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# The Republican Nature of Modern Democracy: Implications on Educational Policy

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## ABSTRACT

This study offers a theoretical context for reading political education literature. Comparing the two classical cultural exemplars (Latin/Greek) we build our working framework upon the firm distinction between Republican and Democratic ideals and we suggest that the current political culture is shaped into the Republican mold. Setting these findings as our conceptual framework, we scrutinize the 2018's democratic education proposal of the Council of Europe, which although represents modern Republican states, it rather employs concepts—participation, living-together, ethical competencies—extracted from the Democratic exemplar. Finally, we assess the effectiveness of our framework and the coherence of the CoE's text.

## Introduction

Political theory precedes political education. Sant's (2019) review affirms that the various trends of democratic education are associated to political projects whose philosophical foundations and discourses are adapted and applied into each Educational agenda. She identifies eight versions of democratic education (elitist, liberal, neoliberal, deliberative, multiculturalist, participatory, critic, and agonistic) each one of which endorse different, usually competing, democratic aspirations. She concludes that beyond this diversity, the term “democratic education” functions as a “floating signifier” that is interpreted differently by each political discourse within the educational scholarship and she confirms that the liberal trend goes on being predominant in the democratic education literature despite the fact that the liberal conception of democracy is now disenchanting the citizenry of Western societies.

For that reason, fostering the ability for an informed interpretation of the political education alternatives and their background is now a decisive factor for designing new educational policies. At the same time, Straume (2016) asserts that the work of major representatives of democratic education (such as John Dewey, Amy Gutmann, and Gert Biesta) is built in terms of “the political” (that questions political arrangements such as laws and norms) instead of “politics proper” (that questions the social institutions as a whole) and it does not provide the necessary notions for confronting the “what-questions” which should be up for debate by every member of the society.

When putting into question social structures, strong interpretational resources are needed. Major philosophical trends of the twentieth century have shown that historicizing a concept is perhaps the most effective method for breaking out of its consolidated structure (see for example Foucault's historicization of sexuality and madness, Kuhn's history of science and Koselleck's project of conceptual history). Accordingly, in light of the latest advances in political sciences and in

classics which have spawned reactions against the rash substitution of the proper term Republic with the term Democracy over the past decades, we attempt an historicization of Western politics by drawing a distinction between *Republican* and *Democratic* ideals<sup>1</sup>.

As political education scholarship has not incorporated yet these conceptions it carelessly replicates anachronistic idealized stereotypes of ancient worldviews. This questionable reception of the ancient ideals causes false creeds with a direct influence on educational theories and creates significant conceptual intervals in several topics, particularly in the use of the paramount notion Democracy which has now been converted into a “floating,” “ambiguous and diffuse” tagline (Feu et al., 2017).

Thereupon, this study firstly responds to the request for political conceptual frameworks which would stimulate the autonomy and free-thinking, offered in educational contexts (Chua, 2016, p. 221). Secondly, in order to test the effectiveness of the conceptual context which is developed in the first section, we experiment with interpreting the most recent political education proposal by the Council of Europe. This way we assess the interpretative power of our model and the coherence of the Council’s text.

## Method

This research builds upon Dumont’s premise that every culture is determined by its hierarchy of values. That is, even if each culture and every social structure is built with exactly the same elements, the internal hierarchy in which they are placed determines the outcome. As Dumont (1987, p. 21) puts it “our values system determines all of our mental panorama” and if we suppose that two societies are composed by the same elements A and B, “it is enough that one subordinates A to B and the other B to A for getting considerable differences in all conceptions. In other words, the internal hierarchy of [values of] a culture is essential for comparison”.

Adding to the comparative approach, Moutsios (2020) pointed out the outstanding self-reflective dimension of the European tradition which stimulates an understanding of foreign social institutions in their own cultural context. Such a tradition that calls for reflection through comparison toward both institutions and social contexts is precisely, he argues, that part of the European tradition that should most be maintained and advanced.

The historiographical approach of this study finds its mayor influence into the methodological battles of the Cambridge School. The call for a “dialogue between philosophical discussion and historical evidence” (Skinner, 1969, p. 49) as well as the conviction that “historical specificity and philosophical delicacy are more likely to be attained if they are pursued together” (Dunn, 1968, p. 86) are the core principles which united scholars like Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, J.G.A. Pocock and others, who let a historical understanding of political thought flourish (Alexander, 2016).

