

**Emma Goldman (1869-1940)** “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For” (*Anarchism and Other Essays*, 1910)

1869 Born in Lithuania

1885 Immigrates to US (Rochester, NY; then NYC)

### **Workers’ Rights Advocate**

1886 Haymarket Square (Chicago) Protest against 8 hr work day. Bomb kills 7 police officers; 4 protesters later executed

1892 Homestead Strike (Pittsburgh, PA). Pinkerton Guards kill 9 steel worker strikers.

### **Birth Control Advocate**

1873 Comstock Law - prohibited distribution of birth control literature. Goldman helped smuggle contraceptives into US.

### **Free Speech Advocate**

1903 Goldman co-founds Free Speech League - influential on later ACLU.

### **War Protester**

1917-18 Espionage and Sedition Acts - prohibited protests against US involvement in WWI.

1919 Goldman is deported to Russia for anti-draft demonstrations.

### **Anarchist:**

## **I. Anarchism:**

“The philosophy of 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” (pg. 220).

### **Two Popular Objections**

1. Anarchism is unpractical.
2. Anarchism is violent and destructive.

### **Goldman’s Response to (1)**

- Anarchism is only impractical relative to current conditions.
- Its goal is to change current conditions.
- With respect to this goal, it is practical.

### **Goldman’s Response to (2)**

- (a) There are different varieties of violence.  
Government is violent; anarchism is just a response to this. (Violence in response to violence.)  
Ignorance is the most violent element in society.
- (b) Distinction between constructive violence and destructive violence: Anarchism is constructive in so far as it destroys “unhealthy” parts of society.

pg. 220 Anarchism must address all phases of life. Compare with fascists. However:  
Basic assumption of anarchism: The individual is fundamental.

pg. 221 “Anarchism is the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself; which maintains that God, the State, and society are non-existent, that their promises are null and void since they can be fulfilled only through man’s subordination.”

Anarchism, however, is not anti-social:

pg. 221 “The individual is the heart of society, conserving the essence of social life; society is the lungs which are distributing the element to keep the life essence - that is, the individual - pure and strong.”

**The goal of anarchism:** a “harmonious blending” of the individual and the social instincts.

**Three Obstacles:**

1. Religion: Dominates the human mind.
2. Property: Dominates human needs.
3. Government: Dominates human conduct.

pg. 222 Capitalism prevents freedom of choice (Mill to the contrary). Goldman’s ideal: voluntary production and distribution associations; production for its own sake, not for the sake of profit. “Free” communism.

The greatest obstacle: the greatest hindrance to individual liberty.

**II. Goldman on Government:**

“The State is necessary *only* to maintain or protect property and monopoly” (pg. 223).

Recall Rocco’s counter-claim: natural inequalities force state intervention if the goal is to protect individual liberty. Also recall Mill: would he agree with Goldman’s claim?)

**Objections Goldman Considers:**

1. Government rests on “natural laws” (i.e., it is necessary due to human nature).
2. Government is necessary to maintain order and prevent crime.
3. Government is necessary to secure the rights of individuals (it “prevents the lazy man from fleecing his fellows”)

Response to (1)

Natural law = “that factor in man which asserts itself in the absence of external forces, in harmony with nature” (pg. 223).

Rousseauian response: Human nature is not such that it requires government. Government (violence, force, coercion, etc) is *contrary* to human nature

Response to (2)

The only “order” maintained by government is through terror and submission. “True” order is obtained through “solidarity of interests”.

Note: Goldman may be viewing government in the sense of Rousseau’s “tyranny”. Recall that Rousseau’s 2nd Stage of Inequality (Government) transforms into his 3rd Stage (Tyranny) via the bamboozlement of the populace - fear of crime; rampant patriotism, etc.

### Specific Response to (3)

In the absence of government, there would be no opportunity for the lazy man to fleece his fellows. Under anarchism, no one would feel “lazy” towards labor. (Recall Marx: “The aim is to make work an instrument of joy” (pg. 224).)

### General Response to (3)

There is no need to secure the rights of the individual. The true foundation of a normal social life are inherent social bonds (pg. 224). In other words, left to themselves, humans will flourish socially.

(Rousseau - yes; Mill - humans aren't *that* social.)

For Goldman, human nature can only be fully expressed in an environment devoid of oppression:

“Freedom, expansion, opportunity, and above all, peace and repose, alone can teach us the real dominant factors of human nature and all its wonderful possibilities” (pg. 225).

## III. The Method of Anarchism

The “logical and consistent” method of anarchism is “direct action”:

“Direct action against the authority of the law, direct action against the invasive, meddlesome authority of our moral code, is the logical, consistent method of Anarchism” (pg. 226).

- No negotiations. Open defiance and resistance. (But not morally/religiously motivated a la King.)
- Strikes are the most manifest version of direct action. (Between King's appeal to conscientious non-violence and Fanon's call for violence.)