

# ATUBES: February 2018

Digest of the Anarchist Tubes

ANEWS



February, 2018

# Contents

- William (Bill) Koehnline (1949-2017) Anarchist, Militant, Friend . . . . . 3
- Horror Vacui . . . . . 4
- Coping with the End of the World . . . . . 5
  - Coping with our minds . . . . . 5
  - Coping through drugs . . . . . 6
  - Radical Self-care . . . . . 6
  - Sadvertising & Sentimentality in advertising and culture . . . . . 6
  - Failure to cope . . . . . 7
  - Conclusion . . . . . 7
- The State unveiled: Spain’s anarchist hunt comes to a temporary end . . . . . 7

## William (Bill) Koehnline (1949-2017) Anarchist, Militant, Friend

By Paul Z. Simons

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/william-bill-koehnline-1949-2017-anarchist-militant-friend>

( I sadly post this announcement about an old time NYC anarchist–Bill Koehnlein, a real hold out, a good friend, a man who preserved almost singlehandedly one of two last Anarchist spaces in the City in the 80s, the Anarchist Switchboard. Bill introduced my friends and me to Camatte, the Sits, and Perlman–and in this way helped shape our ideas of the post-left and now black anarchy. Rest In Power, Comrade–wherever I go, little bit of you comes with me–pzs)

William (Bill) W. Koehnlein, life-long militant, organizer and educator, died in Manhattan on November 19, 2017, after a long, courageous struggle with colon cancer.

A native New Yorker, Bill was born May 10, 1949, and spent the first six years of his life in the Payson Avenue section of Manhattan (1949-51) and in Elmhurst, Queens (1951-55), where he attended kindergarten at P.S. 89. For the next twelve years, he lived in Huntington Station, Long Island, subsequently moving to the Lower East Side of Manhattan, his main residence until his death.

Bill was a warm, humble, honest and compassionate person. Throughout his adult life, he worked primarily as a freelance book editor and indexer. A political actor, he radically opposed the culture of capitalism both as a writer and organizer committed to grass-roots movement-building for systemic change. In his interactions with people from all walks of life, he espoused and embodied an alternative culture of solidarity. The projects and actions in which Bill was involved from the 1960s on reached across the ideological spectrum of the Left–anarchism, socialism, communism, while sharing a common goal: promoting revolutionary consciousness and practice. For example:

- 1) Bill demonstrated with SDS at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.
- 2) From the 1960s into the late 1980s, he was an active member of the anarchist community. During this period of time, a) he participated in the Free School movement as a member of the collective that ran Free Space/Alternate University (in the A. J. Muste building and on 14th Street); b) he was a member of the Libertarian Book Club; and c) in the early 1980s, he co-founded the Anarchist Switchboard (East 9th Street/Second Avenue in Manhattan), a project partly modeled on the original Free Space.
- 3) Since the 1960s, he actively supported the War Resisters League.
- 4) He worked as a journalist for Liberation News Service.
- 5) From the late 1980s until his death, Bill was an active member and constant supporter of the Brecht Forum/New York Marxist School, and subsequently, the Marxist Education Project.
- 6) He was a passionate supporter of the Theater of the Oppressed Laboratory (TOPLAB) from its founding in 1990, and subsequently served as TOPLAB's administrator (late 1990s – 2017).
- 7) For three years, he volunteered weekly at the Earth Matter NY Compost Learning Center, on Governors Island, caring for the chickens.
- 8) He was a working member of the Fourth Street Food Co-op in Manhattan.