Even though in this study some mentions about hegemonic ideologies and structures of power will be found, our intention is not to reveal power relations but rather to conceptualize a neglected fundamental cultural aspect of politics and its direct impact on political education. We have purposely not adapted any “discourse analysis” method as this coinage is loaded with analytic perspectives that primarily focus on relations of power (see for example Foucault or Laclau and Mouffe) and this is out of our scope. Instead, Pocock’s (1987) contribution on implementing structural linguistics as a means of investigation of political discourses underpin our essentially linguistic analysis.

Keeping these methodological remarks in mind, we undertake a comparison between political aspects of the two ancient cultures from which the actual political culture mainly originates: the

<sup>1</sup>In this text there are two uses of the words Democracy and Republic. When referring to the ancient versions we use the italic form (*Democracy/Republic*) while when we use the terms in a modern sense we use the roman form (Democracy/Republic).

Latin/*Republican* and the Greek/*Democratic*. Our historic-philosophical report of the two ancient worldviews, although strongly supported by secondary bibliography, is principally informed by primary sources and in an attempt to narrow down a project that cannot otherwise take substance in an article-length work we mainly draw on Cicero and Aristotle. Although we seek to develop a contrapositive representation for the two thinkers in order to achieve an unblurred distinction between them, we do not confute the fact that every comparison is dynamic and dialectical in nature.

Having established the key characteristics of the two political traditions, in section two we launch into a report on the emergence of modern citizenship, intending to bridge the distant ancient past with our contemporaneity. On this account, we arrive at the conviction that the actual political structures are inspired by the *Republican* model, institutionally and conceptually.

The application of our analytical framework is realized in the last section, where we assess its efficiency for questioning contemporary political education literature. Since our conceptual context is built on macroscopical elements (diachronic political and cultural ideals) which transcend national limitations, the text intended to be analyzed text should also represent a transnational implement. Applying the findings of sections one and two, we embark on a textual analysis of the CoE's Democratic education agenda and we inspect its underlying political assumptions. The selection of CoE for building our case is guided by three factors. Firstly, contrary to its similar agencies, like UNESCO which focuses on Global citizenship education, the CoE has produced a series of texts that are rich in philosophical theses about Democracy and they *per se* serve as subjects of an analysis for Democratic education. Secondly, because its range of influence exceeds by far any national curriculum as it is implemented in several countries (Barrett, 2020, p. 13). Thirdly, very few scholars have engaged into a theoretical investigation of its educational publications although its importance calls for independent academic research. Given that in a Scopus search<sup>2</sup> only 5 studies were found containing conceptual inquiries related to the Council's political education agenda, our study contributes to filling this gap.

Describing a culture in an objective way is a futile endeavor and we do not claim that our account fully reconstructs the classical political cultures. We took under consideration only some essential and in some sense representative parts of the remaining literature of this multifaceted epoch, mainly the *corpora* of Cicero and Aristotle. Biased by their particular intentions these two authors attributed their own views to their societies and this overwhelming element of contingency adds complexity to the reconstruction of their era (Skinner, 1969, p. 50). In addition, political accounts are by definition biased since every author is aware of his/her social status and, therefore, any Rawlsian "veil of ignorance" is beforehand missing. Nevertheless, our schematic description might not be completely vacuous since politics is always a projection of an imaginary into the possibilities of a reality (inspired by Estlund, 2014).

Under these limitations, we proceed by taking on a comparison of the political language that these two theorists employed in order to shed light to the main elements of each paradigm.

## Polites and Civis: Divergent Worldviews

Cicero had risen questions about the fidelity of his Latin translations from the Greek texts of Plato and the Classics. Obviously facing the impossibility of a literary translation, Cicero (2006a, p. 21) maintained that he was trying to translate the Greek contents "in words consonant with our [the Latin] conventions"<sup>3</sup>. The linguistic issue became increasingly decisive as the interaction

<sup>2</sup>This search was realized on June 2, 2020. Detailed results are available here: [https://figshare.com/articles/Scopus\\_exported\\_refine\\_values\\_csv/12520703](https://figshare.com/articles/Scopus_exported_refine_values_csv/12520703)

<sup>3</sup>This in fact meant the replacement of the Greek philosophical terminology with the Roman legal language, see Griffin (2013, p. 114).

between the two worlds was becoming more intense throughout the centuries. Seen from the Greek side, the inefficient philosophical ability of the Latin language to express the “notions (νοήματα)” of the Greek thought was denoted as a cause of several intellectual frictions<sup>4</sup>. Through the lens of political theory, these notes call for a comparative investigation into the political foundations of the two cultures.

