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Glenn Wallis *is an independent scholar and founder of Incite Seminars in Philadelphia. He has taught at several universities, including Brown University and the University of Georgia. His most recent books include* A Critique of Western Buddhism and How to Fix Education. *Wallis blogs at Speculative Non-Buddhism. He holds a Ph.D. in Buddhist studies from Harvard University. He has also recently published* An Anarchist's Manifesto (Warbler, 2021). *He is an expert in Emma Goldman's practical philosophy of anarchy. Here in this interview, he goes into detail about what Goldman espoused and her legacy, while also contrasting her thoughts on anarchy with his own. He addresses how notions of anarchy have changed over time and what its value is today.*

John Kendall Hawkins *is an American ex-pat freelancer based in Australia. He is a former reporter for The New Bedford Standard-Times.*

HAWKINS: Glenn, Warbler Press recently released a book, *The Essential Emma Goldman* (2022). Its subtitle is *Anarchism, Feminism, and Liberation.* This is a good place to start. Can you tell us about these terms and how Emma Goldman put them into action?

WALLIS: That subtitle certainly gets right to the point! When I hear those three words together, I immediately think: oh, Emma Goldman! That's what she dedicated her life to. Or, truer to her own spirit and way of speaking, that is what she fought and bled so mightily for. Goldman's own succinct definition of anarchism is: "a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary."

This is a deceptively dense statement, containing far-reaching assumptions about the confluence of human capacity (to be cooperative and creative, for example) and about the state or government (inherently coopting and coercive). Each term requires careful teasing out. The short version, though, is provided by Emma Goldman's life itself. Her life was a testament to her view of anarchism. She chafed against "man-made law" as mere ignorant, self-serving "phantoms that have held [us] captive" to the powers that be. Although she deeply experienced love and longed for the comfort of companionship, to give one example, she never married. This decision was a result of her lived anarchism. She considered marriage to be yet another form of economic bondage, a cynical "insurance pact," a "parasitism," in which *both* partners are degraded. Anarchist theory enabled her to *see through* the supposedly natural, inevitable, and self-evidently "sacred institution of marriage." Anarchist theory also enabled her to *imagine other possibilities* for how we might engage in intimate relationships. Emma Goldman's courage of conviction did the rest.

In this example, we catch a glimpse of how Goldman put all three terms—anarchism, feminism, and liberation—into action at once. Her anarchism was a heuristic into the structures of domination pressing on our lives and, at the same time, a guide to more humane alternatives.

Her feminism disabused her of any and all notions of women's inferiority to men. Her choice not to marry or have children stemmed from her feminist conviction that "Everything within [a woman] that craves assertion and activity should reach its fullest expression; all artificial barriers should be broken, and the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery."

Finally, the entire *point* of it all, of the anarchist struggle, is liberation. Whenever I hear someone speak like that, I have to ask: liberation from *what*? As we should expect, Emma Goldman has an answer: "liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government. True liberation, individual and collective, lies in his emancipation from authority and from the belief in it." I should also mention her adamant conviction: "History tells us that every oppressed class gained true liberation from its masters through its own efforts."

HAWKINS: You, too, have had a book recently published by Warbler, titled, *An Anarchist's Manifesto* (2020). By way of contrast, how are Goldman's terms and contributions addressed in your book? Have they changed in character over the last 100 years.

WALLIS: I mention Goldman throughout the book. It is hard not to. As Vivian Gornick says in the Foreword to the Warbler edition, Emma Goldman was "an incarnation." She is a timeless avatar, haunting, in the playful yet uncanny spirit of a poltergeist, any writing on anarchism today. When young leftists hear about Goldman for the first time, the response is typically: *what a badass!* It is an immense help in making the case

for anarchism to have a figure of such courage, intelligence, irreverence, wit, wisdom, integrity, force, humor, and—you can't mention it often enough— *courage*, all rolled into one.