Bill lived a full life with integrity. He also touched hearts and minds with his encyclopedic knowledge, prodigious memory and wit. He did extensive research on many subjects, including organic farming and sustainable agriculture, edible mushrooms, wines, alternative medicine and the politics of food. He was also an animal whisperer and defender of animal rights who vigorously promoted the health and ecological benefits of the vegan diet. He fed birds and squirrels, loved crows, brushed his cat, gazed at the moon, climbed rocks, and felt at home in the woods and on mountain hiking trails. Bill will be lovingly remembered by his family and friends as an engaging raconteur; a writer of both incisive political commentary and whimsical fiction; a disseminator of information—news, films, music, recipes; an accomplished photographer; a lover of music ranging from Wagnerian operas to John Coltrane and Sun Ra; and a creative vegan cook.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Marie-Claire Picher; his son, Lyle Koehnlein, and daughter-in-law, Jessica Weiser

Bill's family would like to thank the Visiting Nurse Service of New York Hospice and Palliative Care Program for their invaluable support. We request that any monetary contributions in memory of Bill be sent to The War Resisters League, The Marxist Education Project or The Catholic Worker.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Celebrating the Life of Bill Koehnlein  
Saturday, March 24, 2018  
Saint Mark's Church in-the-Bowery  
Parish Hall  
131 East 10th Street (at Second Avenue)  
New York, NY 10003  
1:00-4:00pm

## Horror Vacui

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/horror-vacui>  
via anarhija.info

There are anarchists who run after uprisings on other continents wherever the spotlights of the media fall. There are anarchists who talk about "fortress Europe" and they don't even know which States are part of the EU. There are anarchists who struggle against the borders and they don't even know where the Schengen frontier runs. There are anarchists who, like "good white men", see in the "dark-skinned" non-EU people potential comrades, and they don't even notice that there are European non-EU people. There are anarchists who talk about internationalism and they don't even know (or don't give a fuck) what happens on their own continent. There are anarchists who express solidarity with all prisoners (or all political prisoners), as if the prison is really a correctional facility that automatically turns a human being into a better person (or a comrade/anarchist). There are anarchists who think of antifa as their comrades, as if the left-wing/extreme-left movements/parties are the lesser evil in an illusory revolutionary front. There are anarchists who get into the role of victims, just because they are a woman, gay, trans etc., as if it is not enough to be "simply" a human being to be oppressed by the Power (as if this notion is too tight and therefore it requires some other label to express that someone is more oppressed than others; is it possible that in these times of alienated sexuality where people, including anarchists, obsessively see sexual harassment on every corner, we suppress our femininity/masculinity turning ourselves in a sterile "gender", in which the democracy is trying to turn us, in accordance with this mechanistic society of mutilated sexuality?).

There are anarchists who in the 21st century still talk about the "class" struggle (a concept created in 19th century; in fact, marxist), while we live "simply" in a stratified society (like it has always been since civilization). There are anarchists who idolize the "native" people, as if they have already materialized Anarchy (always according to the notion of "the noble savage"), as if the history/time is linear (not circular). There are anarchists who say that they seek to decolonize their territory from the State in their struggle for national liberation ("the nation", this concept born with the modern State), as if the Earth is private property, as if all of us are not colonised by the State. It appears as though anarchists have fetishized the struggle per se, any struggle, regardless of its purpose, background, actors and ideology. So long as there exists any weak minority clashing with a more powerful enemy, it is sure to find attention (and occasionally, fervent support) on the counterinfo sites. It is as if many have forgotten that national liberation struggles are not struggles against power, but struggles for power. (National liberation is an appropriate term for what it is: it is a liberation of the nation, not of human beings). Likewise, the struggles of native groups do not seek to destroy power, but to take a (greater) share in it. No Kurds, Palestinians, Mapuche, nor any other oppressed ethnic minority or any irredentist/separatist movement seeks to abolish oppression altogether, but merely to abolish oppression against them, so that they may be free to become oppressors themselves and build a national empire of their own, justified by the same myths of ancestry and "the right" to a "fatherland" and to "national self-determination". These terms are the jargon of the State and have no place on anarchist platforms. All these struggles take place under the cult of

the nation-state. How does anyone calling themselves anarchist can find comrades among people reproducing power, authority and submission?

