



DIXI

- Bernard-Henri Lévy . . . 1, 4-5

Matter of the fact

- Dmitry Butrin 2

What is the question

- Andrey Fursov 3
- Peter W. Schulze 3

Problematic field

- Mikhail Fedotov 6-7
- Ella Pamfilova 7
- Steven Marks 8
- Fedor Girenok 9
- Markku Kivinen 9

Political health care

- Alexander Pavlov 10
- Sergey Mitrofanov 11
- Michael Parenti 12
- Vladislav Inozemtsev 13

Position

- Thomas Szasz 14-16

Special opinion

- Paul Hollander 17

Academia

- Talal Asad 18-19

Returning Back

- Dipesh Chakrabarty 20

Editor in Chief
Gleb Pavlovsky

Editorial Director
Alexander Pavlov

Editorial Office:
M. Gnezdnikovskiy per., 9/8, str. 3a
Moscow, 125009
Phone: (495) 629-8993
Fax: (495) 629-5297
e-mail: info@russ.ru

Bernard-Henri Lévy:

THE TOTALITARIAN DESIRE “TO PROVIDE TREATMENT”

RJ International organisations that publish ratings on state corruption or the infringement of the freedom of speech can conventionally be called “social diagnosticians”, basically detecting the illnesses of this or that country. The criterion of “health” in this case is based on the observance of human rights and/or the level of corruption. Besides the “social diagnostic” function, a number of international organisations play the role of a “social doctor”, prescribing medicine to improve a country’s health, even if the patient does not give his consent to do so. How much does the performance of this function accord with the norms of international law and can it be recognised as legitimate?



Bernard-Henri Lévy is a French philosopher, political journalist, and writer

I do not like this illness metaphor. I hate to hear when they speak about diseases, treatment and getting well with regard to a society. What is more, I suppose that this kind of mentality is the beginning of totalitarianism. What does it actually mean to be totalitarian? It means to think that a society is ill, that one should find the sickness, the virus, or the microbe and that, once it is found, the necessary treatment should be administered. **The original source of totalitarianism is the desire to provide treatment**, demonstrating in itself the

should be more careful with this kind of approach and try not to use this kind of terminology.

RJ One of the most dreadful diagnoses is when a country is ranked among “non-democratic states” or “states that violate human rights”. The means of humanitarian intervention is often used as a treatment for such an illness. But this mode of treatment is often lethal for the democratic

A totalitarian politician is someone who sees himself/herself as a diagnostician and someone who thinks that politics is just a part of his/her clinical practice

desire to retain immaculacy. A totalitarian politician is someone who sees himself/herself as a diagnostician; someone one who thinks that politics is just a part of such clinical practice. Thus, one

development of the state where it was applied. How can one draw a border beyond which the use of such “medicine” would become lethal?

To be continued p. 4–5

THE TOTALITARIAN DESIRE “TO PROVIDE TREATMENT”

Bernard-Henri Lévy

DIXI

Continuing. For beginning see p. 1

There are several questions in your question. I support the idea of the right for humanitarian intervention, that my colleague Bernard Kouchner stands for. As for human rights and the criterion of their observance for modern communities' analysis, I support that too. We can hardly ask other societies for anything other than to observe these basic rights. If this is not done, we will have to renounce the idea of a better world where human kind will become really humane. Of course, there were cases in history when the introduction of the human rights concept to non-Western societies did not provide the fruit that was originally intended. The most striking example of the latter tendency is the situation in Iraq. It should be taken into account that the right for humanitarian intervention is not a universal category. This right should not be used by default, without first thinking of the consequences of its usage, also it should not be applied for ill-minded reasons.

Besides, it is obvious that, in order to achieve the objectives of the humanitarian intervention operations, this requires special conditions that were not provided in the case of Iraq. This is the reason for this disaster. For instance, the allies should have been found among the locals and the corruption should have been reduced to a minimum if not entirely rooted out. A political plan should have been worked out beforehand in order to define the steps required to pacify the socie-



ty in Iraq after the end of military intervention. Finally, it was necessary to first clearly understand the civilisations constituting Iraq and not simply learn about them during the intervention. All of the difficulties that the Americans faced in Iraq could have been foreseen. That is why **I was against the absurd and harmful intervention in Iraq from the very first day, if not earlier.** This disaster, initiated by American neo-conservatives, compromised the right to engage in a humanitarian intervention, which I support openly.

Democracy is a good solution for any country of the world. Yes, it creates disproportion. But it certainly has fewer disproportions and failures than a despotic tyranny

RJ Liberal democracy has begun to be treated as an ideal model of a political system for society only within the last few decades. Many non-Western researchers such as Samir Amin describe the expansion of this form of political system in the world as pandemic. Do you think it is possible to call liberal

democracy a disease of modern society, the symptoms of which come in the form of the social problems that are swamping democratic countries, or is it a panacea that will cure the social problems of the present day in due course?

