

NATIONAL COMMUNITIES AS THE SPACE OF VALUE PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARTICULARISM AND UNIVERSALISM (THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY)¹

Jarmila Maximová

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Abstract: MAXIMOVÁ, Jarmila. *National Communities as the Space of Value Preservation and Transformation from the Perspective of Particularism and Universalism (The Issue of National and European Identity)*. The aim of the study is to explain the place of communities in contemporary pluralistic democratic societies. The shared values of particular communities by which they are primarily defined, may perceive an integrating process and universalistic requirements of bigger entities as a certain threat. In the study, the author deals with the nation as a community, whereby a national identity is supposed to be understood as one of the key values of the community. From this point of view, the author reflects on the issue of European identity justifying its importance based on the demands of universalism and particularism.

Keywords: *National Communities, Shared Values, National Identity, European Identity, Universalism, Particularism*

Abstrakt: MAXIMOVÁ, Jarmila. *Národné komunity ako priestor uchovávaní a transformácie hodnôt z hľadiska partikularizmu a univerzalizmu (otázka národnej a európskej identity)*. Zámerom štúdie je vysvetliť miesto komunit (spoločenstiev) v súčasných pluralistických demokratických spoločnostiach. Spoločné hodnoty konkrétnych komunit, ktorými sú primárne definované, môžu vnímať integračný proces a univerzalistické nároky väčších entít ako istú hrozbu. V štúdiu sa autorka zaoberá národom ako komunitou, pričom vychádza z predpokladu chápania národnej identity ako jednej z kľúčových hodnôt tejto komunity. Z danej pozície sa následne zamýšľa nad otázkou európskej identity a zdôvodňuje jej opodstatnenosť na pozadí nárokov univerzalizmu a partikularizmu.

Kľúčové slová: *národné komunity, spoločné hodnoty, národná identita, európska identita, univerzalizmus, partikularizmus*

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Introduction

In the system of pluralism, which is a kind of ideal in current democratic societies, individuals belong to certain communities not only as citizens, but also as members of families, churches, professions, and other communities or specialized groups. In this sense, communities work as a kind of refuge protection against impersonal authority and, for many, they mean the possibility of self-realization, recognition and success. On the one hand, communities often present forms into which the traditional values have been transformed and got a new shape. Pluralistic ideal of society strives to strengthen and enhance various kinds of communities, and to enable them to preserve their shared values (traditional and transformed) within pluralistic democratic system unless this is destructive to society and degrades it. I suppose that such a danger (related to extreme positions) is imminent in the countries of Central Europe and it is even greater when religious and ethnic solidarity leads to demands for self-determination in the form of political autonomy or independence.

In this context, my contemplation is focused on the examination of the limits of particularistic demands of communities and the values their members share in the relation to the principle of universalism. I will try to prove that both principles – universalism and particularism – coexist in society, although the traditional society was characterized by a greater degree of particularism, modern liberal society is rather characterized by universalism. One of the most important questions is how to re-conciliate particularistic demands of communities (without any excarnation of their shared values) with the universalistic demands of society such as the adherence of general human rights.

In the second part of the study, I will discuss the specific issue of identity and ethnicity (as primordial values of some communities) from the perspective of universalism and particularism. I suppose that the way people feel their cultural roots and different identities influences their willingness to support even a larger entity or universalistic demands of what communitarians call the “community of communities” (e. g. the state, the EU, etc.) is bigger. This is probably the way how to perceive European identity in the light of universalistic and particularistic demands and, hence to define the policy of the European Union based on the shared values and culture.

What is a community?

Community is the natural form of man’s cohabitation because “man is a community being and his being is communal” (Višňovský 2007, 45), which presupposes the social concept of an individual. Communities direct one’s individual activity and promote one’s identity (Sullivan 1995, 175). Etzioni (1995, 24), one of the current new communitarians, understands them as networks of social relations, which have common meanings and, in particular, “shared values”.

There are various kinds of communities in today’s society based on different set of values. One of those communities which are considered to be “constitutive” (because they answer the question *Who am I?*) is a nation. It is a “community of memory” having its own history in the sense that it constituted the past (Bell 1993, 124). Common history going back several generations is the most important feature of the communities of this type. Nation as a kind of community is a bearer of moral tradition, which gives unity to the life of individuals. Via such a community individuals relate their existence to the existence and message of their ancestors. In the case of national community, language, history and culture form collective consciousness and play much more important role than anywhere else.