The relationship between classical anarchism (roughly, 1840-1939) and contemporary anarchism (roughly, 1968-the present) is complex and fraught with contention. By its very nature, anarchism must remain highly adaptive to the ever-changing conditions that require its application. By the same token, anarchism has to stand for *something,* and that something must transcend perpetual contingency. The principles that animate Emma Goldman's anarchism do, I believe, transcend temporal and sectarian differences. In fact, I'll stick my neck out and say that her foundational principles are wholly uncontroversial to all anarchists. These principles are, basically: *opposition to* authoritarianism, capitalism, the state, unjustified hierarchy, and institutional oppression; and *cultivation of* cooperation, collective intelligence and creativity, mutual decision-making, helping one another. Now, in terms of Goldman's specific application of these principles—we should not expect them to be transferable to our time and place. This holds true for all of the classical anarchist writers. Indeed, it holds true for the more recent '68 Situationist or Seattle anti-globalism anarchism. So, Emma Goldman's foundations remain in place; and her applications are undergoing perpetual metamorphosis.

HAWKINS: Aside from her opening essay, "What I Believe," the other essays in Goldman's collection are selections from her previous book, *Anarchism and Other Essays*. In "What I Believe," Goldman boldly pronounces her position on seven different controversial issues: *property; government; militarism; free speech and press; the church; marriage and love; and, acts of political violence*. These issues remain fiery and controversial 100 years later. Which of these issues would Goldman find most requiring activist resistance today?

> be so declared by treaties among all civilized powers. Such treaties would give to the Federal Government the power of dealing with the crime.

Let's give the great Emma Goldman the last response to this bluster of officialdom:

> [Anarchism] is so absolutely uncompromising, insisting, and permeating a force as to overcome the most stubborn assault and to withstand the criticism of those who really constitute the last trumpets of a decaying age.

WALLIS: The United States Congress enacted the Espionage Act just after entering World War I in 1917. It is, with occasional revisions, still in effect. And, as you say, both Emma Goldman and Julian Assange were indicted under it. (So were Daniel Ellsberg, for his Pentagon Papers leaks, and Edward Snowden, for his National Security Agency leaks.) The Act prohibits "obtaining information, recording pictures, or copying descriptions of any information relating to the national defense with intent or reason to believe that the information may be used for the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation." It also mandated "criminal penalties for anyone obstructing enlistment in the armed forces or causing insubordination or disloyalty in military or naval forces."

Goldman was arrested, along with her companion Sasha Berkman, for her public remarks in New York City against the military draft and militarism in general. They both received the maximum penalty of two years incarceration a $10,000 fine (that's roughly $235,000 in today's money). While she was in prison, Congress passed the "Anarchist Exclusion Act," specifying that "aliens who are anarchists…shall be excluded from admission into the United States." So, in December 1919, Emma Goldman and 248 other utterly wrong-thinking "aliens" boarded the S.S. Buford and were deported to the fledgling Soviet Union.

The authorities were glad finally to be rid of her. No less an authority than an American president, Theodore Roosevelt, could trumpet:

> Anarchy is a crime against the whole human race; and all mankind should band against the anarchist. His crime should be made an offense against the law of nations, like piracy and that form of man-stealing known as the slave trade; for it is of far blacker infamy than either. It should

WALLIS: It's impossible to offer a "pan-anarchist" answer to your very interesting question. I have already touched on the reason for this: anarchist solutions or, better, strategies, are, by definition, highly fluid, adaptable, and time-place-problem specific. I know anarchists in Turkey for whom resisting Erdogan's increasingly illiberal government is paramount. Until recently, when things have gone silent, we were hearing from anarchists in Russia for whom agitating against militarism and for increased free speech are the pressing issues. In the United States, since 2020 in particular, acts of political/police/incarcerational violence have been front and center. If we took a trip around the world, we would likely find anarchist activists engaged in all of those issues mentioned by Goldman.

