To what extent are European values universal?

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Introduction

In recent years, the political values that form the basis of the European Union have been called into question[1]. Within the EU, authoritarian and neo-nationalist far-right populist movements that are hostile to political liberalism are challenging these values[2]. In a more recent trend, "European values" are also questioned to the left of the political spectrum amid post-colonial criticism of the Enlightenment which is purportedly the mask of Western cultural imperialism. Alongside this criticism, the universality of values resulting from the Enlightenment is challenged as a rejection of the Western and more specifically European pretention of claiming to be the origin of "democratic values" and asserting the "universal" nature of individual rights that follow on from this European intellectual and political movement. "European values" are criticised as imperialistic and were used as a universal "mask" designed to disguise plans for domination. Outside the EU, these values are also disputed against the backdrop of a rise in authoritarian, dictatorial and totalitarian regimes, particularly in China and Russia, which aim to reshape the world order by claiming that the values that underpin it are Western and not universal[3].

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1   This paper stems from an invitation at an event organised by le Grand Continent at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, to discuss the following question: "Do European values have a universal dimension?". I would like to warmly thank Jean-François Jamet, Jean-Baptiste Roche and Céline Spector for their ever-invaluable comments regarding the first draft of this paper.
2   See for example Geiselberger H. (ed.) (2017): *The Great Regression*, Wiley.
3   See for example Cheng A. (2020), "La prétention chinoise à l'universalité", *Esprit*, issue 461, January-February 2020.

This very topical debate raises several questions. We must first define which "European values" are being considered and clarify what is meant by "universal". Does this mean that *European* values can be transposed everywhere as they are? Does it mean that these values originate from outside Europe? Considering the universal dimension of European values in these terms may lead to two very different questions that call for conflicting answers that are relatively simple to conclude. It is interesting to note that the topic of the universal dimension of values is sometimes conflated with the question of European identity. This association of ideas illustrates the intrinsic disquiet surrounding this issue. Debate on these issues has the disadvantage of structuring the discussion in highly polarized terms, that Myriam Revault d'Allonnes recently summed up in a very clear fashion: "Does the universal dimension of European values fall within an abstract universality, in principle, that some call "overhanging" because, starting with specific and assigned origins (a particular identity), it claims to standardise and align with its own model all that is different to it? This is the criticism consistently made of this type of universality by those who rightly see it as a disguised expression of economic, colonial and cultural hegemony. This 'universality' is actually the simple unilateral transplant of a singular form dominated by Western modernity. Yet this is precisely what is asserted in the call for a monolithic European identity, fuelled by Christian values and in search of an over-arching narrative". In this respect, the difficulty we face today is to find a way forward that "leaves behind this binary approach where there is competition between a self-proclaimed overhanging universality and the criticism of a universality that is still limited to domination narratives"[4].

Entirely in line with this inquiry, the sole purpose of the following arguments is to attempt to contribute to this thorny debate. To achieve this, this paper will clarify what is understood by "European values" (1.), consider the question of their universality while attempting to avoid the pitfalls of the "civilisation" narrative (2.) and justify the need to acknowledge and assert the "heritage of the European Enlightenment", a "local and plural heritage" (3.).

I . What are "European values"?

The debate on the rule of law, liberal democracy and more broadly "European values" is often marred by the confusion between two legal and political aspects on the one hand, and a societal dimension on the other. This confusion causes adverse effects and impedes the clarity of debates on this topic. As Jacques Delors had commented: "The fight [for values] is not very clear as it sometimes gets dressed up as a conflict between modernists and those who look back towards the past"[5]. The terms of this debate must be clarified and a distinction made between two or three different dimensions of these values that are sometimes inappropriately conflated with the fight to defend the values of the rule of law and liberal democracy[6]:

- The rule of law in the strictest sense of the term[7]: legality, prohibition of arbitrary conduct by executive powers, independent and impartial jurisdictions, effective judicial protection, including for the respect of fundamental rights, equality

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4   Revault d'Allonnes M. (2022), "Les valeurs européennes sont-elles universalisables ?", *Le Grand Continent*, 11 November 2022.
5   Jacques Delors, "Dissertation sur les valeurs", four-yearly international Congress of Benedictine Abbots, San Anselmo, Rome, 8 September 2000, in Relire Delors. *Discours de Jacques Delors depuis 1996*, Jacques Delors Institute, 2021, p. 102.
6   Chopin T., Macek L. (2022), "European values. A debate to be clarified, a struggle to be fought", Policy Paper No.275, the Jacques Delors Institute, April 2022.
7   See the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, "A New EU Framework to Strengthen the Rule of Law", COM(2014) 158 final, p. 4.

before the law. These elements are non-negotiable and are in particular subject to detailed case law by the Court of Justice of the European Union (meaning that the scope here is legal as well as political).