And there are anarchists who see no problem in being every day watched, registered, filmed..., so they make their own videos/photos to share them online. There are anarchists who use the social networks as if they are places of discussion (with “like”, “followers”, “friends” and all). There are anarchists so devoted to animal liberation, as if anarchy could be achieved (as if by magic) by all becoming vegan, as if liberation is plural, and not just one and total (liberation of the Earth and of everything which composes it). *“Everything is velocity, moment, instinct. (...) My nature is – opposition; logic – indiscipline; philosophy – subversion”* [Janko Polić Kamov, “Sloboda”]

How do you intend to destroy the existent if you support it with your own struggles?

[anarhija.info](mailto:anarhija.info) & some comrades

## Coping with the End of the World

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/coping-end-world>

*Submitted anonymously*

The day after Trump was elected President, news reports circulated images of young people at college campuses gathering to cry and mourn together. At these “cry-ins” or “self-care events,” students reportedly colored in coloring books, played with play-doh, met with therapy dogs, drank hot chocolate, and of course, cried together. These stories were met with ridicule, supposedly showcasing the oversensitive millennial generation as a bunch of snowflakes who can’t handle the world. But just like how, to Baudrillard, the existence of the uber-commercialized and artificial Disneyland gives cover to the rest of society pretending not to be both already, these spectacular stories of human coping hide the fact that society is already coping all the time.

To cope means to deal with something with some degree of success. When faced with a situation that is unalterable, it is a workaround or sidestep. Since you cannot change it, you try to figure out a way to handle it. In the 20th century, revolutionaries faced the miserable world with hope to transform it into something better, which guided their actions and ways of living. But in present day, a revolution seems less possible, and hopelessness is spreading. Every day is a new disaster: environmental catastrophe, war and the threat of nuclear winter, daily random mass shootings, Nazis killing people and trying to gain power, and the arrival of an Orwellian techno-future. These horrors compound ongoing miseries of daily life under capitalism: hunger, boredom, humiliation, exploitation, isolation, violence, oppression, alienation, etc. Since it seems like we can’t change these realities, we try to cope with them.

## Coping with our minds

Mindfulness is a Buddhist practice that has recently become popular within the field of psychology. It involves adopting a quasi-meditative mindset throughout daily life to non-judgmentally notice toxic thoughts. Seeing these thoughts for what they are supposedly lessens their ability to exacerbate neurosis and anxiety. This practice contrasts with psychoanalysis and other schools of psychology in discarding the role of the therapist as an expert of the mind, who tries to “fix” the patient by uncovering latent secrets buried within their psyche. Mindfulness never aims to “cure”, but rather offers an ongoing strategy for dealing with anxiety and toxic thoughts. In other words, it is a coping strategy that’s become popular due to an increasingly anxiety-producing world. It’s not the only one.

Psychiatry, a sister discipline to psychology that includes its practitioners prescribing anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medications, adopts the same approach. It never tries to cure someone of depression or anxiety, but instead aims to assist the patient in getting through daily life. Like mindfulness, it is a coping mechanism that can be useful to people. Both are in prominence right now because they level people out enough to enable

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<sup>1</sup><https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/08/health/heroin-deaths-samhsa-report/index.html>

them to be productive members of society. Someone who cannot get out of bed in the morning won't be able to produce value at work or through whatever role they are assigned in capitalist society.

## Coping through drugs

The number of people addicted to opioids have increased drastically in the last decade, including over double the amount of heroin users in the US from 2002 to 2016.<sup>1</sup> The Opioid Crisis is largely a result of over-prescription of painkillers for severe and chronic pain. These painkillers are addictive, and 21 to 29 percent of patients prescribed them admit to misusing them.<sup>2</sup> When the prescription runs out, or when a tolerance is built-up to the drug's effects, many begin using heroin or other illegal opioids. Chronic means "continuing or occurring again and again for a long time," implying that it probably won't go away permanently. Taking painkillers then is a way of coping, of constantly battling a condition that isn't being fixed for whatever reason.