Political interaction was conceived by the Latins mainly in terms of utility, i.e. profit. The legal notion of partnership—a contract-secured relation—remained a cornerstone of their state edifice (Asmis, 2004) and found its *acme* in the foundation of the *Res Publica* (*RP*) (Terrenato & Haggis, 2011, p. 219). The extremely hierarchical social structure of the Romans integrated the political and economic spheres and gave rise to a political system that answered to their social needs. Therefore, the *RP* formed a part of the Roman identity (Alston, 2015, p. 6) and determined this society’s internal, interpersonal, relations. But for them, unlike in our contemporary culture, social interaction—intersubjectivity—had nothing to do with confronting the Other in his/her wholeness: A *societas* (=partnership) could exist only as long as the partners, in the pursuit of their common purpose, kept to their agreement (Zimmermann, 1996, p. 455). The *RP*—although never written in our modern constitutional sense (Galinsky, 1996, p. 6)—served as the general statute of the legislative authority that was designated to secure these private partnerships under the rule of law.

Cicero (in *De Re Publica* 2006b, para. 39; trans. by Harries, 2013, p. 120) offered us a full insight of what *RP* meant for the pre-imperial Romans: “[...] the *res publica* is the property (*res*) of the people (*populus*). But the people is not a universal gathering of men brought together in any old way, but a gathering of a large number (*multitudo*) bound together in partnership (*sociatus*) by legal consent (*iuris consensus*) and for the shared benefit of all (*utilitatis communione*)”.

In this concise definition, we see that the legal notion of *societas* served as the contractual—quasi-philosophical—basis of the Roman citizen community. *Civis* (citizen) and its collective expression in the Roman citizen community as *civitas*, was plainly the summation of the people that were linked, individually protected, and rights ascribed by the law. Thus, *Civitas Romana* (Roman citizenship), aside from the status *libertatis* (freedom), was juridically defined solely by the condition for being subject of rights, private and public (Berger, 1953, p. 389).

At the service of this rights-centered sociopolitical structure, *lex* (the law) had a key ideological and pragmatic role: it had the vital function of framing the citizen’s body. It was “the foundation of liberty, the fountain-head of equity” upon which the “*mens et animus*” of the state were grounded (in *Pro Cluentinus*: Cicero, 1979, para. 146). Far from existential concerns and since *res* has strong connotations of property (Galinsky, 1996, p. 7), we can understand why the law in the *RP* was explicitly connected with the safeguarding of property rights at a fundamental level (Harries, 2013, p. 108).

While the key elements of the Roman reality can be sufficiently represented in such a brief report, a description of the Greek case is more complicated and perhaps there is not much to compare at all (Hammer, 2015, p. 1). Sherwin-White (1973, p. 5) was right in that “the difference between the Greek *polis* (city) and the Latin *civitas* corresponds to the difference between the mountains of Greece and the hills of Latium”. While, as we saw, the Romans built their political structure onto a simple legalistic ontology, the Greeks inextricably related politics to every other human activity.

As seen through Aristotle, politics—as the central *locus* (τόπος) of interpersonal relations (Aristotle, 1998, p. 26 or *Politics*, 1260b.40–42)—was not thought to be simply another field of knowledge nor a segment of human activities. It was rather the supreme (κυριωτάτη)<sup>5</sup> art/science

<sup>4</sup>See the contemptuous comments of Photius ((Patriarch of Constantinople in the 9th AD) 1900, p. 376A) who speaks about ‘the poverty of the [Latin] voice’ (διὰ τὸ τῆς φωνῆς ἔνδεές) and ‘the narrowness of the words’ (τῶν ὀνομάτων ἡ στενοχωρία) which impede the translation of the Greek notions into the Latin language.

<sup>5</sup>Crisp (Aristotle, 2010, p. 4 or EN, 1094a) translates *κυριωτάτης* as ‘highest master’.

(τέχνη/ἐπιστήμη)<sup>6</sup> since through politics it was decided the value and the importance of all the others (Aristotle, 2009, pp. 3–4 or NE, 1094a,1 – 1094b,11). Humans were defined as “naturally political animals” and their participation in the political scene was perceived as the satisfaction of this basic—natural—need, as “even when they do not need one another’s help, people no less desire to live together” with others (Aristotle, 1998, p. 76 or *Politics*, 1278b, 19–25).