HAWKINS: A blurb for *An Anarchist's Manifesto* at your website partly summarizes the content of your book with:

> Why anarchism? And why a manifesto? Anarchism is commonly viewed as an outdated and wholly impractical idea. Worse, it has an accursed reputation for advocating chaos, violence, and destruction. The aim of *An Anarchist's Manifesto* is to convince readers of the exact opposite: that anarchism is the most adaptive, humane, intelligent, singly inclusive proposal that we, as social animals, have ever envisioned.

Would you elaborate on this?

WALLIS: One of my favorite remarks in all of anarchist writing, a line that I repeat every opportunity that I get, is Emma Goldman's remark about "The strange phenomenon of the opposition to Anarchism." I cannot for the life of me understand how someone can hear what anarchism has to say about, for example, work, and remain *opposed* to it. Precisely this "phenomenon" was the catalyst for *An Anarchist's Manifesto.*

So, it's, say, 1886. Factory workers in America are toiling for sixteen hours a day in unsafe, unregulated conditions for a pittance while the owners become Gilded Age millionaires. The workers are not permitted breaks. The workspace is unventilated. Workers are as young nine years old. They have no unemployment, health, or life insurance. They are considered expendable. When they are too ill or incapacitated to work, when they die at home or on the job, someone else steps in to replace them. Of this, the boss has no doubts. And around and around it goes.

Now, along come the anarchists. On the streets, in organized mass demonstrations, in rousing pamphlets and magazine articles, in impassioned speeches, in neighborhood canvassing campaigns, in workplace pickets, they agitate for an 8-hour workday, safety regulations, ample breaks and ventilation, the end of child labor, a minimum living wage, unemployment insurance, wealth distribution, and more. And yet, there is *opposition* to anarchism? Among the workers even? In *An Anarchist's Manifesto* I offer many contemporary examples of the same vexing issue of *opposition* to anarchist strategies today, strategies bearing on environmental degradation, economic insecurity, slave labor, technological dystopia, racial and gender oppression, daily mass extermination of sentient non-human animals, and so forth.

We understand the workings of "manufactured consent" (as the anarchist Noam Chomsky terms the way in which our mass media act as a propaganda apparatus for the dominant ideology). Emma Goldman understood, too. She knew what the problem was. In "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For," she identifies the basic reason for the "strange opposition" that she continually encounters. It was, namely, that the emotions of media consumers "are continuously kept at a pitch by the most blood-curdling stories about Anarchism." In particular, anarchism's supposed proclivity toward *violence* and *impracticality*

Third, *who* she spoke to caused agonizing consternation. Goldman's speeches challenging convention were delivered to audiences that crossed class, ethnic, race, nationality, age, and gender lines—lines that only the boldest orators in her day dared to entangle or transgress.

Fourth, *how* she spoke was perhaps the most "dangerous" of all. She was deeply theatrical. She spoke with equal amounts of force and eloquence. Roger Nash Baldwin, one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union, said that he was converted to radical ideas about free speech when, as a Harvard student, he witnessed an Emma Goldman speech. (In 1927, Baldwin would even edit Peter Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*. These are the roots of the ACLU!)

U.S. Attorney General Francis Caffey touched on this combination of elements when he reported that Goldman was "a woman of great ability and of personal magnetism, and her persuasive powers make her an exceedingly dangerous woman."

HAWKINS: President Woodrow Wilson, in his December 7, 1915 State of the Union address spoke as if unhinged at times about the "disloyalty" of immigrants who had repaid America's generosity with "disloyalty." He said, in part:

> I urge you to enact such laws at the earliest possible moment and feel that in doing so I am urging you to do nothing less than save the honor and self-respect of the nation. Such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out. They are not many, but they are infinitely malignant, and the hand of our power should close over them at once.

Not long after the 1917 Espionage Act was passed by Congress. And Emma was on the list of its suspects. How did that happen? And does it reveal anything about the Assange case?

since January 2023 alone. So, this is not a criticism from *outside*. It is an imminent critique, derived from anarchism's and Buddhism's very own principles. Anarchism does not fight for "partial liberation of *some* sentient beings." Buddhism does not strive for "universal compassion for all sentient beings except non-human animals." This heartless, blind, and contradictory state of affairs within two otherwise great traditions saddens me. Talk about "the strange phenomenon of opposition."