- The fundamental political values of the European Union as specified in article 2 of the TEU are: "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail". These values are also non-negotiable but much vaguer. They are not subject to independent mobilisation before the courts and are at best an element in light of which other texts can be interpreted.
- This falls within the scope of legitimate political debate in any national society, including that regarding "societal" values. In this respect, the EU leaves Member States some latitude, provided that specific national characteristics are not mobilised to impede a fundamental European acquis; see for example the balance struck by the Court of Justice of the European Union in the *Coman and Hamilton* ruling: Romania is free to not recognise same-sex marriages, but it cannot oppose the free movement acquired by an individual through a same-sex marriage legally performed in another Member State.

In the debate on "European values", these different registers are often confused, as demonstrated in the discussion around the divide between "progressive" and "conservative". Not all countries share the same sensitivities regarding certain issues related to the societal dimension of "value" challenges and on certain major topics (asylum, bioethics, etc.) differences do exist, even within national societies. Furthermore, this divide conflates very different trends (liberals, socialists, etc.) under the "progressive" umbrella and caricatures the opposition as "conservatives" or even "reactionaries".

Here, the "European political values" under consideration are values resulting from political liberalism, as developed throughout the history of Europe and asserted since the Enlightenment. These values are placed as the foundation of the European construction project: fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, equality before the law, the rule of law, representative democracy[8], etc. The historical experience of European peoples following the tragedies of the 20th century has forged a consensus on these values that can be broken down into four main elements:

- Combination of democracy (universal suffrage) and political liberalism (rule of law, respect for fundamental rights, separation of powers),
- Emphasis on solidarity and attempts to achieve social justice, giving the State an important role,
- Spirit of moderation, tolerance, openness and distrust of political passions (particularly with regard to those stirred up in the name of religions and/or nations),
- Relative renunciation of the use of force and a preference for the peaceful settlement of conflicts through negotiation, a vision of international relations that does not view the concept of State sovereignty as absolute.

These political values are embodied in the political European integration project which takes the form of a community of law and political values, not simply an alliance between sovereign States that cannot guarantee that the established peace will be permanent[9]. If this were true, the EU would simply be an intergovernmental entity

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[8] Article 10 of the TEU states that "the functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy".

[9] Chopin T., "L'Union européenne n'est pas une simple alliance entre Etats souverains", *Le Monde*, 19 October 2021.

and would not have gone as far in its integration, not only as to enshrine it in treaties that take precedence over national legislations but also to create supranational institutions with a clear mandate to guarantee effectiveness. The States and citizens of the European Union are bound by historical, political and geopolitical events. This is where the founding "value" of Europe lies: first integration created the conditions for peace and anchored democracy before it built strength through unity. In other words, Europe's founding value lies in the need to remain united, i.e. geopolitically united, and to protect itself from a return to authoritarian or even totalitarian temptation. Europeans feel European because they know that their history, both past and future, is entwined and that they are community of shared destiny[10].

This founding value raises the current question quite well: what place is there for anti-liberalism in Europe that can only be opposed to political liberalism by unequivocally rejecting authoritarianism and totalitarianism? This leaves room for a form of conservative anti-liberalism provided that it does not compromise itself with a nationalist authoritarian project (like in Hungary for example) and for an egalitarian anti-liberalism provided that it does not compromise itself with a Marxist-based authoritarian project within the framework set out by the rule of law. This is a fine balance that is constantly put to the test. The stability of a political and legal order, composed of States that have freely and under sovereignty decided to associate themselves in a wider Union to exclude any risk of conflict between them for the long term, requires a minimum degree of political homogeneity which in turn implies a consensus on these shared political values which cannot tolerate any degree of differentiation[11]. These political values have been enshrined in EU law, ratified by all Member States upon accession, not only in article 2 of the TEU (see above) but also in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, adopted in 2000 and incorporated into the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, which stresses that the EU is not simply a large marketplace but that it also upholds values and guarantees freedoms[12].