Although a “natural sweetness” was ascribed to life, living together with Others was a *sine qua non*, a prerequisite, for its enjoyment. A “solitary person” (μονώτης) (Aristotle, 2010, p. 177 or NE, 1169b.17–18), an individualistic existence in modern terms, could never be thought to be happy and the organized living-together, the polis (πόλις), was thought to have been formed “to the end of [...] living happily and good” (Aristotle, 1998, p. 81 (trans. modified) or *Politics*, 1280b.39–1281a.2) through the opportunity for a “communion of life” (κοινωνίαν τῆς ζωῆς) which offers (Aristotle, 1998, p. 75 or *Politics*, 1278b.17). A *politeia*<sup>7</sup>, and its multiple incarnations in a variety of popular governments or *Demokraties* in the Greek antiquity<sup>8</sup>, was defined by Aristotle in the terminology we have just employed: in the unhindered participation (μετοχή) of the citizens (πολίτες) in the public affairs (Aristotle, 1998, p. 66 or *Politics*, 1275a.23). Yet beyond formal institutionalizations, political activity was rather seen as a way of fully enjoying life itself, in the completeness of the interpersonal relationships whose effect extend into the re-shaping of one’s self, into the blurring of the personal identity (Vlassopoulos, 2007).

These ontological axioms were connected with a popular ethical system that was destined to orient citizens toward the acquisition of ethical and intellectual competencies which were thought to be required for a good (καλός) citizenship<sup>9</sup> and a pleasant coexistence—a living together (συζῆν)<sup>10</sup>. Aristotle deemed a utilitarian morality not as a trait of a good citizen and “to seek everywhere the element of utility” was thought to be “completely inappropriate for those who [were] magnanimous and free” (Aristotle, 2013, p. 222 or *Polit.* 1338b,2–4). In its place, a wide range of virtues was adapted as they thought that would allow a person to live with happiness—to drive a joyous life together with the Others (Nussbaum, 1990).

For the *Democratic* setup, politics was intertwined with all aspects of life. It referred to every kind of human relations and not simply to the arrangement of conflicts between social or economic powers. Our report emphasized only some key features of the *Democratic* culture and it did not attempt a complete representation of its worldview. Yet, all the necessary elements are set in place and, moving forward, we shall risk projecting these remarks to our era and examine their relevance in modern times.

## The Reinvention of Democracy: How Did Republics Come to Be Democracies?

While participating in a cultural context, being aware of the context is by itself a demanding challenge (Stoczkowski, 2002, p. 2). Politics adds complexity to this task and even the finest theorists

<sup>6</sup>Crisp (Aristotle, 2010) translates *science* while Brown & Ross (Aristotle, 2009) translate *art*.

<sup>7</sup>*Politeia* was Aristotle’s *correct* political structure whose ideal was ‘fundamentally a democratic one’ (Pellegrin, 2018, p. 209). For more about the affinity of Aristotle’s *Politeia* to the ancient Athenian Democracy see Contogeorgis (2018, p. 212) and Ober (2005).

<sup>8</sup>We use the plural as recent investigation reveals the plurality of Democratically governed city-states in the ancient era (Robinson, 2011, pp. 183–186).

<sup>9</sup>Adkins (1984, p. 47) argues for the ‘necessity of reading [Aristotle’s] Ethics and Politics together, and both in the context of Greek values and attitudes’.

<sup>10</sup>The notion of *συζῆν* (living together), although it is not considered to be a term in the theory of Aristotle (Ross translates *συζῆν* (EN.1169b,19: Aristotle, 2009) as ‘live with others’ while Crisp (Aristotle, 2010) as ‘company of others’), we suggest that a special attention has to be given. Two of the most significant differences between the Latin and the Greek understanding of politics can be found in the use of *συζῆν* by Aristotle: On the one hand, *συζῆν* as joyful experience that is an end itself was directly contrasted with an utilitarian morality (‘one pursues the other as a pleasant person to *live with*, but sometimes the other the one as useful’ (Aristotle, 1935, p. 429 or EE.1243b, 17–18)) On the other hand, it was seamlessly connected with the ‘political nature’ of humans, charging political participation with ethical values.



have occasionally failed to recognize significant differences when comparing cultural frameworks. Herodotus (fifth century BC), for example, in his *Histories III* projected a Greek understanding of politics to the Persians and he attributed procedures of political argumentation and voting to their monarchic setup.

