all the shit to have a family and have these emotions and make a baby at the end.

This making a baby can also be inside the self too. I think Nietzsche mentioned it as the three transformations of the mind, where at the end you become a child. Whatever you have known, you kind of have to uncondition it again and again, to have this naive mind again to explore what is. And still you can have your thoughts around that, which have not much meaning, but the question is, how much can you relate your sexual drive to your heart? The more that is out, the more creative life you will generate.

The question for me doesn't relate to some thoughts, but I know there is still a sexual desire. There are emotions. As long as there is love I also want to give it meaning, there will also be this negativity. I am mostly happy, and in some sense a bit tired of, but mostly happy, to dive into.

Cadell: That was great, from both of you. I like this picture that Kevin is painting of the spiritual path involving a delaying of family life, a prioritisation of creativity, and a deconstruction of certain attachments that can be both a burden and a liberation. Some people might be walking

that path without realising it, and then of course there are people doing it with a deeper intention of the energy they are working with. What that energy is, was expressed by Daniel perfectly when he said this divine and the other within oneself. That is the paradox of this birth space, where you can have a child, it is almost not about whether you have a child or not, but it is that metaphorical child inside yourself, and becoming a child again. That does come out of that empty space, which not only comes up in Nietzsche's writings, but structures the entirety of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

In the context of this anthology, titled Abyssal Arrows: Spiritual Leadership Inspired by Zarathustra, you do not necessarily need to relate to the concept of leadership, you can make your own relationship to an analogous concept, or a concept that you think resonates more with how you have come to understand this dimension of existence, but I would like you both to reflect on the capacity to command and lead oneself in aloneness. This is something that Nietzsche struggles with himself throughout the whole book. He says to obey oneself, to command oneself, on the inside, is difficult, but even harder is to become a great leader or someone who commands great things, is where he develops his notion, especially towards the 'Fourth and Final Part.' So as it relates to the inside of leading, and the outside of leading, the other within oneself, and the actual other, how do you relate to this notion?

Kevin: This is a big question, and extremely relevant to the time we are living in, because of how much chaos and uncertainty seems to be increasing in the world on so many levels. When you think about this term spiritual leadership, what comes to mind for me is the power of that notion. To handle the power of that notion, with all other things being equal, a great sovereign entity leading a small tribe, village,

or massive civilisation, must be grounded in a spiritual reality as well as the mundane reality.

Now assuming there is benevolence, skill, and prowess, how powerful would it be for a leader to also embody the spiritual reality. I think the separation of church and state, as a rule of thumb in the West, split leadership from the spiritual reality. This split makes a lot of sense from a logical perspective. But I cannot help but think about how truly powerful it would be for a leadership model where the leader was grounded in a spiritual reality.

On the level of the Overman, he must create his own spiritual values in this world. I think a lot of people who don't define or consider themselves spiritual, are actually really good at starting out on that path. These people start trying to create their own values, setting their own rules and guidelines towards life, as opposed to following the religious rules of the past. And in doing that, they do cultivate spiritual virtue, even if they do not sense-make it in that way. By doing this they do enter into a dimension of meaning and personal agency that is so powerful. person has a certain gravitas because they self-determined and embodied to what is actually available to the human being. They actually act from principle, value, and virtue that is known from their experiential path.

For me personally being called into leadership, it has been in the context of having spoken on stages, retreats and events, and led various types of businesses related to yoga and tantric breathing-styles of work. This is not what I set out to do, at all. Actually encountering Cadell's work was part of my figuring out this path. I was reading his evolution blog, and I wanted to be an intellectual writer, author and blogger myself. I didn't have the idea of being in a leadership position related to yoga and tantra. And yet, by going so all in on what I felt to be the most

interesting thing, and also going through the school of hard knocks, related to what my gifts actually are and giving them to the marketplace, I ended up in positions of spiritual leadership.

The qualities that I committed to in my personal subjective spiritual reality, created external qualities that other people voted for with their attention or with a vote of confidence. We want you to do X or Y. For me it was physical at first. I started as a yoga teacher and personal trainer. Those were really beautiful places to start, and taught me things that would become useful later on, in facilitating public speaking and coaching. I think the best leaders do have a spiritual dimension, even if it is as simple as gratitude. When you really ground yourself in gratitude, which automatically activates a bunch of other viruses like humility, receptivity, attunement, and insight. If you are truly grateful, and not just giving it lip-service, but you can actually shift your attitude or mindset and be thankful for simple things like clothes on your back, a warm meal, roof over your head, simple stuff, you almost inexplicably cultivate virtue.

I think all leaders understand how to do this, even if it is unconscious competence for them. An internally led person who has strong principles and values, and is essentially embodying their piece of the Overman, by a secondary effect, becomes a powerful external leader, and other people want to follow them, because they want to actualise in a similar way.

Daniel: Cadell, you always ask questions that you could write a whole book about. Leadership. There are so many different types of leadership, and many forms are not even aware that they are a spiritual leadership. When I look back, I became very responsible in my family, because of being the oldest. I took leadership for my life from the age

of 14, I just had to finish school, and whatever else would be the case was acceptable, as long as I finished school. She could not handle the problems involved in mothering a son. So I became responsible for myself at an early age. Being responsible means having discipline towards a goal. The goal was to finish school.

I also became a leader in martial arts very early on in my life. My trainer would put me in front of classes of adults, and I would teach, from 16, the older ones. This was military leadership, but all the movements that you do is spiritual training if you follow the energetic pathways that you follow when you do the work. Then I founded two institutes in academia, organising conferences, where I learned to self-empower other people, and work. By self-empowerment together. This is the leadership that I see as the most contemporary spiritual leadership, where you can work from an empowered place even if you don't have the whole plan yourself. It's kind of like our trialogues, where you have three people and everyone is contributing from their standing. I mean, for sure, you have a bigger part in this Cadell, by leading this, and setting it up, initiating it, and being responsible for it, but there is always that person who has that foresight and initiative. To be the one who initiates spiritual leadership, to see the gap to fill for those that follow.