I repeat that I reject the use of medical terms to describe processes that are going in a society. I also do not want to speak of “social diseases” or “symptoms” or “panacea”. If you ask me if democracy is a good or bad solution for the countries which have already abandoned it or have never known it, then yes, surely I will say that it is a good solution. **Democracy is a good solution for any country of the world.** Yes, it creates disproportion. Yes, it has its disadvantages and a democratic system is apt to failures in some cases. But it certainly has fewer disproportions and failures than a despotic tyranny.

Let us look at Russia for instance. Your country and your people have experienced the darkness of totalitarianism. You

managed to escape it thanks to a long endless and heroic counter-stance; you have managed to overcome sixty years of Stalin and post-Stalin terror. Today, the market economy is rapidly growing in Russia, even though it is not crowned with a necessarily democratic superstructure. Certainly the population of

Russia would live more safely and enjoy a better welfare if the country were moving towards a more democratic situation.

In addition, I think that dictatorship is a costly affair, in the literal sense of the word. A repressive machine, the police, tracking systems, the oppression of economic initiative and social groups – indeed all of this costs a lot. Thus, even in the case that liberal democracy is not a perfect political system, it still is the least expensive political system when it comes to its maintenance. And this statement is universal – I think it is fair at any latitude. Therefore, it is nonsense to say that there are cultures that are incompatible with such a system...

RJ *Do you think Russia can succeed in terms of the development of democratic institutions?*

In my opinion, Russia is a part of the Western world. Of course there are different answers to this question. We have the answers given by Gogol and Turgenev, and we have the answer by Dostoevsky. I personally can agree with the former authors. I assume that Russia is going to be a great power only in the case that it follows the path towards democratic development. A great Russia is a country that will maintain the best democratic tra-

ditions, which will become its traditions as well. I see no other path of development for your country. I am convinced that democracy can work in any country in the world. I am absolutely sure that democracy can be exported. Of course, nobody and nothing is preventing it from being adapted according to the local culture. To deny the fact that democracy can work in any country essentially boils down to racism.

RJ *The Islamic UMMA, as well as Western rating agencies, offer their own method of “treatment” for so-called social “illnesses”. Will it – or any other organised forces of non-Western origin – be able to accept responsibility for such treatment, as has been done by such organisations as “Amnesty International”, “Transparency International”, etc.?*

Yes, sure it is most welcome. I keep repeating that **the only war of civilisations that exists is the one happening inside Islam between the democratic branch thereof and the fanatical one**. So anything that can strengthen the democratic type of Islam is good. If organisations like “Amnesty International”, without any double standards as such a prototype tends to have, happens to emerge within Muslim civilisation, I will certainly support it.

RJ *Do you think it is possible to estimate how close this or that country is to achieving democracy and why ratings of democratic development are so popular in the modern world?*

When it comes to political and moral issues, I do not actually trust ratings. I trust statistical figures and the thing that experts in the field of psychoanalysis call “assessments” even less. **Democracy is about spirit, not about figures**. It is a matter of quality, not quantity. If you insist on the contrary, if you treat quality as if it were quantity, if you try to interpret in figures the things that are antagonistic to figures by their very nature, then people are simply transformed into empty numbers for you. Even if these happen to be large numbers, it is here where the end of democracy starts. So just forget about ratings. Let the ratings be made for those companies that follow their own price quotations of NASDAQ or the Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange. The issues of justice and ethics are not among the questions that should be solved by making cold-blooded calculations. ■

Bernard-Henri Lévy was speaking with Julia Netesova

Bernard-Henri Lévy was one of the leaders of the French “new philosophy” movement of the 1970s, a group that also includes André Glucksmann and Alain Finkielkraut. He is a graduate of the École Normale Supérieure (France). He has authored more than twenty books focusing on acute matters of both French and global politics. Lévy is critical of the Russian Federation’s policy. He actively supported the Afghan mujahidins during the Afghan war. After the war in Bosnia broke out, he provided assistance to the Bosnian

Muslims. And in 2008 during the operation involved in Georgia’s pacification, he spoke in support of Mikhail Saakashvili. Among his books are such works as *Idéologie française* (French Ideology, 1981), *Eloge des intellectuels* (A praise for the Intellectuals, 1987), *Les aventures de la liberté* (The adventures of Freedom, 1991), *Bosna!* (Bosnia, 1994), *Qui a tué Daniel Pearl?* (Who killed Daniel Pearl? 2003), and *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville* (2006).