Similarly, back in the second century BC, Polybius (1923) in his 6th book of *Histories* tried to describe the Roman politics using the schemes created by Aristotle (Polybius, 2010, p. xix) and, a century later, Cicero translated the Platonic dialogue *Πολιτεία* as “*Republic*,” clearly projecting his Latin conceptions to the Greek culture. As this distortive unification of the two worldviews is currently gaining momentum, in what follows, we briefly examine the emergence of the actual political culture while we highlight its un-*Democratic*, *Republican*, origin.

Comparative studies of contemporary democratic politics recognize, at least, three major models of democratic political institutions. The “Westminster” model, as seen in the United Kingdom; the Presidential government model, represented by the United States of America; and the model that combines parliamentary with presidential features and results to what is labeled as a “dual power” or “semi presidential” government, as seen in France (Krane & Marshall, 2015, pp. 3–4). Starting from the U.S.A.’s political roots, we shall examine the nature of Western contemporary political landscape in comparison to the ancient exemplars.

The U.S.A.’s founding fathers, although men of vision and classically literate, were rather hostile to the *Democratic* ideals. They viewed *Democracy* as a chaotic and insecure environment that has no cure for the mischiefs of the tyranny of the majority. Madison (see *The Federalist* N.10, 2008, p. 48) for example, thought that no prosperity can be achieved in a *Democratic* setting due to the excess of power of the majority faction, whereas a fraction is “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community”.

For Madison people are always converted into a mob when assembling, independently form their individual characteristics. “In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason” and even if “every Athenian citizen [had] been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.” (see *The Federalist* N.55, 2008, p. 275). Holding these principles together with the certainty that monarchy and anarchy were anathema, a limited allowance of choice for a political system was created. Moreover, following the pressure of the widespread 1760s slogan “no taxation without representation,” the sole “practical government” which remained as a viable possibility to serve both the demands of the voters together with the “business and religious interests of the educated and cultural elite” (in which the founders belonged) was a Republic (Holt, 2016, p. 245). Thus, against the insane and idiotic tendencies of the mob and in compliance with their “traditional aristocratic spirit” (Street, 2003, p. 296), the founding fathers established an *anti-democratic* Republican constitution “design ed to keep in check the unlimited creativity of popular movements” (Maddox, 1993, p. 10).

In Madison’s account a fundamental cultural aspect can be traced. His description of the citizens’ gatherings reveals his cultural origins that dictate an accurate repetition of the Latin ontology: Society is described by this *Republican* thinker in terms of *power*, *interests* and *rights* while the task of the state is the safekeeping of the individuals under the rule of law. His reasoning is monopolized by an interplay between these notions and even when dealing with the Greek paradigm, the *Democratic* terminology is mostly ignored and substituted by the *Republican* schemes of utilitarianism and power interactions<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup>This is valid for most of modern political theorists. See, among others, the analysis of Madison (in Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 52), of Birch (2007) and of Maddox (1993).

In the French model the theoretical infrastructure of politics shared similar conceptions. Although the First Republic was rooted in a richer philosophical production that created an infrangible association between the Enlightenment creeds with the political sphere, just as in the “U.S.A. sister Republic” (Weil, 2011) Republicanism was thought to be the optimum rule, the ideal “mixed government”<sup>12</sup>. The term Democracy was used as a reference to a direct governmental participation according to the historical example of the ancient city-states, and this exemplar, although admirable, was in general mistrusted for the same reasons as in the United States. In 1789, Condorcet thought that “laws made by an enlightened monarch were preferable by far to decisions taken by an ignorant populace” and the Republic was assumed to be a system in which governance ought to be driven by reasonable—enlightened—representatives, i.e. “representation was an enlightened substitute for the people” (Gueniffey, 2011, p. 121,122). Political activity remained irrelevant to any of the human’s social needs and utility, i.e. governmental facility, was set as the cornerstone of the French political thought.

The Britannic model may as well be accurately described in the same terms. There is nothing to comment from a *Democratic* perspective on the long monarchical periods of the UK history and even in the “abortive experiment” of the English Republic (1649–1660), either correlated to Machiavellian or Hobbesian ideals (Rahe, 2008) or seen plainly as a fruit of a “commercial society” (Pincus, 1998), the *Republican* proclivity is the one that predominates (Scott, 2004).