HAWKINS: Have you seen the film, *Emma Goldman: An Exceedingly Dangerous Woman*? It begins with Emma being deported from the US in 1920 for her anarchism. She was then regarded by some as "the most dangerous woman in America." What actions caused her to be seen that way?

WALLIS: Yes, an excellent film.

I think that what made Goldman so dangerous in the eyes of the local and national authorities was the combination of four elements. First, *what* she spoke about tended toward the socially taboo, and was often outright illegal—sexuality and birth control, free love, the evils of militarism, the hypocrisy of the church, atheism, the degradation of married life.

Second, her *reach* was substantial. She typically spoke before massive crowds, numbering in the hundreds and thousands. She spoke in university lecture halls, in community centers, in suburban parks and city squares, in barrooms and pool halls, in grimey mine shafts, and in elegant theaters. She traveled relentlessly, some years giving hundreds of talks. In a fascinating article in the academic journal *Women's History Review*, titled "Emma Goldman: Passion, Politics, and the Theatrics of Free Expression," Candance Falk writes that "Often press reporters were swayed by her message, humored by her free flowing jabs at the hypocrisy of big government and of conventional norms—all grist for wonderfully entertaining newspaper articles." Such press coverage, favorable or not, greatly increased her reached, making her (in)famous throughout the United States and beyond.

ticality are singled out by the pro-capitalist media propaganda machine.

As Goldman says in the same essay, "it requires less mental effort to condemn than to think." That is why education is perhaps the matter of first importance in much anarchist theory. In the last sentence that you quote from *An Anarchist's Manifesto,* I am appealing to readers who, I am assuming, are ready to start *thinking* about anarchist claims. I am confident that a thoughtful person who takes a close, open-minded look at anarchist theories will come away startled, surprised, impressed, and who knows, ready to convert.

HAWKINS: In the Foreword to *The Essential Goldman*, the radical feminist Vivian Gornick writes:

> Goldman was regularly being taken to task by her fellow anarchists for interpreting anarchism as a movement for individual self-expression rather than as a collective bent on overthrowing corporate capitalism. To this critique she would reply hotly that if radicals gave up sex and art while making the new world they would become devoid of joy. Without joy, human beings would cease being human—and then any world they made would be even more heartless than it had been before. In conclusion, as she herself said, if she couldn't dance, Emma wasn't coming to their revolution.

This recalls for me what the Yippee Abbie Hoffman once said about participatory democracy:

> "Democracy is not something you believe in, but something you do. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles."

Do you see that such joy is missing from the public discourse and counterculture today? How does your anarchism reflect joy?

WALLIS: I personally find public discourse and the counterculture both incredibly grim these days. Has it always been so bleak? The more troubling of the two, for me, is the latter. Goldman's quip that any revolution that doesn't include dancing is not for her is deceptively casual. Laughter, a sense of humor, dancing, music, play, pursuit of pleasure, satisfaction, joy, *are the very point.* They are the outflow of liberation. Think about the kind of social formation that begets all of this. It must be a society where so much of what we are currently bereft of already prevails: justice, integrity, fairness, intelligence, creativity, cooperation. People are often surprised when they discover that Marx explicitly stated that the whole point of communism is to create the conditions for *personal fulfillment.* I believe that all good leftist thought is oriented in this direction.

By the way, that criticism from Goldman's fellow anarchists that you mention is still bandied about today. It's a debate between what one anarchist derisively calls "life-style anarchism"— which we can more generously see as doing our best to live anarchist principles in a small corner of the universe, in our daily life—and a large-scale revolutionary anarchism of movements and campaigns directed at the dismantling of capitalism and the state.

