To Lenni Groener,

Lenni,

Steve Bloom asked me to clarify the following.

When I objected to what I considered and still consider antisemitic innuendo, slant, implications, whatever might be the correct English formula, in the Lenni Groener / Steve Bloom article, I did not mean that you are an antisemite, or that your merits as a sociologist specialized in the study of the evolution of the Jewish community in the U.S. should in any way be questioned.

This distinction avoids a heretical question.

I believe ideas as expressed by a person, every single one of his writings should be taken seriously and considered on their own merit, without being dealt with only in the light of a writer's personality, his overall thinking, etc. They should therefore be open to criticism.
in function of their direct content, and nothing else. Otherwise, what would be the meaning of having them written in the first place?

Any other way of reading leaves one only with a choice between two evils, which make free debate difficult if not impossible. Either one transforms critique of every single text automatically into an attack on a person's qualities or integrity which then poisons the atmosphere and makes a later transcendence of the difference impossible. Or one abandons from criticizing what one considers wrong formulations, for fear of questioning the author's overall merits, and then freedom of criticism and of thought is limited in an irreducible way.

I reject both attitudes as detrimental
to constructive scientific and political debate, indispensable to progress. I therefore think my comments on the Observer-Observer article were entirely legitimate in function of what you actually write and nothing else.

Of course, when criticism of a person's work text extends to criticism of aspects of the text, it could become appropriate. The overall evaluation and meaning of the ideas.

But such a criticism does not follow automatically from the mistake. A scientist can be correct.

Conceivably,

Ernest Shackleton