

An Exchange Between Brian Morris and John Clark

6th December 2018

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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 Wobbly 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 dogmatism. 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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