HAWKINS: In her chapter "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation," Goldman acknowledges that women have made great strides, especially in economic equality, but that she sees a great emptiness and lack of fulfillment in modern women. She concludes the chapter with:

> Pettiness separates; breadth unites. Let us be broad and big. Let us not overlook vital things because of the bulk of trifles confronting us. A true conception of the relation of the sexes will not ad-

as near identical since they are intended to lead to real world transformation. So, for each, the aim is to *embody* the ideal so as to create actual effects.

On a related note, anarchists have been anti-religion from the beginning. As I see it, the main reasons for that stance are that (i) Christianity was their model, (ii) Christianity is highly authoritarian, hierarchical, and dogmatic—qualities that any self-respecting anarchist abhors, and (iii) for millennia, the Church was in perfect collusion with the coercive State.

But that attitude is changing. When *An Anarchist's Manifesto* came out, I was invited to several anarchist forums to discuss the book. During virtually every Q & A, some young leftist asked about the place of "spirituality" in anarchism. My knee-jerk response is to point out that anarchism wants to create a world in which the succor of spirituality is not *necessary*. Still, it's a great question. What *might* a materialist "spirituality" look like? (The very terms seem to be contradictory, and yet…) This would be a great project to work on. I imagine humans have already fashioned useful material toward this end—from, for instance, the Hermetic traditions, pagan traditions, contemplative and meditative traditions, apophatic and mystical traditions. We would have to extract the *material* material from the *idealist* material, though. That is tricky business. Anyway, it is something we might need to address as the world continues to hurl toward cataclysm.

One final note. I said that anarchism advocates "total liberation" and Buddhism advocates "universal compassion," for all sentient beings. I'd like to mention one area in which both traditions have an abysmal blindspot. If their respective practices are really enabling people to *embody* their ideals, then why are so few anarchists and Buddhists vegan? Animal liberation should be interwoven into the consciousness of everyone claiming liberation and compassion "for all sentient beings." According to the Animal Kill Clock (https://animalclock.org), 12,221,879,967 have been killed in the United States for food

usually-varied capacities to several pursuits in the farm, the workshop, the factory, the study or the studio," as Kropotkin wrote in *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* in 1899. I know people who spend a good deal of time translating texts. They swear by Chat AI, for example, because it saves them so much time and effort. AI gets the basics of the translation right. That done, the translator can then spend more energy refining and perfecting the text.

I think *one* viable anarchist response to such technology is suggested in your earlier Vivian Gornick quote about the importance of "individual self-expression" and "joy" to Emma Goldman. I do translations, too. Every word choice, every syntax decision, every punctuation detail involves my" self-expression." Why would I even *want* to by-pass any of the process? I'm talking about work dealing with language and ideas and rich metaphors and complex meaning—why would I want to collaborate with a *machine*? And what's to say that I don't derive deep *joy* from doing the parts that AI can approximate? Present being prologue, we'd better be careful, as the Gornick quote indicates, that we don't start (continue!) making a heartless world "devoid of joy."

Speaking of Luddites, anarchism itself vacillates between radical anti-civilization primitivism and starry-eyed techno-utopianism. Of course, there are many positions in between as well. Much current thinking around deindustrialization, rewilding, degrowth, anti-work, DIY, and so on, have roots deep in anarchist thought.

HAWKINS: You've written a few books on Buddhism. How does that practice jibe with your anarchism?

WALLIS: This is a huge question. To give a brief answer, I would say that the core concern of both Buddhism and anarchism is, arguably, alleviating the suffering of all sentient beings. This "all" is not to be taken lightly. It necessarily leads to what anarchism calls "total liberation," and what Buddhism calls "universal compassion." Those goals strike me

> mit of conqueror and conquered; it knows of but one great thing: to give of one's self boundlessly, in order to find one's self richer, deeper, better. That alone can fill the emptiness, and transform the tragedy of woman's emancipation into joy, limitless joy.

What is the state of sex relations today? Does the overturning of Roe vs. Wade erode the progress assumed to have been made over 100 years.