Traditional communities of the past were characterized by a high degree of homogeneity, closeness to communication from outside, and they were often repressive to their own members (Gardner 1995, 167). They unconditionally required a high degree of conformity. The present pluralistic society is characterized by the existence of communities of different kinds, extent and level of responsiveness to the needs of their members and to the actual activity in society. So, compared to the past, today's functional communities show several heterogeneous elements. Changes are not only experienced within them, but often they are even looked for. These communities are rather pluralistic and adaptable, they promote individual freedom and responsibility as a part of their members' duty towards the group. Moreover, they are in continual active contact with the outside world and enable reassessing and transformation of the set of shared values. On the other hand, they may also lose the advantage of continuity that traditional communities have.

One of the basic features of today's communities is their integrity, including diversity, which requires tolerance and mutual understanding.² A community that contains diverse elements is capable of adapting not only to a changing world, but also to certain degree of transformation of values within the community. Diversity, however, must not interfere with the integrity of the community, so there must be some institutional arrangements and agreements that reduce polarization (for example, through mutual understanding of groups within the community, through the possibility of coalition formation, by solving conflicts, etc.). This is about the integrity or unity of the community that preserves the integrity of its parts (Selznick 2002). But the most important feature of today's communities is "the rational basis of shared values" (Gardner 1995, 170), that should be anchored not only formally, in terms of law and rules, but also in customs and traditions, and they should represent a common vision within the community.

However, healthy responsive community is capable of constant self-determination, the formulation of its own morals, and the validation of its values and ideals. Within this order, communication has to function effectively not only inside the community but also outwards, to other communities and to society. Although the current society is plural, each community must, in addition to its own particular values, respect and actively promote universal values such as the human rights, the ideals of freedom, justice, equality and human dignity.

Changing or some form of transformation in the institution or tradition can also distort the setting within the community and lead to the destruction of this institution or tradition. For example, if society legitimizes more individual rights or requires more social responsibility, the balance in the community is disturbed. Society, in which no balanced forces are activated, loses its scheme. Conflicts, revolutions, or the accumulation of minor changes can appear and these can lead to a completely new pattern of organization and order. In this context, it is necessary to deal with the question of how the universality of norms and more than merely local solidarity with fellow humans is possible in a radically pluralistic world.

Ethical universalism and particularism in pluralistic society

Pluralism and pluralistic society appreciate institutions that are close to people, accessible and responsive to their needs. The pluralist system includes people to a larger community, such as the nation, not only as citizens or individuals, but also as members of various communities, such as families, churches, representatives of professions and other specialized groups. These communities

² For the possibilities of intercultural dialogue see also the study of Jozef Palitefka (2010, 187 – 195) *Možné limity interkultúrneho dialógu*.

“hold a guard” between the government and individuals and are often the shelter of protection against impersonal authority. For many, as already mentioned above, they also offer opportunities for recognition and success.

The pluralistic ideal seeks to strengthen, not to weaken the community, but if it is shifted to the extreme, then it is destructive for society and can disrupt it. Such a danger is the biggest when religious and ethnic solidarity leads to demands for self-determination in the form of political autonomy or independence. The question arises whether, in such a case, to focus on internal affiliation or on external unity and community. In this context, Selznick (2002, 45) speaks of the choice between “universal” and “particular” conviction. He defines universalism and particularism as two basic forms of altruism, which coexist in society (Selznick, 1995, 110). And, while the traditional society was characterized by a higher degree of particularism, the current liberal democratic societies are characterized rather by universalism.

Universalism is considered “inclusive altruism” (Selznick 1995, 111). Within universalism people are classified in the context of general policy and objectives according to objective criteria such as age, need, talent or success, without considering the special claims of a relative or group membership. When defining an object of moral interest, the special, specific interests of individuals or groups are disregarded. An objective view is considered to be the most important virtue. So universalism is based on the morality of fairness, the simple logic of the rule of law. General principle of human rights (i. e. all persons have equal rights to freedom and to well-being) is then obviously an ethical universalistic principle (Gewirth 1988, 291) because human rights are of fundamental importance for morality. Their purpose is basically to protect equally the general abilities of agency on the part of all persons because their objects, what they are rights to, are necessary conditions or goods of action and successful action in general. Moreover, the universal human rights involve that all persons have equal dignity in that they have equal claims or entitlements to these goods as their personal due.