*Democracy*, as originally described in the Greek literature, enjoyed no popular appreciation. Reaching to a more practical level, the actual constitutional doctrine that “sovereignty belongs to Parliament” (“Parliament’s Authority,” n.d.) is the dominant legal ideology which according to Eldin has “become irretrievably embedded in the collective psyche of the English legal community” (Edlin, 2010, p. 173,178; found in Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 268). This principle, that originates in medieval notions of monarchical sovereignty and its claims to represent the community (Goldsworthy, 2010, p. 275), diachronically left little room for *Democratic* ideals.

Concluding the inspection of the three hegemonic models, we note that the current political paradigm follows the Latin’s footsteps and not the Greek’s—we live in *Republican* varieties and ideals (Shalev, 2009, p. 23), not in *Democratic* ones. Political theorists, politicians and partisans insist to use the terms Republic and Democracy interchangeably but this “is simply not correct” (Maddox, 1993, p. 9). History and Political Theory indicate the distinction (Whatmore, 2004, p. 48) and, as Cartledge (2016, p. 295) notes, the modern use of the term “democracy” is rather a “reinvention” of its original significance. Democracy contains inherently “a promise of perfect liberty and equality” (Gueniffey, 2011, p. 124) that is repeatedly exploited as an electoral campaign promise and the incessant use of the term “democracy” as a substitution of “Republic” has caused conceptual confusion around the cultural ideals which it represents. Nevertheless, it is argued that respecting ones’ citizen identity is to remain coherent and loyal to the foundations of modern politics, to the original Republican bedrock (Holt, 2016, p. 252).

Having completed the construction of our conceptual context, we proceed by introducing a political education text into its cadre. This way we try to rediscover the analyzed text’s alignment regarding core *Democratic* ideals, and to assess the potentials of our scheme to analyze political education literature.

## The Council of Europe on Democratic Education: Democratic Ideals Serving Republics

Tröhler (2010, p. 6) viewed the “Harmonization of the Educational Globe” as a process orchestrated by international educational bureaucracies which aims at directing toward a “specific” culture. Inasmuch we recognize the hegemony of the *Republican* paradigm in the politics of the

<sup>12</sup>This Polybian idealization of the *Res Publica* can be found in several French philosophers of that era (see Kent Wright, 2011).



West it was expected that its official pedagogy would praise the specific culture of its patronage, i.e. the indoctrination of the youth to the established culture. But this is not the case with political education. Official agendas articulate their educational proposals in a way that seems conceptually incoherent as it is tottering between the two classical traditions which we take them to be incompatible.

To prove our claim, we examine the Council of Europe Education Department's (CoE) proposal for a Democratic education and we build our argument in two parts. Employing the firm distinction between *Republican* and *Democratic* ideals, we first establish the Republican nature of CoE's political ideals and, next, we approach its proposals on citizenship education searching for the origins of its conceptions.

The CoE is a supranational institution consisted of 47 member states, 28 of which are also European Union members—not to be confused with the European Union's agency “European Council”. Its activities include monitoring and enhancing mechanisms for the prevalence of the famous triangle: democracy; human rights; and rule of law (Council of Europe, 2020; Schmahl & Breuer, 2017).

As for its educational policy, the Council has significantly influenced the meaning of citizenship throughout its 70 years of operation and citizenship education reforms in national education systems were shaped by its ideals (Ververi, 2017, p. 518). The latest publication of its democratic education project named “Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture” (RFCDC) was published in 2018 and it is already officially implemented in 17 countries, just one year after its publication (Barrett, 2020, p. 13).

This publication belongs to a wider educational policy whose editions include the 2016s “Competencies for democratic culture: living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies” (Barrett, 2016). The 2016s text is mostly contained in the 2018 edition of the RFCDC “Vol. 1: Context, concepts and model” which is accompanied by two more volumes which focus on the “Descriptors of competences for democratic culture” and the “Guidance for implementation”. Our analysis draws from the 1st volume of the 2018 edition as well as from its 2016 preceding, both of which are authored by Martyn Barrett.