The other part, is to have a space opening, it is just a space opening, where you have other people, or enable other people, to find their power. This is kind of like gardening. You set up the soil, and plant the seed, and then watch the plants grow by themselves. The biggest task is preparing the soil and ground. This ground is a metaphor in which I have been working as a gardener, with the seed as a fundamental principle in the Tibetan pathway, to grow my spiritual leadership. That is very important because you have to assert a kind of security or

self-esteem, but you can only have self-esteem if you are really sure about something. In this context I highly recommend reading Nietzsche or studying old traditions like Tibetan or Tantric traditions, because they have figured something out that has a long heritage. Once you have been through this school, you get this secure traditional ground where you can germinate on it, and make it your own, and give others that kind of ground again.

Spiritual leadership for me is very much related to picking up and leaving heritage, but also on recreating stable ground, with foresight and discipline, and actually the love for this recreation.

Cadell: Fantastic. I do think, following what Kevin says about cultivating that true gratefulness, it is like a superpower. I was watching my own consciousness when Kevin was bringing up that concept, and seeing the shift in attitude that can emerge there. I could also see the death of the aspects of yourself that don't want to die either, the resentful aspects of your personality. That certainly comes up in Nietzsche in a profound way, in the sense that when he sacrifices himself, he is so grateful for the life that was given to him, that he doesn't see what he is doing as a sacrifice anymore. That is a window into one of Nietzsche's ideas about leadership.

Also, what you were saying Daniel, about having foresight and initiative, seeing the gap as a space opening for others. That is actually how Osho understood the gap, he saw the gap as spaciousness for others. That is incredibly powerful, especially when you think about what Osho opened up in the gap that he saw. Certainly one of the best ways to describe his work was a sort of enabling for others to find their power. And I also really like the way you, Daniel, described the soil and the ground, and the way studying someone like Nietzsche, allows you to

differentiate, actually, which is very counterintuitive to what Nietzsche would call scholars.

This has been super enjoyable for me to reflect with both of you, and this is a meta-example of differentiation. The last question I will ask, and it may be a little cliche, but I think it is useful. There will be a lot of younger people reading this, if you were 20, what would you share with your younger self, as it relates to spiritual leadership and this broader conversation?

Kevin: It's funny, because I have the same thing, of seeing a question like this as cliche, but when you zoom out, you can see this is extremely valuable to ask. I can see my 20 year old self in front of me now. I would tell him to take more risks. Stop being afraid of making mistakes. Looking back from this vantage page, 13 years in the future, almost all of those mistakes, maybe all of them, do I am not thinking about them at all, and I not matter. guarantee that no one else is either. That is the first one. Take a calculated risk. Take a calculated risk with logos. pathos, and mythos intact, but really go for it. That involves the domain of career purpose, liminal experiences, dating and the feminine, and that involves financial, emotional, and psychological decisions. Instead of playing defence, play offence. You have so much time.

I think Gary Vaynerchuk is one of the biggest champions of this, he is really interested in speaking to the youth around technology. When I was 20, I had a smartphone. But with technology, and with access to abundance at the fingertips of a 20 year old, there is no excuse because of the knowledge available. Pick what you want to do, and go all in. Get to a place quickly, whether this path has played its part, and then move on, or if this path really opens up a new dimension of fulfilment and your edge with creative actualisation. Nietzsche's Overman. You can start sooner,

you don't have to wait until your 30s, 40s, 50s, burnt out from a failed job and a divorce. You will have made a big dent, and you will have a lot of data to reflect on, to plan out the rest of your experience.

Daniel: Back to the 20s. That is where I went on my big trip. I would say travel, live life! What I would do and what I got for inspiration is other people telling me what they did in travel. I thought: I want to do this too. I was in South America, experimenting with diets after retreats, and I met this one guy who had been travelling for 20 years with his surfboard, and he was surprised I hadn't seen the beautiful girls of Buenos Aires or the Columbian crazy towns, and he just named off a bunch of things. The next day I was on the road to Buenos Aires to see the beautiful girls. There was just this motivation to go out in the world and experience and live it to the fullest that you can. Especially if you have this time where you are not bound to the responsibility of family life. It will actually hit you in taking risks, confronting fears, running through ghettos and stuff like that. It's like, what kind of story do you want to tell about yourself? Live it! This is following the excitement for the unknown. Throw yourself into it. If you die it's ok! You will have lived it. That is kind of the most inspiring thing that comes to my mind if I were to talk to someone in their 20s. The world is totally open to you.

Cadell: I think it's one of those great paradoxical aspects of Nietzsche, where he actually doesn't value living for a long time. If you die, it's ok. As long as you were living. That is a great way to end this conversation. On that idea of taking risks, making mistakes, those are the real materials of learning. Thank you both.

Daniel: Thank you too, I am already missing our next conversation.

Cadell: Well you know one of the most profound dimensions of Nietzsche is on the joy of repetition, and searching for joy of eternal repetition. I will end that to become a creator, we have to reconcile ourselves with both time and loss, and maybe in that context, we can find that divine inner other, that space where death drives new life.

In any case, this was a great way to honour the continuation of the Sex, Masculinity, God trialogues, and keep leaving our mark.³⁴⁴

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³⁴⁴ Last, C., Orosz, K., Dick, D. 2020. *Sex, Masculinity, God: The Trialogues*. Ouroboros Publishing.