Particularism, on the other hand, is a “closed altruism”, that is, the ethics of commitment to individuals who depend on each other for the special connection between them, not for their general characteristics, such as people, children, voters or consumers. The “other” is someone for whom self-esteem is relevant because he belongs to one’s own community (Selznick 1995, 111). For instance, religion is particular if it requires the maintenance of the characteristic identity of the sacred community or of the chosen people. The ethical particularism is hence confined to preferences for or partiality toward various groups and communities, ranging from one’s family and personal friends to larger pluralities of one’s community, one’s nation, etc. Obviously, these groups and communities may vary in their members, size, values, preferential differentiation and their moral status in society (Gewirth 1988, 286). One of the positive features of particularism (from communitarian point of view) is that it is actually based on the experience of continuity, through which we realize that we are “anchored”, that is, interconnected with the lives of the others. On the one hand, strong and stable ties to the family and other communities help most people in their moral and psychological development. But, on the other hand, particularism also has a significant negative aspect. It often supports arrogance, bigotry, exclusion, and many other negative phenomena. The question which appears here is if the failure of particularism in this respect can be remedied by the promotion of certain universal norms, especially tolerance, equality, rule of law and human rights, etc. without ignoring or simply rejecting natural human bonds to family, locality, religion, language or tradition.

In other words, is it possible to recognize and protect the benefits of particularism without doing so at the expense of universalistic ideas? Can we reconcile the demands of particularism and universalism in contemporary society at all? And, if so, can these efforts of reconciliation affect the value system of society or transform it?

Contradiction or reconciliation?

I suppose that by adhering to certain general rules, certain universalistic ideas such as the universal human rights, the reconciliation of universalistic and particularistic claims to the functioning of communities in today's society seems real. The basic prerequisite is to avoid extreme positions in society that can shatter society.³

Particularistic relationships and links are often compatible with more comprehensible visions because group attachments and existence of responsible communities in society can be justified on the basis of ethical universalism discussed above. Particularism in society is also confined on the ground of morality. Social dimension of morality restricts ethical particularism to groups and communities. The conflict between ethical universalism and particularism can thus be viewed as a conflict within morality itself: "Among the various moral possibilities of different ethical particularisms, which, if any, are morally right or justified, and can this moral rightness be established on the basis of ethical universalism?" (Gewirth 1988, 286).

As Gewirth (1988, 285) further argues, ethical universalism and particularism are definitely related that the former can and does justify the latter, which restores important coherence to the moral domain. Particularistic ideals and relations are rational and moral and do not violate morality. By this rationale, ethical particularism is given a kind of justificatory grounding that is both deeper and more firmly based than the intuitions and appeals to convention or feeling which have hitherto been its main forms of support, and, moreover, this rationale can also serve to establish which particularisms are morally justified and which not.

There are many examples of the justification of particularistic demands in the philosophy of contemporary social and political philosophers. One of them is the position of John Rawls (1971), whose difference principle justifies the unequal distribution of economic goods insofar as this is to everyone's advantage. Another is the claim of Ronald Dworkin (1978; 2011) who suggests that equality of concern and respect may justify certain inequalities in goods, opportunities, and liberties. In both cases, particularistic preferences or certain inequalities are justified not because they are good or right in themselves, but only as means to the universalistic end of advancing some kind of overall equality⁴ taken as a fundamental value. However, these arguments and justifications of particularism are rather consequentialist and they do not satisfy the contentions of particularists who hold that certain kinds of preferential status are desirable in themselves, not merely as means to universalistic ends.

Another justification of particularism is presented by Alan Gewirth. It is based on the principle of human rights⁵ and, Gewirth (1988, 289) believes, that "intrinsic justifications of certain kinds of ethical particularism" can be provided. Considering the question of how can a principle which says that all persons have equal rights justify treating some persons preferentially and hence unequally, Gewirth thinks that the answer can lie in the fact that rights do not exhaust the justified treatment of persons, so that persons may be treated unequally in those areas of conduct which lie beyond

³ Dangerous can be extreme positions such as radical multiculturalism, which in a sense is a universalistic requirement because it requires the recognition of all groups or communities, or cultural imperialism that is hostile to local sources of identity and authenticity.