The RFCDC contextualizes in a subtle way its political concepts promoting a hidden curriculum when it comes to the fundamental issue of the structure of the political institutions. We read that “democratic culture and intercultural dialogue depend not only on citizens' competences but also on the nature of the institutional structures”. Not unjustifiably, when bringing together the “institutional structures” with the “democratic culture” we unequivocally recall crowded assemblies making decisions of political nature.

But this logical association is disrupted by the hierarchical structure of *Republicanism* which is assumed by the text. For the CoE, Democracy is about giving from above to the *populi* the chance to express their opinions: The RFCDC “treats intercultural dialogue as vital for democratic culture [...] it is only through such dialogue that citizens [...] can explain their perspectives, aspirations, concerns, and needs to politicians and policymakers who are likely to have other cultural affiliations”. The same top-down understanding manifests itself as a hidden premise in every similar occasion: “if local or municipal authorities establish places and spaces in which dialogue can occur [...] and promote and encourage the use of these facilities, then citizens will [...]”.

The *Republican* aspiration of the CoE, as noted above, was expected since it is a depended agency funded by Republican states which compromise its motives: The purpose of the RFCDC is “to support member states in developing [...]”. Thus, while the RFCDC is about promoting Democracy we see that it is instead a *Republican* manifesto that avoids a collision with its sponsors.

As the *Republican* nature of the CoE is demonstrated, we shall now argue that its educational proposal's raw materials have *Democratic* origins. To prove our claim, we shall highlight the RFCDC's usage of three key Democratic terms in a premier position: competences; participation;

and living-together. The RFCDC aspires to promoting the key “*competences* that need to be acquired by learners if they are to *participate* effectively in a culture of democracy and *live peacefully together* with others” (2018, p. 11—italics is ours). This indicates that the goal is to participate and to live together with others, while the competences assist in accomplishing this effect.

The recent systematic review of Tahirsylaj and Sundberg (2020) revealed that the term competence mostly appears unelaborated and undefined all over the academic and official literature. The RFCDC (2018, p. 32) defines the term as the “ability to mobilize and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context”.

Jónsson and Garces Rodriguez (2021, p. 11) have correctly pointed out that there is an ambiguity concerning the meaning of this term as, on the one hand, the definition assumes that a competence is an ability to mobilize psychical and practical functions such as values or skills but, on the other hand, “values and attitudes are also competences” (2018, p. 33). The RFCDC treats this polysemy stating that a “competence” as a holistic term consists of the selection, activation and organization of “competences” and the application of these competences in a co-ordinated, adaptive and dynamic manner to concrete situations” (2018, p. 33) and that “[i]n addition to this global and holistic use of the term “competence” (in the singular), the term “competences” (in the plural) is used in the Framework to refer to the specific psychological resources (the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) that are mobilized and deployed in the production of competent behavior” (2018, p. 32). Like Jónsson and Garces Rodriguez, we consider it to be a problematic term explained by circular definitions (a competence [...] consists [...] of competences).

In any case, “democratic competence” is about “psychological resources” which lead to an appropriate response to a real-life situation (2018, p. 32) and this is accurately described by Buxarrais et al. (2019) as “ethical” competences for Democracy. This ethical conceptualization of “competence” is effortlessly associated with the *Democratic* call for a correlation between ethics and politics (see note N° 9) and since such an ethical perspective was absent from the *Republican* ideals, or at most undeveloped, we conclude that the “democratic competence” notion originates in the *Democratic* literature.

The second Democratic notion that is used by the RFCDC is “participation” which, as mentioned here, is one of the objectives of the project. The meaning of participation in the CoE’s texts has many similarities to the one we saw in the section of the *Democratic* culture. Participation is in both cases considered to be almost a synonym to dialogue rather as the isolated incident of voting (2018, p. 25): “active and autonomous participants in democracy, in intercultural dialogue and in society more generally”.

In association with the *Democratic* understanding, the terms participation and dialogue occur interchangeably in the RFCDC (2018, p. 24; for an analysis of dialogism in the RFCDC see Simpson & Dervin, 2020). The text suggests the substitution of the “adversarial communication [where] the goal is to “defeat” the other person” for “an open exchange of views” and for the acquisition of “an understanding of the perspectives, interests and needs of each other”. In fact, the term “dialogue,” usually accompanied by the adjective “intercultural,” occurs in the text as the title of two Chapters and 47 times more while the derivatives of the root “particip\*” (participant, participate, participatory, etc.) occur 48.