II • Are "European values" universal?

After World War II, these political values (broadly speaking democracy and human rights) were conferred the status of universally recognised standards (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Yet are these values specifically "European"? Are they intrinsically linked to European or even Western "civilisation"?

I THE "GLOBAL ROOTS OF DEMOCRACY"

If we adopt a broad view of "democracy"[13] (not limited to the mechanisms of representative and electoral democracy) defined against the broader backdrop of public debate ("government by discussion"), free debate and deliberation[14], the roots of democracy go well beyond the limits of certain narratives that assert the specific

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10   Maillard S. (2022) "Belonging to Europe", Policy Brief, Jacques Delors Institute
11   See on this subject the recent insightful arguments put forward by Olivier Beaud (2022), *Le pacte fédératif. Essai sur la constitution de la Fédération et sur l'Union européenne*, Dalloz – Institut Villey, coll. "Droit politique", p. 542-552.
12   Particularly as litigation invoking the Charter is becoming increasingly common. This strength also leads to another EU's weakness: which distinction should be made between the Council of Europe and the ECHR, institutions with distinct geographical scopes?
13   Sen A. "Democracy and its Global Roots", *The New Republic*, 6th October 2003; "Democracy as a Universal Value", *Journal of Democracy*, July 1999 .
14   See for example Habermas J. (1998), "Le débat interculturel sur les droits de l'homme", in *L'intégration républicaine. Essais de théorie politique*; French translation: Fayard, 1998, p. 245-256; and Rawls J. (1993), *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press

"Europeanness" or Western features of these values[15]. This argument that support for the causes of pluralism, diversity and fundamental freedoms can be found in the history of many societies, is corroborated empirically by the existence of long-standing traditions which encourage and practise public debate on political, social and cultural issues in countries as diverse as India, South Korea, the Arab world[16] and in many parts of Africa. This is demonstrated, for instance, in Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, and his discussion on the importance of the heritage of public discussion in Africa[17]. From this stems the need for a history of ideas on democracy and freedoms that is broader, in addition to the requirement of acknowledging this "global heritage" and the history of ideas in African, Asian and other societies. A greater understanding of the deep roots of democratic thinking on other continents is therefore essential.

It seems unquestionable that the use of deliberations as a decision-making method existed well before modern Europe. If there is a specific European feature, it appears to be more in the relation that Europeans have forged between this decision-making method and individual freedom, a link that is so deeply rooted in Europeans' political identity that we are no longer able to distinguish between the two. In other words, democracy (in particular understood in its broadest sense as a deliberative system with no other precision made) is not particularly European. However, it seems that the issue of its organisation to create an instrument of individual emancipation is more specifically a part of European culture and history (this is a key point in Tocqueville's reasoning for example). Mistakenly perhaps, as it is impossible to claim to have an exhaustive knowledge of the history of ideas in every world region, it seems that the individualistic standpoint that characterises the emergence of European liberalism is a specific feature. Here, the difference concerns the viewpoint rather than the values discussed. The "essential" values, by definition expressed in generic terms, can always be perceived in one way or another at different times and in different places. In this sense, the term "universal" is legitimate. For example: freedom is a universal value insofar as it is possible to find it in many very different civilisations. Yet what is this freedom? The freedom of an individual that is alienated by no collective? The moral freedom to make conscious choices and accept the consequences? The freedom of what goes beyond the physical limits of the world? Etc.

I THE RISK OF THE "CIVILISATION" NARRATIVE

In addition, a second essential aspect of the question of whether these values are inherent to Europe or the West concerns the risk of dividing the world into separate "civilisations" that are closed off from each other,[18] making it very difficult to consider the influences and intellectual links between societies and potentially the risk of conflicts[19]. Marc Crépon put forward an insightful criticism of what he called the "falsehood of the clash of civilisations,"[20] in particular on the basis of two arguments that are worth remembering here.

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15   It should be noted that Sen does not sufficiently distinguish between liberalism and democracy in his analysis. We often move seamlessly between "democracy" and "freedom" as if they were both synonyms. Moreover, in this context, he uses a view of "democracy" that, while being admittedly broader, remains in the register of a system of government. He therefore does not give a substantial dimension to the concept, regardless of the decision arising from free discussion/deliberation, it should be respected whatever its compatibility with pre-ordained values).