⁴ Equality is something that really exists and that makes universal values to exist, to the extent that it is enacted. Rancière (1992, 60) in this context points out: "Equality is not a value to which one appeals; it is a universal that must be supposed, verified, and demonstrated in each case. Universality is not the *eidos* of the community to which particular situations are opposed; it is, first of all, a logical operator."

⁵ He calls it "the Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC)" because the argument that justifies it combines the material consideration of the generic features or goods of action with the formal consideration of the avoidance of self-contradiction on the part of every agent (Gewirth 1988, 291).

rights, such as where supererogatory conduct is or may be appropriate. The principle of human rights then justifies or grounds not only individual duty-fulfilling actions but also certain kinds of social rules and institutions, which has direct and indirect application.

Firstly, the requirements of fulfilling the duties that are correlative to the human rights are imposed directly on the actions of individual persons. One of the example of this direct implication is duty to refrain from killing or stealing because these duties are direct correlatives of the rights to life and to property (Gewirth 1988, 290). Secondly, these requirements are imposed on the other on the rules of social institutions, and then, in turn, on the actions of individual persons. So the indirect implication relates to the social rules and institutions that are morally justified only if they express or protect persons' equal freedom and well-being. Various kinds of (ethical) particularism may be justified through such indirect implications of the (ethical) universalist principle because the principle of equal rights to freedom and well-being authorizes certain social groupings and institutions wherein persons make differential use of their equal freedom and are subjected to differential treatment because of the ways their actions affect other persons' equal rights to basic well-being.

The principle of human rights as the universalistic principle also justifies communitarian priorities, such as the particularistic priorities for one's country, ethnicity, identity etc. Since ethical universalism, as the principle that all humans have certain equal rights, is independently justifiable, it has a rational warrant quite apart from ethical particularism, and it can serve to justify and protect the latter even if, in some cases, it may be psychologically generated by certain kinds of particularism (Gewirth 1988, 298).

In this context, regarding that particularistic relationships and links are often compatible with more comprehensible and universalistic visions, I will analyse the case of identity and ethnicity in the European political and cultural space. I suppose that if people feel that their cultural roots and different identities are supported, they are more willing to support even a larger entity within the meaning of the "community of communities" such as the European Union without feeling the danger of excarnation.

The case of identity and ethnicity

Identity is one of the most interesting issues within the discussion about universalistic and particularistic demands considering communities and pluralistic society. Selznick (2002, 31) defines identity as an aspect of personality that is formed by the experience of the environment in which we grow up (family, religious community or social class) or experience of life choice (marriage, occupation or interests). Hence most people have a multiple identity – e.g. a woman like a wife, mother, teacher, Catholic, etc. Identities do not necessarily need to persist, and only a few are truly important and significant, so it is necessary to distinguish between identity anchored and expanded.

Personal responsibility which accompanies identity, applies to family, national, local, religious, racial, and ethnic bonds and stems from them. Such identity is based on feelings of rooting and authenticity. Anchored identity stems from the deep human need of giving and receiving care, protection, and recognition. It clearly tells us who we are and with whom our lives are connected. This kind of identity generally remains and the duties it creates are less vague, more open and more demanding. The good of the other becomes the condition of self-satisfaction and perception of oneself. Extended identity is more extensive and erases the boundary between personal and social responsibility (for example, creating European identity as a primary accountability strategy). Liberal society members who have gained their moral identity through smaller groups

or communities tend to be loyal to them, and feel first and foremost members of such a group or community, and only then, members of the state or other, greater community. In other words, their commitment to the state as such and their identity as active, autonomous members of liberal democracy are secondary.

