

Overview

Reseña

José Enrique Gómez Álvarez*

Savater, Fernando. *Against Separatism (Contra el separatismo)*. Editorial Planeta, México, 2017. 95 pp.

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The aim of the book is to oppose separatist attitudes in general and in particular the case of Catalonia. Savater himself warns «...this is a pamphlet. Not a treaty, nor an academic study, nor a scholarly refutation of other people's views... The question of separatism is not a topic to write a thesis... but a poisoned arrow that has made a target in the very center of our national coexistence» (p.13). However, I decided to review it because, similarly, the book raises issues of arduous discussion in bio politics: one of them is respect for the differences within a National State. Certainly, several parts of the book are not formally an academic discussion; however, it raises questions about that difficult limit between equa-

* PhD in Philosophy from the University of Navarra. Master in Social Gerontology. Professor and researcher at CISAV. México. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8964-2207>. Email: jegomezalvarez@yahoo.com
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lity and freedom, dialogue, truth and others that are present in modern states. This book has two parts. The first «Against separatism» (pp. 23-42) is the general theory or the central arguments against separatism. The second is a collection of articles most of them published in *El País* (Spain) related or supplementary to the first part.

Savater mentions how the construction of the Modern State implies disappearing or expanding if it wants to see the common ties of the small communities, as in Greece were the *Deimos*, by a legal structure, which will later be recognized as the rule of law. In a few words, a legal framework has to be established that unites whatever is different because of the character of the citizen. Naturally, from the beginning, not everyone entered the status of citizens, but rather it expanded until the 20th century. It is interesting how Savater pins down that character of freedom and equality, that arises in the French Revolution by de-ontologizing the concept: «...that we are born equally destined to citizenship with the duties and guarantees inherent to it and especially with the same right to decide about management of society» (p. 29) regardless of regional origin, language, religion etc. This clear statement is crucial to discuss separatism. The latter ends up being a regression to stages before democracies, where the community that shares special characters can decide on itself over the interests of the State. Savater thus defends something well known: there must be a right to education, a civic one in particular, that includes even signs that articulate or establish, or perhaps remember, that abstract belonging that is citizenship. Ultimately, an education that avoids the fundamentalism of any kind, recognizing that within a democratic society, different and sometimes antagonistic lifestyles coexist, where conviction is the only way we have.

Savater points out that the reasons for rejecting separatism (pp. 38-42) are: 1) It is undemocratic: citizens are the bearers of rights, not territories. 2) Retrograde. 3) Antisocial. 4) Harmful to the

Economy. 5) destabilizer. 6) Create bitterness and frustration. 7) Create a dangerous precedent.

The second part entitled «Estocadas»² (the final sabre thrust) (pp. 43-91) presents 11 small notes, published in newspapers mainly that complement and reiterate what was stated in the first part.

In particular, the comparison is made with the case of Euskadi. He often reiterates that language and education in a democratic society should encourage inclusion and not generate divisions. He does not deny that there are fundamental values of a Nation, but that it is why separatisms and regionalisms must be fought, or rather its excesses: «One can love his own kinship without falling into nepotism or becoming a nationalist... But it is sensible and very advisable to appreciate the rule of law –and the national symbols that accompany it– because it is the support of citizenship that allows us freedom within equality» (p. 67).

This book is a pamphlet, as the author states, intelligent that helps us remember the risks of egalitarianism as well as individualistic excesses.

Bibliographic notes

¹ That by the way is accurate; they are brushstrokes, argumentative strokes to put it against situations and ideas that have been presented in Catalan separatism but applicable to any separatism.