Montserrat Guibernau, Belonging, Solidarity and Division in Modern Societies
Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013. 240 p.

Pompeu Casanovas
IDT-UAB
pompeu.casanovas@uab.cat

Contemporary societies are not like the traditional ones. The members of the latter accept tradition as a source of behavior, and adapt to a form of identity that excludes or significantly limits the ability to choose. In contemporary societies, on the contrary, the choice is open and it defines the space where individuals can interact and relate to the group they belong to.

This basic dichotomy, first founded in the nineteenth-century French historiography and sociology of Michelet, Taine, Renan and Durkheim, and culminated in the sociology of Simmel and Max Weber, furnishes the threads with which Montserrat Guibernau weaves her web. She is in good company to perform this task. The sense of belonging to the group, the ability for self-identification, for feeling excluded or integrated the line that delimits the inside and out, has been the key to understand the French and German sociology of the 19th and 20th centuries. In this regard, the author is following a well-trodden path. "Individual identities are not clear-cut; rather, they are subject to transformations emerging from their intrinsic dynamic nature. Various identities tend to coexist at a time, and their relevance moves and switches according to individual needs, external demands and expectations".

What is new in the formulation of Guibernau book, then, is not the conception of social relations as a set of rules and behaviors of inclusion and exclusion, but that these are seen as a byproduct of the fundamental act of choice. Choosing becomes the basic act that constitutes sociality and, in the end, the dynamics of the community. "Belonging by choice" does not mean absence of limitations on individual will, but these are less strong than the act itself that allows group membership. Thus, "through the process of choosing, belonging is turned into a consequence of free will". And this in turn opens the door to a

process of identification with the community, a "primary identity" that transforms individualism and uniqueness of individual sorting. This process generates an emotional tension that is essential in the operation and management of the *political identity*.

Through the emotional management of collective identity, Guibernau provides a more general scheme or model that can be used as a key to the understanding of identity in contemporary societies.

Cosmopolitanism is in this sense a strong thesis on political identity that the author uses as a hermeneutical reading for a number of phenomena: the reinvention of tradition in relation to clothing or signs with a mark of identity (such as the burqa), uncertainty and ambiguity of cultural identity associated with the development of globalization, the emergence of the extreme right as a phenomenon that prevents social integration, the functioning of paradoxical loyalty as a political tool, and finally the emergence of nationalities and symbols, rituals and nationalist sentiments. Thus, "emotions act as a trigger for political mobilization."

Here, in the analysis of the dual nature (as enabling and constraining) identity applied to national projection Guibernau draws from her past contributions on the political culture of nationalism.

To sum up, this is a rich, sound and consistent book within the classical political science tradition. It would be interesting to compare some of its concepts (eg. about loyalty) with contributions analyzing contemporary social phenomena from different epistemic and methodological traditions. It would be useful, for example, a comparison with the transformations of the rule of law ("deliberative" or "procedural") as analyzed from different theoretical positions (neo-republicanism or neo-institutionalism). How new concepts emerge, as the so-called "right to decide" (which cannot be confused with free speech)? This concept is unknown in the Western legal tradition and belongs to what is called "pop-law". How this analysis of the identity relates to the uses of ICT technologies? This has been an essential element of the Arab Spring, and it is difficult to understand the political mobilizations outside the technology that facilitates flash mobs. Technology already is, as Floridi argues, "In-Between". And lawyers and political scientists have assumed that the technological dimension is *regulatory*, directly pertaining to "code" (to use Lessig's formula) and not an outer dimension that can be set aside. The emergence, functioning and managing of social intelligence are hot topics of research, and the interested readers will find quite useful suggestions in *Belonging* to enter the discussion.

English version by Pompeu Casanovas