In Europe, ethnicity is a part of its non-political as well as political reality because the foundations of most European states are built on an ethnic principle. It is part of a multilevel range of collective identities of man and participates in shaping his value hierarchy, political consciousness, social feeling, emotional and existential expressions. These may be either primordial or constructivist. The main difference between these positions stems in the perception of one's own ethnicity as a source of identity and life values. A constructivist perceives ethnicity as one of many identities in his civic profiling, and in his attitudes and views on ethnicity, the orientation towards flexible multi-ethnic communication projects prevails. His ties to society are marked by conscious loyalty, hence they are formed by choice. For example, regarding nationality, the constructivist admits that a person can become a member of any nationality because national identity is placed in the citizenship category. The primordial understanding of ethnicity, on the other hand, responds to the specific need for ethnic anchoring of man. In this aspect, ethnicity is universally, eternally, undeniably and politically or economically "unsolvable". Within the framework of primordialism, an individual is defined as an organic component of an ethno-cultural entity. The national identity of man is, therefore, strongly associated with certain primordial variables: the common features of biological (race, tribe, ancestors), territorial (landscape) and cultural (language, religion, values, etc.) nature, which are activated especially when closed ethnic community is in some kind of danger. The primordialist creates his attitude primarily through socialization, and cultivates it mostly through the emotional aspects of his mind. In comparison with the constructivist, the primordialist has difficulties to get socialized in a different culture, and his cultural ties to his own ethnic community are dominant. In his identification strategy, the primordialist separates national identity from civic identity.⁶

In this context, I agree with David Miller (1999, 111), who suggests understanding of ethnicity as "chosen identity", i. e. as a concept which represents the opposite pole of the ethnic spectrum of a closed and stable ethnic community, and, moreover, it is a pole towards which group identities in contemporary liberal societies are slowly moving. One of the convincing arguments for such an attitude to ethnicity and identity is that there is a high degree of social mobility and cultural mixing in contemporary societies, which means that for increasing number of people, their self-ascribed ethnicity depends on choosing which of several possible lines of descent to highlight. It is important to emphasize that person's ethnicity is not less important to them, but as physically identifiable communities (local communities) become weaker, it may be more important to find a symbolic community with which to identify. Communitarians would call it "community of memory" (Bell 1993, 109). So ethnic identities should not be regarded as fixed and primordial, but as fluid and open just because the states today are composed of a plurality of nations or cultural groups and communities.

National identity based mostly (but not necessarily) on ethnic principle in the majority of European countries comes into question when regarding the integrating process within the EU and trying to define the notion of European identity. This is necessary when we want to set the

⁶ For detailed analysis of primordial and constructivist understanding of ethnicity and social formation of ethnicity and nation see, for example the study on *Primordial and Civic Ties* by Clifford Geertz (1995, 29 – 33) and the study *Národná a občianska identita v procese tvorby integrovanej Európy* by Marcela Gbúrová (2002, 23 – 34).

rules of common policy based on a shared public culture which defines the national or supra-national identity alongside a plurality of private cultures.

Delanty's cosmopolitan concept of European identity

Although few people may have a primary identity as “European”, such an identity can become salient in specific contexts. Gerard Delanty (2002, 345 – 359) identifies four existing positions from which European identity can be theorized. These should be examined from the position of satisfactory justifying and reconciliation of both universalistic as well as particularistic requirements.

European identity defined basically in terms of universal human rights and notion of justice is typical for the first conception called moral universalism. It sees Europe as based on moral values associated with the liberal, democratic heritage of moral universalism. This idea is rooted in *A Charter of European Identity*⁷ and, on the one hand, it is popular with the EU representatives because it is relatively flexible and compatible with national identities, but, on the other hand, this model appeals to the values which are rather “western” than European. The problem is that this universalistic conception has little cultural content and no explicit political content because “it is too general and does not take a specific institutional form” (Delanty 2002, 4).

The second position – European post national universalism – expresses European identity in political-juridical norms and institutions but in a way that never reduces them to the concrete institutional level. So, compared to the first concept, this concept of European identity adds a legal dimension to the purely moral one, but it is also culturally neutral because its point is to neutralize culture. Its main concern is law (or a kind of constitution) and it is linked to the civic tradition. Considering its application to the EU, I agree with Delanty (2002, 5) who is doubtful in this aspect because “the constitutional tradition has been based on the nation-state and the EU is neither a state nor a nation, or even a nation-state”.

The above mentioned conceptions are universalistic. Universalism is compromised for particularism in the third model of European identity which is based on the primacy of culture. It is called European cultural particularism (Delanty 2002, 6) and it appeals to Europe as the expression of a spiritual idea that underlying the diversity of Europe is a higher point of unity (philosophical and literary conceptions of Scheler, Heidegger, Husserl, Jaspers, T. S. Eliot etc.). The European identity is defined as shaped by the Greek, Roman, Christian culminating in the Enlightenment, which results in an exclusive Europe, as the western, secular heritage. However, this definition reflects a communitarian conception of identity as it is very close to current communitarian persuasion.⁸

The last model of European identity discussed by Delanty is European pragmatism. It is based rather on the economic and social aspects of life and “avoids the problems of universalism and

⁷ *The Charter* was initiated in March 1994 by Václav Havel in his speech to The European Parliament. It discusses Europe under the headings of its destiny, values, living standards, economic and social policies, and responsibilities. Its aim is to stimulate a wide-ranging debate of these issues in order to achieve a Union which is closer to its citizens. For current policy see also the document published by The European Commission *The Development of European Identity/Identities: Unfinished Business. A Policy Review* (2012).