16   Cf. Hussein M. (1989) *Le Versant sud de la liberté*, Editions de la Découverte.

17   Mandela, N. (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom*, Little, Brown and Company.

18   Huntington S. (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster.

19   See for example, Gardels N. (2022), "The Clash of Civilizational States. China and the West affim each other's identity", *Noemia*, 19 November 2022.

20   Crépon M. (2002), *L'imposture du choc des civilisations*, Editions Pleins Feux.

First of all, the assertion of a radical difference between "civilisations" based on "value" systems deemed incompatible with each other can only lead to the naturalisation and essentialization of differences and, ultimately, to the risk of conflict. Such an assertion assumes exhaustive knowledge and understanding of the different civilisations in their full complexity, which is not possible[21]. This is why any aspiration towards distinctiveness is only hypothetical. It is in this respect that "we must avoid responding to the 'fight against the West' by reaffirming our specific cultural characteristics, through the narrative of an eternal European essence"[22].

However, this does not mean that European values cannot be identified. We can do this, without purporting exclusivity, while acknowledging the incontestable contributions of some authors and events and the objective differences with the current situation in other world regions. As regards the qualifier "universal", it is more about a compass than a description: European values aim to become part of a broader framework in order to highlight the links with other geographical areas, specifically to underscore similarities and ease conflicts. The claim of universality is a means of legitimising the narrative within Europe (by lending to its values another coloration than purely circumstantial) and of forging ties with other cultures. This ideal is perverted in its external dimension when it is used as a pretext for domination of others and in its internal dimension if it doubles up as a baseless claim of exclusivity to boost a European sense of pride that is unjustified in this instance.

Moreover, a "civilisation" includes a diversity of societies which results in a possible plurality of interpretations for certain values. Religious freedom in Europe is an interesting example on this subject. Beyond the principles of religious freedom and tolerance, the relationships between the Church and the State vary from one EU Member State to another. France is the only EU State to have enshrined secularism into its Constitution. In doing so, it is an original model in Europe, as the other countries do not have such a strict separation of Church and State. Another clear example is that the Greek Orthodox Church enjoys a specific status in Greece's Constitution. Yet, on the whole, European societies stand out today for a high level of secularisation[23] (with special cases such as Poland for example) and therefore are different to the other western centre that is the USA, a secular country (assertion of the separation between the Church and the State) which acknowledges a greater importance of religion in the public arena[24]. We might extend the analysis by highlighting the differences in collective preferences between the Europeans and Americans for example in relation to violence and the use of armed force; moreover, the continuation of the death penalty in certain American States also allows us to make a distinction between the two sides of the Atlantic within the Western world[25]. Likewise, we should not forget the issue of the social model, with European societies having greater trust in collective management via State intervention when compared to the American model, which places more confidence in private, individual mechanisms.

This is the case because we can share common values but interpret them differently depending on our history. This is what saves the claim that European values are universal (which is the specifically European interpretation of values that go beyond the European framework). The question subsequently arising is that of the

21   This objection was put forward by Raymond Aron against Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*, 1918), in *L'Histoire et ses interprétations*, Editions Mouton and Co., 1961, p. 38.
22   This is what Jean-Yves Heurtebise wrote in a recent article with the provocative title "Nous n'avons jamais été Européens. La guerre en Ukraine et le devenir européen", *Esprit*, September 2022.
23   See Roy O. (2019), *Is Europe Christian?*, C Hurst and Co Publishers Ltd.
24   This appears very clearly in symbols and political discourse.
25   See Tertrais B. (2006), "Europe-United States: common values or cultural divorce?", Paper of the Robert Schuman Foundation, issue 36.

degree to which interpretation within Europe is the same to find out if it is an appropriate level to discuss values. If Europe's different societies diverge too much in their interpretation of values, in this case it would be more appropriate to talk about national values. This takes us back to the arguments discussed above regarding the need for a minimum European consensus, not only on values (which is not difficult in practice given their very broad nature; the Council of Europe results from an axiological declaration between the EU, Russia[26] and Turkey…) but also on the interpretation that should be made regarding certain key issues.

