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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Clark and ETH (and ELs)

From: clark@mn.frontiercomm.net [Jerome Clark]
Date: Sun, 07 Dec 1997 22:40:03 PST
Fwd Date: Sun, 07 Dec 1997 23:10:04 -0500
Subject: Re: Clark and ETH (and ELs)

> Date: Sun, 07 Dec 1997 16:52:02 -0800
> From: John Koopmans <john.koopmans@sympatico.ca>
> To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: Clark and ETH (and ELs)

> > Date: Sat, 06 Dec 1997 10:24:03 -0700
> > To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
> > From: Jilain <jilain@rt66.com> [Jilain Jones]
> > Subject: Re: Clark and ETH (and ELs)

> > >From: clark@mn.frontiercomm.net [Jerome Clark]
> > >Date: Fri, 05 Dec 1997 17:45:01 PST
> > >To: updates@globalserve.net
> > >Subject: RE: UFO UpDate: Re: Clark and ETH (and ELs)

> > <big time major snip>

> > >I will let readers of the list familiar with my writing judge for
> > >themselves whether my writing evinces serious mental disorder
> > >-- surely the most unique criticism ever made of it, I must say.

> > <more snipping>

> > >Cheers,

> > >Jerry Clark

> > Hello all :)

> > I have just joined the list, and thus have missed a great deal of
> > this conversation. (Haven't had time to check the archives and
> > catch up on it as yet). But the above statement really caught my
> > eye. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly an "armchair
> > diagnosis" of mental disorder rears its head when dealing with
> > those who investigate any aspect of the ufo/alien phenomenon.

> > I know a gentleman who has been investigating ufos for 30 years
> > or so. He once told me that you will know when you're "hitting
> > too close to home" when people stop debating the data you present
> > and start attacking you personally. I've found that to be a true
> > statement.

> > I personally find the whole thing quite intriguing. Once the
> > personal attacks start, I REALLY start paying close attention to
> > what someone is saying. And I've found that nine times out of
> > ten, the one doing the attacking is reacting to the "hitting of a
> > nerve" by someone else. From there, its generally just a matter
> > of time before there is some indication given as to what the

> > "nerve" is all about.

> <snip>

> > Jilain

> Jilain:

> You make a very perceptive observation about following personal
> attacks and trying to discern what the "nerve" is all about.
> However, if you had followed this discussion a little sooner, you
> would have learned that Jerome Clark also attacked John Keel by
> calling him "paranoid" and his theories "half-baked". Part of
> this seems to stem from some previous personal attacks that Keel
> made on Clark, and according to Clark, on many others.

John,

I'm afraid you're entirely wrong here. That doesn't, of course, make you a bad person; it's just that, by your own admission, you're new to this field, and I'd bet you haven't read much of what I've written outside this list. It's also apparent that you haven't read much Keel to speak of, either; otherwise you wouldn't have that "according to Clark" in your last line. You'd have seen the evidence with your own eyes.

I called Keel's ideas, not John himself, "half-baked." I am opposed to personal attacks. If you think Keel and I are sinning equally, please read my earlier posting in which I quote Keel writing vituperously on ufologists and Forteanes, as he has for many years, using language few of us would employ even in anger. I challenge you to find me using comparable language anywhere.

In this field there are many points of view, and I have friends who hold just about all of them. My range of friends in ufology runs the gamut from skeptics to contactees. I get along fine with them, and they with me, and occasionally we even mix it up in print or in correspondence without anyone's mistaking legitimate dissent for personal animosity.

Keel's ideas, in my judgment, are misguided, for reasons about which I have written at length. Please go to your local bookstore, pick up my UFO Book, and read my essay on "Paranormal and Occult Theories." You don't even have to buy the book. Just learn where I'm coming from, so you don't have to engage in misguided speculation about who I am and what I'm about.

> So, in this case, the personal attacks are going both ways, and
> the "nerve" itself seems to be the mutual attacks on each others'
> mental stability. If you have any kids jealous of the amount of
> attention each seems to think the other is getting, you may
> recognize the scenario. Unfortunately, the attacks seem to be
> spilling over into each others' theories.

The personal attacks are NOT going both ways, unless you are arguing that one's protests at being slandered are morally equivalent to the circulating of the slander to which the victim is objecting. I abandoned Keelian views in the late 1970s, when I came to see them as poorly conceived, essentially meaningless, and often out-and-out credulous. This had NOTHING to do with my feelings about Keel, whom I continued to like, though we had long since drifted apart. The last time I saw John was in Connecticut in 1989. We went out to dinner together and had a merry time. Afterwards I wrote him a good-humored letter.

The issue where Keel is concerned is, it seems, me. The issue where I am concerned is his ideas, as you would know if you were conversant in what I have published on the subject.

> While the work of both Keel and Clark can be respected in their
> own way (from certain viewpoints) their attitudes towards each
> other can not, since it can only result in unnecessarily
> affecting the perceptions of readers towards the work each is
> doing. This in turn hurts the whole UFO community and the
> likelihood of professional scholarly advancement in this field.

Give me a break. Please read what I have read about Keel's theories in my books and articles. (Please read my UFO Encyclopedia, incidentally, if you want to learn something about "professional scholarly advancement in this field," which is what

reviewers said they thought this was.) Though I have my private suspicions, I have not once written of Keel as crazy, socially inept, or pathetic -- adjectives he habitually hurls, in print and elsewhere, against all who disagree with him. If Keel were to write articles challenging my ideas, precisely as I have done with his, there would be no problem, only healthy, entertaining, and (one would hope) ultimately enlightening debate.

Personal attacks are pointless, counterproductive, and boring. I need no lecture from you on that score, since this was precisely the point I was making (and apparently you were missing) when I raised the issue of Keel's ad hominem excesses. I wish John Keel believed, as I do and I presume you do, in rational debate, but I simply fail to see by what peculiar logic my criticizing him for that makes me morally equivalent to him. Perhaps you could explain it to me.

If, on the other hand, you want to direct your words to Keel, which is where they ought to be addressed, I'll gladly give you his address.

Jerry Clark

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