⁸ For comprehensive analysis of communitarian philosophy and ethics see *Pohľad do filozofie a etiky nového komunitarizmu* by Jarmila Jurová (2013). Contemporary debates in ethics reflecting the discussion between universalism and communitarianism can be also found in *Universalism vs. Communitarianism* by David Rasmussen (1990).

particularism of the other models” (Delanty 2002, 8). The example of such attitude is the common currency of the EU (the Euro), democracy and civil society. From the point of view of cultural integration of Europe, this conception seems very institutional, and, moreover, it pays little attention to cultural aspects.

Each of the models discussed above have their limits considering European identity because they are either too universalistic or too particularistic. Delanty in this context suggests an alternative conception of European identity called European Cosmopolitanism which addresses the cosmopolitan heritage in Europe. It is not based on the shared heritage of Europe but it defines European identity in terms of its conflicts, traumas and fears (religious, national, multicultural etc.).⁹ European identity is hence viewed as “a recognition of difference consisting of the ability to see the other within the self and oneself as other” (Delanty 2002, 12). He emphasizes that Europe needs cultural reference points that are not essentialist ones, thus rather than separate the cultural from the political, to see the political in the cultural should be the aim. It is necessary to see European identity as an expression of the growing reflexivity within European collective identities because national identity is not a primary identity.

In this sense, Delanty’s concept of European identity perceived as not actually existing already but as being a more diffuse and open ended process of cultural and institutional experimentation, is considered very promising as it creates an ethos of cultural pluralisation rather than cohesion which can reconcile the dilemmas of universalism and particularism.

Conclusion

To conclude, the attempt to reconcile universalistic and particularistic demands necessarily requires some degree of acceptance of boundaries and limits from both sides, certain concept of tolerance, and ultimately, greater sensitivity to the confrontation of critical and conventional morals. Being the members of various communities (including national and supra-national), we must be prepared to criticize a particular culture (including our own) from the inside, that is, in the light of its own origins; but also from the outside, that is, in the light of other experiences and overall interests. The idea of community with a shared way of life which serves both as a source of ethical standards and as a framework within which people will want to justify their decisions to one another by reference to criteria of justice cannot be overlooked in the common policy of particular European states as well as the European Union as a whole. The Europeans understand themselves primarily as the members of their nations and states, and then as European citizens, so their national identity is prior to what has been explained as “European identity”. Thus, they are less willing to support the demands of the EU if these do not accord with the interests of their own nation or state. However, this is not only about economic, institutional and political corrections within the EU and Europe, but it is in the first place about the rebirth of a sense of European community and about re-definition of European identity and European culture.

⁹ For detailed discussion of the historical forms in which the relationship between universality and particularity in the context of European identity have been thought, see also the study *Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity* by Ernesto Laclau (1992, 83 – 90).

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SUMMARY: NATIONAL COMMUNITIES AS THE SPACE OF VALUE PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARTICULARISM AND UNIVERSALISM (THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY). The study examines the limits of particularistic demands of communities and the values their members share in the relation to the principle of universalism. Universalism and particularism are perceived as two principles which should coexist in modern democratic pluralistic societies. After defining a community and its main features in communitarian discourse, the author

discusses the question how to re-conciliate particularistic demands of communities with the universalistic demands of society such as the adherence of general human rights. The contemplation follows with the analysis of two selected values of communities – identity and ethnicity - from the perspective of universalism and particularism. The idea is then developed in a larger context, namely in the perception and various concepts of European identity within the EU. The author comes to the conclusion that the way people feel their cultural roots and different identities influences their willingness to support even a larger entity.

Doc. PhDr. Jarmila Maximová, PhD.
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Faculty of Arts
The Department of General and Applied Ethics
Hodžova 1
949 74 Nitra
Slovakia
jmaximova@ukf.sk