Participation in the RFCDC is, usually, not described in terms of utility, there is no mention about extracting an economic or otherwise benefit from participation. Far from the *Republican* ideals, the term “benefit” appears in the text only to condemn the utilitarian ethics in favor of a genuine interpersonal relationship. “The attitude of openness [...] needs to be distinguished from the attitude of having an interest [...] merely for one’s own personal enjoyment or benefit” and “people can learn and benefit from other people’s diverse perspectives”. Similarly, the

personal traits suggested in the RFCDC “need to be distinguished from the unprincipled or opportunistic adjustment of behavior for personal benefit or gain” (2018, pp. 41, 40, 49).

Connected with the concepts of “competencies” and “participation,” the third *Democratic* notion that is employed by the RFCDC is the concept of “living together,” which in Aristotle we found it as *σὺζῆν*. Helping learners to participate and to live-together is considered to be the purpose of this project and this can be directly traced in its preceding document published in 2016 and whose title was *Competencies for democratic culture: living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies*. When seen through the lens of our analysis, this dense heading displays the conceptual manipulation which operates behind political and educational thought. Here, we see a simultaneous employment of the three *Democratic* concepts—participation, moral competencies, living-together—which are drawn together and utilized to promote the *Republican*-type citizenship which prevails in current societies.

In the 2016 *Competencies for democratic culture* document, also repeated in the RFCDC, we found the term “live-together” only 3 times, always surrounded by romantic slogans which offer no indication as to why this coinage was used (2016, pp. 39, 40, 65): “living together as equals in society and for freedom, justice and peace in the world”/“intercultural dialogue should be used to develop a democratic culture of living together as equals in society”/“to become effective engaged citizens and live peacefully together with others as equals”.

Conversely, while these phrases are feasibly associated with the *Democratic* views of politics as a means for a pleasant coexistence, the text provides us a slightly modified coinage which completely alternates the meaning: “[...] act together with other individuals to address common and general interests.” In this phrase, which is found in the Glossary section of the RFCDC (2018, p. 70), living-together has given its place to acting-together and the *Democratic* viewpoint of citizens enjoying the “communion of life” is substituted by the *Republican* understanding of individuals in search of their “common interests”.

## Discussion

In this article, we argued that the Latin political culture was (by and large) built upon a juristic way of thinking in which the notions of law (*lex*), the contract-secured partnership (*societas*) and the utilitarian ethics (*utilitatis communione*) were its core elements. We also affirmed that in the Greek reality political culture was (again broadly speaking) built upon concepts such as “participation” (*μετοχή*), “living-together” (*σὺζῆν*) and ethical/intellectual “competencies” (*ἀρεταί*). Employing historic-philosophical methods we highlighted the fundamental elements of each political culture and we concluded that contemporary Western political thought is predominated by the *Republican* model, as it adapts the juristic *modus operandi* of politics. With this distinction in mind, we analyzed the CoE educational proposal for Democracy Culture and we saw that while the CoE represents modern *Republican* states, it employs concepts—such as participation, living-together and competencies—which are extracted from the *Democratic* exemplar.

Our conceptual framework is shown to be efficient for carrying out valid analysis of political education literature as seen in the inspection of the CoE’s texts. The conceptual distinction between *Republican* and *Democratic* ideals offered us an understanding of the otherwise concealed premises of the text.

Barrett (2018, p. 60) admits that “the CDC project is extremely challenging and ambitious” and we saw that this is manifested in the conceptual ambiguities of its publications. The examined texts heavily lack precision as their terms are presented undeveloped and vague, even for the principal term “competence” which is explained by a circular and obscure definition. Likewise, we noticed the idle employment of the term living-together, which appears surrounded by catch-phrases with no articulated content. Our investigation helps us understand that a cause for this shallowness could be found in the indecisive waving between political ideals.

Despite the conceptual flaws which come with this kind of texts, the findings of this study should not incentivize a disposal of the Council's contributions. The Council's programs act as a ground for democratic empowerment (Missira, 2019, p. 63) and the appeal for the expansion of its influence around the globe is justified (Naankiel & Iortyer, 2014) since on account of the Council's policies Democratic citizenship education is gaining importance (Council of Europe, 2017). From a different standpoint, our study affirmed that the Council mainly builds its education proposal upon *Democratic* ideals and, therefore, it enhances the exposure of students to *Democratic* concepts and political culture, although this is incompatible with the actual *Republican* reality.

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