

An Exchange Between Brian Morris and John Clark

6th December 2018

Contents

Brian Morris	3
John Clark	3

A review by Brian Morris of John P. Clark's *The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism*¹ appeared in *Anarchist Studies* 26:2 (Autumn 2018), which was followed in that same journal issue with a reply by John Clark to Morris's review. Since publication of the issue, this exchange has continued with a further reply from each individual; in the interest of timeliness, we are publishing those further replies here on AnarchistStudies.Blog.

For the purposes of context, we have also republished Morris's and Clark's review articles from *Anarchist Studies* 26:2, which are available at these links (the further exchange is below):

Brian Morris, 'The Reformist Anarchism of John Clark'

Reply to Brian Morris by John Clark, 'The Domination Of The Text: Morris's Reading of *The Impossible Community*'

Brian Morris

'Afterword: Response to John Clark's "The Domination Of The Text: Morris's Reading Of *The Impossible Community*"'

Misjudging most of my own words and phrases as implying an *attack* on his own work, and insinuating that I am a philosopher waif because I dislike his arid scholasticism, John Clark completely fails to address the substance of my review – his own complete *misinterpretation* of Murray Bookchin's libertarian socialism and radical democracy, together with Clark's appropriation of Bookchin's ideas on freedom without any acknowledgement. Instead we get a lot of poisonous relationships and intrigues between himself, Dolgoff, Bookchin and Biehl, which has little to do with my *focused* review. Criticising spiritual gurus does not make one an Orientalist!

Of course, I'm fully aware that Clark long ago critiqued Stirner's egoism, and that he *really* did not think (contrary to what he said) that Nietzsche was a heroic figure and a good anarchist, and that his book does advocate communitarian anarchism. In fact I recommend the book to many class struggle anarchists as many of the essays contain important insights. But whether or not Clark can claim to be a class struggle anarchist, given all those insinuations against the very idea of class struggle (especially as Max Cafard) I will leave to readers to judge.

Please note: I have long been a 'fan' of Murray Bookchin, as I have been a fan of Kropotkin, and Ernest Thompson Seton – but I don't agree with everything Bookchin said or did! I do however defend Bookchin against Clark's warped understanding of his politics.

John Clark

'Out of the Morass. A Final Post-Mortem on Morris's Ideological Readings'

Brian Morris's original non-review demonstrated that he had not read *The Impossible Community*. His "Afterword" shows that neither has he read the Cafard texts that he charges with having the same flaws. I searched these texts and found that there is *not a single mention* of "class" that supports his claims.

Rather, I define anarchism there as "the desire for a classless, stateless society". I attack one author for failing to see that "hierarchy of power, status and wealth" is evidence of "a social class system". I discuss the fact that in ancient Sumer the "apparatus of hierarchy and domination

¹ John P. Clark (2013), *The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism*, London: Bloomsbury

is already fully developed in the brutal class system". And I praise my friend and fellow Wob-
bly Penelope Rosemont for "exploring topics such as revolution, war and peace, working class
struggle" and discussing "working class organization".

Morris complains that I squander the reader's time on "poisonous relationships and intrigues".
Yet, these accounts were not idly anecdotal but pointedly antidotal – the necessary administration
of a strong dose of truth to counteract the poison of falsehood that Morris injected into the
discussion.

Morris's texts are extremely useful in showing the corrosive effects of sectarianism and dog-
matism. These are evidenced by an inability to read carefully, a projection of preconceptions on
texts, a careless disregard for truth and accuracy, an inability to change one's mind in the face of
evidence, an inability to *change the subject*, in more senses than one.

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