

## Reply to David Ramsay Steele

by Bernd Frohmann

DAVID RAMSAY STEELE'S response to my review of the second edition of William Warren Bartley III's *Wittgenstein* contains some misunderstandings and omissions that I am happy to address for the benefit of readers who have not seen the review.

First, no disinterested reader could suppose that I intended to discredit the book's publisher, since there exists not a single statement of mine to that effect. The Open Court Publishing Company is, to my knowledge, a publishing house worthy of respect for both its past and present achievements, and I would not presume to criticize either its publishing or marketing decisions (printing conflicting blurbs is indeed a standard marketing device and I never suggested otherwise). But the plain facts are that the first edition of Bartley's book caused exactly the degree of hostility that Bartley seeks so insultingly to dismiss in his second edition, that some of that hostility was directed at the publisher, and that no better example of such rage can be found than in Stonborough's article. The publisher evidently agreed, and printed an excerpt from the article as a blurb. My purpose in citing it was to offer some evidence of the book's impact.

Perhaps the wounds from attacks directed against the publishers over a dozen years ago still smart so much as to impair Mr. Steele's reading of a new review that dares even to cite them.

In the third of his numbered points, Mr. Steele asks an important question, which many readers of Bartley's book probably had little difficulty in answering for themselves, and that is, what are the alternatives to biography such as this? It would be difficult to improve upon G.E.M. Anscombe's guidelines for responsible reporting of sensitive biographical details, even those whose sources the author is forbidden for whatever reason from naming, in her letter on Bartley's book in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 16 November 1973. Readers may also judge for themselves the adequacy of Bartley's response in the 11 January 1974 issue of the same periodical. As an Editorial Director, Mr. Steele knows very well the alternatives to tabloid-style *reportage*.

It would be pleasant indeed to avoid the tiresome subject of Wittgenstein's homosexuality. Surely no reader missed my statement that the reason for reviewing the second edition was to judge the additions to the first. Bartley chose to add a chapter by reprinting his article on Wittgenstein's homosexuality. Therefore my review focuses on Bartley's excogitations on Wittgenstein's homosexuality. What could be plainer? And it ought to be crashingly obvious that whether or not Wittgenstein or anyone else was or is a homosexual simply cannot, in 1988, excite the cognitive faculties of educated members of the reading public. It is simply not important. Whether he was a "promiscuous homosexual and was consumed with guilt about it", which is no more important than if he were a promiscuous heterosexual and consumed with guilt about it, could be responsibly treated if it were true. But for the likes of Bartley's purple prose and lack of concern for evidence (which concern is, *pace* Anscombe, *not* the same as naming your sources) the reader is forced to seek out the typical tabloid's "reporting" of the sex lives of day-time soap opera stars, and Mr. Steele knows this too. Furthermore, if Mr. Steele refers simply to claims that Wittgenstein was a homosexual when he writes of claims that I must know very well have been corroborated, my answer is, of course, but who cares? If he refers to the lurid picture that Bartley develops, then, as Mr. Steele must also know very well, the published evidence is against it.

As for Mr. Steele's charge of irrationality and incoherence, it suffices to point out that he fails to mention my three arguments against Bartley's support for his conclusion, with which I wholeheartedly agree, that Wittgenstein's philosophy cannot be reduced to his homosexuality.

But what about Lyndon LaRouche? Since Mr. Steele has revealed an old book marketing device, I'll own up to an old rhetorical device. It is ridicule by means of exaggerated or hyperbolic analogy. But why do it? I argue thus: (1) the reader ought to know what kind of book the reviewer believes his author to have written; (2) this reviewer believes that Bartley has produced a new type of philosophical writing; (3) but it is not a new type of writing; (4) ergo, the

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analogy. To make the comparison is to be inspired by, and to pass on, the spirit of Bartley's book.

*The Bertrand Russell Editorial Project*  
*McMaster University*

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