III • Asserting the "heritage of the European Enlightenment": a "local and plural heritage"

These values have also been developed throughout Europe's history, particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries. Historically, there is a close link between the progressive definition of individual rights, the resulting political values, and the new political organisation established in modern Europe from the 17th century: the sovereign State (Hobbes). Furthermore, on a philosophical level, this doctrine was formalised by the modern natural law school in Europe in the 17th (Grotius, Locke) and 18th centuries (Rousseau)[27]. Drawing inspiration from or standing in contrast to the Christian heritage[28], the human rights issue hinged on the contribution to the modern European school of thought for the individual in general, free of any specific definition (universal individual)[29]. Much of this way of thinking has to do with the process of emancipation of human reason (Kant). This is indeed why certain recent radical standpoints are completely at odds with the liberal ideal described here: reducing the individuals to the group to which they belong and confining them therein, defending a society which is understood to be a combat between groups, with the State acting as an arbitrator. In this respect, there is no concern for equality before the law, but rather for general and real equality between all these groups. The State no longer emancipates individuals, it corrects imbalances between groups (sometimes even retroactively), even if this means committing individual injustices that are perceived as a necessary evil (the individual level is no longer considered relevant).

It is true that the universality of the values proclaimed can only be considered empirically and historically through the specific status of the citizen with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen which conferred a public and official status to the principles established by the modern natural law theory: this citizen was indeed *French* – statist approach – *American* (Bill of Rights) – liberal approach[30] – and also *Haitian*[31]. However, given the universality of the individual holding these rights, not considering their specific characteristics, should the fact that in the past European powers were able to use the argument of universalism to justify colonial conquests and keep the power balance tipped in their favour, result in the denial and rejection of a European intellectual and political tradition that strongly contributed to forma-

26 Though Russia is no longer part of the Council of Europe today.

27 Cf. Lilti A. and Spector C. (dir.) (2014), *Penser l'Europe au XVIIIe siècle. Commerce, civilisation, empire*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment.

28 Gauchet, M. (1985), *Le désenchantement du monde. Une histoire politique de la religion*, Gallimard.

29 See Lacroix J. and Pranchère J.-Y. (2016), *Le procès des droits de l'homme. Généalogie du scepticisme démocratique*, Le Seuil, coll. "La couleur des idées".

30 Raynaud P. (2009), *Trois révolutions de la liberté. Angleterre, Amérique, France*, Presses Universitaires de France, coll. "Léviathan".

31 Dubois L. (2004), *A Colony of Citizens. Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean*, 1787-1804, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press ; Grovogui S.N. (2011), "To the Orphaned, Dispossessed and Illegitimate Children: Human Rights Beyond Republican and Liberal Traditions", *Indiana Journal of Legal Studies*, 18(1), p. 41-63.

lising, articulating and proclaiming political values in the very name of which many struggles have been and are still being fought for democracy? The latter is clearly demonstrated by the war in Ukraine[32], along with the issue of equal rights as currently illustrated by the revolution in Iran conducted by Iranian women. Universalist aspirations have produced positive results and continue to do so. It is therefore necessary to clarify an ambiguity that is very often at the centre of criticism against universalism and the Enlightenment: "*some of those who fight against racial or sexual discrimination are actually fighting for a furthering of emancipation, following on from the Enlightenment, even if they do not always recognise this. Others, conversely, reject any Western claim to assert the universal character of individual rights from a position of authority*"[33].

Universalism is a regulating objective, not a pretention aimed at enforcing a model. It is clear that "a European historical narrative cannot obscure the trauma and upheavals of Europe, nor its crimes as nothing good can be built on a lie, even a lie of omission", according to Elie Barnavi[34]. However, we must not "de-Europeanise" the universalism of these values[35] which have become globally acknowledged standards, as this would deny the importance of the contribution of Europe's intellectual heritage to the efforts to define, articulate and implement these political values, naturally without disregarding the important influence of ideas and practices from other societies on other continents. In this respect, we must recognise and even assert the "heritage of the European Enlightenment" and of its own sources: notwithstanding the movement of "pluralisation" of the Enlightenment and the challenges to universalist humanism by thirty years of debates on this genre and post-colonial studies[36], as Antoine Lilti wrote: "We do not have to give up the heritage of the Enlightenment. We do, however, have to accept it as a local and plural heritage. Not as a universal rationalist credo that must be defended against enemies, but the maiden intuition of a *society's critical relationship with itself* (this is what we highlight). Asserting the heritage of the Enlightenment must therefore imply considering the outline of "us" which claim this heritage (…). This also involves accepting its polyphony, not silencing dissonance, and paying more attention to ambivalences and contradictions than to dogmatic proclamations"[37].