The most common reported type of chronic pain is low back pain,<sup>3</sup> which has a number of different causes. But it's likely that the prevalence of this kind of pain has actually increased over time. A study done in North Carolina shows that the proportion of people suffering from long-term, low back pain has more than doubled between the early '90s and 2009.<sup>4</sup> Clearly something about this society and form of life is causing people to feel more chronic pain, which they then cope with by taking painkillers.

Habitual use of any drug can be read as a coping mechanism. 55 million people in the US used weed within the last year, and 35 million do on a monthly basis. 52% who used marijuana come from millennial generation.<sup>5</sup> Weed lowers your standards, it makes boring things fun. A stupid show on Netflix becomes entertaining, the toxic parts of a relationship are de-emphasized over the presence of a warm body to cuddle with, and emotions are dulled to the point of being manageable or ignorable. While drug use can provide interesting experiences, habitual use is clearly a way of coping with a boring and stressful world as well as putting off dealing with ongoing problems in life. Since under late capitalism the world cannot be acclimated to the needs of the body, with weed the body adjusts itself to acclimate to the world: a boring, despair-inducing, and stressful one at best.

## Radical Self-care

The idea of "radical self-care" has become popular through Tumblr and online social justice circles in recent years. Rejecting notions of mandatory productivity and its related shame, radical self-care rhetoric preaches that people should do whatever they need to do to get through the day. The examples given usually seem to be indulgent forms of consumption: eat a whole pizza, binge-watch a mindless series, stay in bed all day if you need to. That radical self-care often translates into indulging in consuming commodities is a stellar example of capitalism preying on people's vulnerabilities.

The rhetoric around radical self-care goes something like: "whatever you need to do to cope, do it. Don't ever let anyone make you feel bad for how you cope with the world." What's striking about this is how identical it is to a popular sentiment in prison: Whatever you have to do to do your time, do it. A thoughtful and multifaceted analysis of radical self-care has already been made<sup>6</sup>, but what's apparent here is that it is a synonym for coping.

## Sadvertising & Sentimentality in advertising and culture

Marketing and PR executives are tasked with creating propaganda content for their brands, products, and organizations, which requires them to study social trends and know the pulse of the public. In the last few years there was a trend in advertising dubbed "sadvertising," where ads consisted of sentimental and emotionally moving stories, often unrelated to the products being marketed. William Gelner, former chief creative officer of

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-overdose-crisis>

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.painmed.org/patientcenter/facts\\_on\\_pain.aspx#chronic](http://www.painmed.org/patientcenter/facts_on_pain.aspx#chronic)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/02/090209163146.htm>

<sup>5</sup><http://recointensive.com/marijuana-statistics-2017-55-million-americans-admit-use/>

<sup>6</sup>Crimethinc's "Self As Other" – <https://crimethinc.com/2013/09/06/new-zine-about-self-care-self-as-other>

the marketing agency 180LA, attributes this trend to the fact that: "...we live such digitally switched-on, always-plugged-in lives, and yet we still also somehow feel disconnected from people. As human beings, we're looking for human connection, and I think that emotional storytelling can help bridge that gap."<sup>7</sup> But at the end of 2016, after both Brexit and Trump's election, the mood of holiday advertising quickly changed. An article published by a website for Association Executives:

"Last year's tear jerking sentimental ads have been replaced with trampolining animals, courtesy of John Lewis, and a shift from sentimental wallowing – 'sadvertising' – to a healthy injection of light relief and laughter. Maybe the prospect of Brexit and Trump was simply more than most of us could deal with! When it comes to communications it's definitely crucial to have an accurate appreciation of the predominant mood of the audience."<sup>8</sup>

A trend that exploits people's unfulfilled desires to have meaningful connections was replaced by a trend that tip toes lightheartedly around people's fears of a disastrous future. While the cope-baiting is most obvious in the latter, in both cases the target of the advertisements is someone trying to deal with the miserable life they're stuck in.

