

## A few thoughts stimulated by a French philosopher called Bernard-Henri Lévy

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July 13, 2016



*'Europe might be dying': Bernard-Henri Lévy – BBC Newsnight*  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M48\\_xWT-CM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M48_xWT-CM)

Bernard-Henri Lévy has been a colorful but well-respected philosopher through his career, at least in some quarters where his New Philosophy and critiques of the communist world and any form of totalitarianism have been appreciated by quite a few. He came on CNN tonight, Wed 13th July, as Cameron left and May took over the black brick house on Downing Street and he reiterated what he had said on BBC suggesting Britain had always been a good contributor and influence to the European world. However, his second line of thinking opened to the idea that Brexit may strike a heavy blow to Europe. Indeed Europe might now be sliding into a process of collapse.

Brexit, of course, is slated as a British enterprise but this is not correct. It is an English venture and having said that it has been a political adventure charged with bias and incorrect information. It has not even been an English venture per se, rather a 53 something % venture. Two proponents of Brexit, Boris Johnson, and Nigel Farage, both of whom promoted Brexit, were not known for seriousness, and predictably jumped ship immediately after it was all signed and sealed. Farage came over in an extremely unpleasant moment personally insulting the EU where he harangued the house then told them none had done a proper job in their lives. Nigel it seems gave way to his shadow, expressing not much more than personal resentment; not a bridge builder at all.

Who or what exactly is Britain and who are the English? This is best answered as a question of who holds the reins of power rather than looking to an entire haplogroup for accountability. Bernard-Henri Lévy did not deal with the question of identity but suggested the British, whoever they might be, have offered us much to delight in. Europe has benefited from their influence. Personally, I can think of John Locke for one, who brought us nature and people synthesized as democracy; a divine principle and the social contract if we read him properly. It's a powerful combination of transcendent and pragmatic functionality, yet has this high idealism been put into practice on the ground?

Through history, we find Henry VIII slated as both a king of an independent Britain separated from Rome during the Renaissance and as a pathological figure who was over-sexed and sank into madness in advancing years. Elizabeth I, at the high point of British history, was full of remarkable innovations and awesome failures. Mary Queen of Scots, a half-sister by all accounts, was put to death and unfortunate marriages, affairs, and numerous illegitimate children followed Elizabeth down through life. Moving into our times Margaret Thatcher, hero worshiped for her stance against the threats of the communist world, actually tore the fabric of Britain apart in the process. Her poll taxes wrecked the Scottish social system entirely and destroyed whole towns in Wales some of which never recovered. Not content with that she sat in secret to levy more tax against Scotland whilst money, power and all that comes with that was firmly centralized in her old stomping ground, London, and the close-in south.

I mention Thatcher because it was under her reign of less than benevolent schemes that the SNP rose as a powerful institution in my home of Aberdeenshire. One would suppose that the resentments of Culloden and the Highland Clearances, which are written up as genocide, were in fact largely over; but here it was

again. So a groundswell of rebellion rose whilst under central rule from a wayward, corrupt, parliament cloistered in the deep south, which left the people of the North never finding any sense of fair play. With that and the imbalance of votes which Brexit revealed numerically, the independence movement was underway.

An independent Scotland is still on the cards which leads us back to the question of what exactly Britain is, or will become. Great Britain is currently an island that consists of three somewhat autonomous regions that include England, Scotland, and Wales, whereas The United Kingdom includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland; but the United Kingdom was never authentically united. As Culloden and the Clearances showed, the kingdom was forged by violence, not good will. I think the Irish might say much the same.

In parallel to this the cry for unity rather than Brexit shows up in any group whose call to unite is an aphorism set in stone, yet without much substance. It never works for two reasons. The first is where we ask, "Unity with what?" This means, do we have something noble and authentic to hook our star to or not? The second is the question, "Who are we asking to unite?" Are such people fully individuated, mature individuals who make conscious choices out of their fullness and free will, or are there those who are something else? Something else tends to follow obediently a bit like sheep but they are layered with resistances, resentment and a lot of other issues, buried in the depths of their psyche. Groups like these reveal not much more to see than inauthenticity.

What's the point of going on about all this? Well, Brexit may just end the falsely named the United Kingdom once and for all. We shall see how that progresses but it is already in the wind. One Scottish referendum has come and gone and another may well be in the wind. Punters suggest that Britain might have done well staying with Europe and helping; nurturing the grand enterprise that the term EU represents. However, nurture is not one of England's fortes as we see with Ireland, Scotland and quite a few of the colonies, such as India. We might even throw in America under that rubric.

We never say die but Lévy and his thoughts are not entirely without substance. What Brexit might represent is the end of Britain as we know it and the collapse of the EU, the big dream of unity after a century of horrific slaughter on her lands vanishing as a chimera might; an attempt at gaining a settled peace and a possible shot at co-prosperity lost after a century of World Wars to pomp and circumstance. Parliament in London has revealed her agendas, her untoward lobbying, her corruptions, offshore adventures, and her Paedophile ring rooted in the House of Lords. She may have been something quite different but recent revelations tell us it is not so. If the slide is on, the Scots will have another referendum and most likely will leave the union. The sun will set over the Union Jack. Others will start to disembark in Europe.

Already there is talk of the Dutch and Nexit for example. Nations thrown back into their national identity might prosper and might just become narrow nationalists without much say in an international terrain. What a European breakdown might look like is also weakness set against Russia's strengths and small limited economic regions ever shrinking, which will leave Europe as a third world collective or less.

It currently seems unlikely that the grand dream rising from the 'Greek Europa' will ever see the light of day unless we see some fancy footwork. Europa was a Phoenician Princess in days gone by but she had an affair which clouded her good fortune. She lay mythologically at the roots of European culture and gave her name to the dream of the EU but myth is what might remain. Realistically it was a cloudy dream back then with foibles built in, yet in a year or two, or less from now, we will probably say it remained that way as far as Europe is concerned; a cloudy myth, a tarnished dream.

What remains of the day? There is already a global realignment going on. Geopolitics are not what they used to be. If Europe and Britain go the way of empires as people like Eric Voegelin, the historian, says, then we can see a third world status emerging in parts of the West. But people are resilient and independence tends to force the issue. What issue? The question of individuation comes to mind – growing up. Then there's no knowing what a mature and creative self might get up to. So what is Brexit? Nobody knows really and these are just a few thoughts stimulated by a French philosopher called Bernard-Henri Lévy.