Conclusion

A value system is necessary for a society to function and to draw a political community or collective together. Conversely, values, be they European or not, can be used, instrumentalized and even imposed and can lead to abuses. In this respect, it is naturally legitimate to be able to voice criticism against European values. The option of being able to criticise values and their validity was at the core of the European Enlightenment in the 18th century. What is problematic is the presumption of invalidating the value of criticism which would result in a challenge to the legitimacy of plurality and the acknowledgement of otherness and respect for those different

32 Read the address given on 10 December 2022 in Oslo by Oleksandra Matviichuk, Chair of the Center for Civil Liberties, a Ukranian NGO, when awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, also awarded to Belarusian activist Ales Bialiatski and Russian NGO Memorial.

33 Lilti A. (2022), "Il faut sortir les Lumières des caricatures", *Le Point*, 1st December 2022.

34 Barnavi E. (2008), "Identité ", *Dictionnaire critique de l'Union européenne*, Armand Colin, p. 228.

35 See for example Diallo R. (2022), "Déseuropéaniser l'universalisme", *Le Grand Continent*, October 2022.

36 Spector C. (2019), "Que reste-t-il de l'universel ? Les droits de l'homme à l'épreuve de la critique post-coloniale", special issue "Controverses sur les Lumières", *Lumières*, issue 32, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2nd semester 2019, p. 45-60.

37 Lilti A. (2019), *L'héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*, Hautes Etudes, EHESS – Gallimard – Le Seuil, p. 30.

to us, which is a pre-requisite of life in society. One of the key takeaways of European history (wars of religion, the arbitrary decisions of an absolute monarchy, etc.) is that the assertion of violence towards individuals and groups is fundamentally dangerous. This very reasoning has become a universal value and the bedrock of freedom and tolerance. The absolute need to protect individuals and groups from a normative power's attempts to impose a model arises from this. This is what distances us from relativism and this space must be safeguarded and protected, even though we must be able to question whether it can be made universal. While this element of universality has been expressed in other contexts than in Europe, it is also a key element in Europe's intellectual history[38], as the Enlightenment thinkers themselves moved against a European system of standards: "European culture is a confrontation between convictions and beliefs resulting from these various sedimented traditions and "criticism" in the strongest sense of the term as asserted by the philosophy of the Enlightenment: "thinking for oneself" to use the Kantian maxim of the autonomy of will. We do not understand why 'criticism' in this sense would bear the stamp of a hegemony or cultural imperialism while it does concern above all our capacity for autonomous thinking and self-reflection"[39].

Ultimately, it would appear that European values are highly influenced by liberal individualism and the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment, even though these are not their only source. The result is that these values are chiefly aimed at emancipating each individual, regardless of their belonging to a group. This objective can be rendered universal as it provides an answer to a question (the interaction between the individual and the group) that is not specific to Europe. However, the answer is a result of Europe's history and specific features. These values therefore form an answer that is specific to Europeans for a question that is not specific to them. This is undoubtedly where the universal dimension of these values lies. The issue is that this makes it more difficult to create a European identity on the basis of these values. The way we interpret them may be a result of our history (and this may differ between Member States depending on the subject), but their objective is not specifically focused on us as Europeans.

The European Union may find an answer in this link between the two components (universality and specific characteristics) to the question of identity in the current globalised world. Pierre Hassner wrote: "The identity of Europe is necessarily of an intermediate nature: it must accept, (…), to be both part of a globalised whole and comprise Nation-States that retain their distinct identities. Europe's specific vocation dictates its identity and vice-versa. This identity involves finding a middle road between the global and the local, between dilution and self-withdrawal, to avoid, as much as possible, a brutal confrontation between world interdependence and blind, xenophobic, sterile isolation"[40].

38 See Jaume L. (2010), *Qu'est-ce que l'esprit européen ?*, Flammarion, coll. "Champs essais".
39 Revault d'Allonnes M. (2022), "Les valeurs européennes sont-elles universalisables ?", *op. cit.*
40 Hassner P. (2012), "The Paradoxes of European Identity", Englesberg seminar, June 2012.