## Failure to cope

To cope implies a degree of successfully persevering through the situation. What about when you cannot, when you lack the ability to both change a situation and deal with it in your life? Hopelessness is "significantly related to eventual suicide" by psychiatrists<sup>9</sup>, and suicide rates have been on the rise across demographics of age and gender. It is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.<sup>10</sup> If suicide is related to coping, is it linked to a failure to cope, or is it actually a rejection of coping as a way of living? Random mass shootings are also on the rise.<sup>11</sup> These seemingly arbitrary acts are hard to understand, but the absence of empathy points to a lack of connection with people, and the suicidal intentions behind them demonstrates a feeling of hopelessness.

## Conclusion

It would be stupid, insensitive, and unhelpful to suggest that people "stop coping," as if that were possible or even desirable. Instead, I seek to uncover a trend in the hope of allowing us to better understand this oft-changing and complex society we have been forced into. If you know what your enemy has been up to, wouldn't that help you plot against them?

## The State unveiled: Spain's anarchist hunt comes to a temporary end

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/state-unveiled-spain%E2%80%99s-anarchist-hunt-comes-temporary-end-via-autonomies>

*Spain's Audiencia Nacional tribunal has closed the legal proceedings and State driven persecution of anarchists known as Operación Piñata.*

(Wednesday, January 31st, 2018)

Once again, everything has ended in nothing. Almost three years after the arrests of fifteen people under *Operación Piñata* (March 2015), the courts have stopped the legal process, after a request by defense lawyers to dismiss the investigation for lack of evidence against the accused.

*Operación Piñata* thus meets the same fate as Operations Pandora I and II, as legal proceedings against so-called "anarchist terrorism".

<sup>7</sup><https://www.fastcompany.com/3029767/the-rise-of-sadvertising-why-brands-are-determined-to-make-you-cry>

<sup>8</sup><https://associationexecutives.org/news/322045/What-sadvertising-tells-us-about-communication-in-2017.htm>

<sup>9</sup><https://focus.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/foc.4.2.291>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>

<sup>11</sup><https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/24/justice/fbi-shooting-incidents-study/index.html>

After a total of 33 arrests, with house searches from Palecia to Granada; after three years of legal investigation, in which hundreds of documents were analysed, hours of telephone conversations recorded, bank accounts frozen, and worst of all, after some of the accused suffered months of imprisonment and dispersal in different penitentiaries of the national territory, the tribunal's own public prosecutor considered that there did not exist sufficient evidence to put any of the accused on trial.

Five of the twelve people accused under *Operación Piñata* were placed under custody for months. The order of detention made reference to acts of sabotage, possession of explosives and illicit activity related to drug trafficking.

Despite this, at no point were they linked to any violent act. The three police operations, Piñata and Pandora I and II, led to 33 persons being arrested for supposedly belonging to a terrorist organisation, but none of them could be tied to any violent, terrorist action, except distributing anarchist literature, or publishing essays and books, such as the essay *Contra a Democracia*.

To speak of "terrorism" in the absence of any violence is an obvious and unacceptable [at least for those who defend the possibility of a "State of Law", in opposition to a "State of Exception", whereas for most anarchists, these are but two sides of the same coin, and thus the "Exception" is a permanent state of affairs] extension of the term, something that empties of any content other types of crimes. Not surprisingly, the Pandora operations would suffer the same fate.

More than three years have passed since the chief of the national police, Ignacio Cosidó, announced that "anarchist terrorism had gained root in Spain", with this affirmation never finding confirmation in the courts.

Nevertheless, the three operations taken together amounted to the most virulent offensive against iberian anarchism since the "Scala case" of 1978. And independently of their legal success or failure, what is always accomplished is the dismantling of social centres, the generation of fear and suspicion among militants, the breaking up of networks of mutual aid and the criminalisation of an ideology and movement, which when it is necessary for the State to identify an enemy, sooner or later, anarchists will be targeted.

*(The above is a free translation of an article that appeared in the spanish newspaper, El Salto)*



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