WALLIS: Emma Goldman would be absolutely appalled by the overturning of Roe vs. Wade. That a government can dictate what a woman does with her body, much less a government consisting largely of men, was the height of misguided, thoughtless idiocy for her. Worse even, it was yet another way in which one group exercises ruthless domination over another. Recall that control over one's body is woven into her very definition of anarchism's goal: "the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property."

I think Goldman would see "sex relations" today as still being mired in a "property" logic. And the "emptiness and lack of fulfillment" that she witnessed all around her, particularly but not exclusively among women living within the so-called "sacred institution of marriage"—does it not still define our times? Goldman's stance on "sex relations" in the essay you mention even strikes me as anticipating queer arguments against marriage, to take one example. That position holds that marriage, same-sex or otherwise, is deeply, and deceptively, conservative. It is part and parcel of a unequal status quo. Its legal and ideological roots are literally located in property law. Are there not other, more humane, ways of expressing and living our "sex relations"?

Emma Goldman's intimate relationships were precisely experiments toward this aim of seeking alternatives. Her nonconformity in this regard was very difficult for her psycholog-

ically and socially, and she suffered greatly for it. But, in her relationships, she also gave of herself "boundlessly," and found herself "richer, deeper, better," for doing so. Here we have another central anarchist principle. In fact, we can cite this principle by paraphrasing the Abbie Hoffman quote you gave earlier: "Anarchism is not something you believe in, but something you do. If you stop doing it, we will never know what future is possible."

HAWKINS: Goldman was adamantly anti-patriotic and is quite eloquent in her chapter "Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty," where she writes:

> We Americans claim to be a peace-loving people. We hate bloodshed; we are opposed to violence. Yet we go into spasms of joy over the possibility of projecting dynamite bombs from flying machines upon helpless citizens. We are ready to hang, electrocute, or lynch anyone, who, from economic necessity, will risk his own life in the attempt upon that of some industrial magnate. Yet our hearts swell with pride at the thought that America is becoming the most powerful nation on earth, and that it will eventually plant her iron foot on the necks of all other nations.

Such is the logic of patriotism.

Are these not prescient words for a nation that has virtually been at war with someone for almost 100 years.

WALLIS: Sigh, yes. This is one of the instances where I would invoke "The strange phenomenon of the opposition to Anarchism." Go back and scour the anarchist record for diagnoses and prognoses of human "progress." They saw it all coming. Another strange phenomenon is that we don't *all* see it coming. When, in Goldman's time, fossil fuel powered automobiles began clattering down dirt roads, spewing

petroleum clouds, killing small animals and children, destroying the neighborhood peace, was it not obvious that they'd be clogging the streets in no time, and perhaps even contributing to a hole in the ozone one day? A proto-anarchist like Henry David Thoreau certainly thought so, and on merely hearing the first rumbling of the locomotive near Walden Pond. For anyone with a bent for utopian thinking (in the best sense of that term), past and present are prologue. When Emma Goldman imagined "the possibility of projecting dynamite bombs from flying machines upon helpless citizens," she was seeing the nightmare of Dresden and Hiroshima.

HAWKINS: In your chapter on the critique of capitalism, you write a succinct description of its eroding powers:

> "Spectacle" is an apt metaphor for life in a capitalist society. It suggests that we are mesmerized, infatuated, spellbound, be-witched, beguiled, and eventually seduced by a perpetually unfolding market extravaganza of commodities, images, and representations, the overwhelming majority of which are demonstrably superfluous, indeed often counterproductive, to happiness and wellbeing.

Yes, you see this in the AI phenomenon. We seem smitten, don't we?

WALLIS: Don't get me started! *Take it away Noam*: "Given the amorality, faux science, and linguistic incompetence of [AI language] systems, we can only laugh or cry at their popularity."

The relationship between anarchism and technology is complex. Similar to Marx, some anarchist thinkers (for instance, Peter Kropotkin and Murray Bookchin) held out hope that technology would create ease in place of labor's hardship and drudgery. Technology, to this kind of thinking, will allow us more free time, putting us in "a position to apply [our]