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Students' attitudes towards the role of national celebrations/anniversaries in Greek primary schools

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Abstract

School, as a dominant ideological state mechanism, is engaged as a network of practices and special methods in order to serve national goals. Curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, school management, parades and festivities are mechanisms employed by schools in order to attain "national" goals. In the present study, we aim at discussing Greek students' viewpoints about the role of national celebrations.

The study is based on questions-statements of a three grade Likert's scale, given by 1314 primary school students during the academic year 2009-10. The corpus of data was analyzed on the basis of Factor Analysis, which enables the understanding of the response patterns of the social subjects-students. The results indicated the predominance of the specific features of the Greek social and political system, the "narcissist" perception of the Greek state, the ethnocentric attitudes and the necessity of organizing national celebrations.

Keywords: *students, nationality, citizenship*

Introduction

Celebrating national holidays in Greek elementary school is a public historical narrative, where the position and the relationship of teachers and schoolchildren are defined in relation to the society and the world. The historical memory determines the future perceptions and attitudes of citizens at the national and social environment (Connerton, 1989). National holidays in Greek elementary school complement the historical education of schoolchildren, because they focus on national and historical inter temporal values.

This research focuses on the ways in which school celebrations seem to influence the shaping of national and political identity through homogenization in an era of globalization (Williams, 1989). The theoretical background refers to political and civic education as active learning which *requires the translation of conceptual knowledge into enactive forms which will develop out of cooperative behaviour* (Ross, 2008: 70).

Citizenship education is being initiated in many countries in Europe, from England in 1999 to Spain and Greece in 2007, as well as in the European Union (ibidem, 43).

We try to analyse the historical concepts of national school celebrations according to Kennedy's two form of passive citizenship: a) the first form is concerned with national identity: that means the individual understands and values the nation's history, the sym-

bolic and iconic forms of the nation in its institutions, flag, anthem and in the case we study in the national anniversaries.

Thus this kind of passive citizenship is commonly taught through transmission models of education, through civic education and the hidden curriculum.

b) A second form of passive citizenship is described by Kennedy as patriotism, which stresses the value of social stability (ibidem, 47-49)

The aim of this research is to:

- a) Record the national and social engravings;
- b) Explore the perceptions of Greek primary school's students and teachers on the role and the content of school celebrations, and;
- c) Contribute to the discussion about multiple, legal and nested citizenship as has been developed for the past half century (Connerton, 1989 and Williams 1989)..

The data

In order to record the views of schoolchildren on matters related to the Greek national school celebrations, a series of 45 questions was given – Likert's tactical three-scale type declarations (1: I agree, 2: Neither agree nor disagree, 3: disagree) while the subjects were invited to express the degree of agreement.

The questionnaires were completed by 1671 schoolchildren, who attended the sixth grade of the Greek primary school during the academic year 2009-10.

We have chosen to use a scale, because its construction involves identifying the evaluated object and of the steps of the scale (Bamboukas, 2000: 306-319).

It is also widely used in academic and educational organization and is one of the most frequently applied techniques for the collection of quantitative data. In order to process the data we employed Factor Analysis, which is widely used in the field of social sciences.

Factor Analysis is used in order to understand the response pattern of the social subjects-pupils, as it enables us to draw conclusions for a complex set of variables.

The internal consistency of declarations of the questionnaire was calculated from the reliability of the alpha coefficient¹.

Table 1: Distribution of students by gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	667	(50,8)

¹ The coefficient alpha (Cronbach's a) is the average of all possible values of the reliability of partition for the questionnaire and it was preferred because it does not depend on the order of statements.

Female	647	(49,2)
Total	1314	(100)

In total of 1314 primary who take place in the research, the 50,8% (667) are boys, while the girls represent the 49,2% (647) of the total sample (t. 1).

Table 2: Distribution of students by school region and gender

Area	N (%)		
	Male	Female	Total
Athens - Thessaloniki	380 (29%)	372 (28,3%)	752 (57,2 %)
Urban area	144 (10,9%)	120 (9,2%)	264 (20, 1 %)
Semi-urban area	45 (3,4%)	50 (3,8%)	95 (7,3 %)
Rural area	98 (7,5%)	105 (7,9%)	203 (15,4 %)
Total	667 (50,8%)	647 (49,2%)	1314 (100%)

Table 2 indicates that from the total of 667 (50,8%) boys, 380 of them (49,2%) attend primary schools in Athens and Thessaloniki, 144 (10,9%) attend schools in urban areas, 45 (3,4%) attend schools in semi-urban areas while 98 (7,5%) attend schools in rural areas.

From the total of 647 (49,2%), 372 (28,3%) of them attend schools in Athens and Thessaloniki, 120 (9,2%) attend schools in urban areas, 105 (7,9%) attend schools in rural areas while the remaining 50 (3,8%) attend schools in suburban areas (t. 2).

Based on Factor analysis, four (4) independent agents emerged explaining 60.884% of the total inertia of the data (table 1) and are described separately.

The adequacy index² $KMO=0,854 > 0.60$ has shown that the samples of the data were adequate to support Factor Analysis while Bartlett's sphericity check ($sign < 0,01$) pointed out that it is also meaningful. The significance level for all analyses were designated at 5%, i.e. level $p = 0.05$. With regard to sphericity check, the significance level was designated at 1%, i.e. level $p = 0.01$.

Table 3: Averages and standard deviations for every statement

Statement	Mean	St. Deviation
National celebrations take place in order to remember the achievements of our ancestors	1,26	0,55
National celebrations remind us our glorified past	1,22	0,50
National celebrations take place in order to understand that our forefathers fought for us to live free	1,19	0,46
National celebrations teach students how to respect	1,39	0,62

² Adequacy indexes were used a) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) to check if the data are fit to undergo Factor Analysis, and b) Bartlett's sphericity index which controls whether the correlation matrix of variables involved in the analysis differs significantly from monad in order for the data analysis to be meaningful.

their national heroes		
National celebrations highlight the virtues of the Greeks	1,51	0,64
National celebrations teach us to love our country	1,26	0,54
National celebrations take place in order not to forget Greek history	1,36	0,63
National celebrations take place in order to honor our heroes	1,26	0,56
National celebrations take place in order to remember the events of Greek history	1,31	0,59
National celebrations help students realize their duty to their country	1,52	0,70
With national celebrations we celebrate wars	2,21	0,84
Only our forefathers made history	2,30	0,77
With national celebrations I learn to cooperate with my schoolmates	1,98	0,82
Pupils' participation in the school celebrations should be compulsory	1,93	0,82
National celebrations remind us the course of the Greek nation	1,34	0,58
National celebrations help us avoid the mistakes of the past	1,86	0,79
Pupils' participation in the parades is compulsory	1,80	0,84
National celebrations help pupils become responsible citizens	1,84	0,78
National celebrations help students learn about the history of their homeland	1,30	0,58
Parades must be abolished	2,66	0,64
Parades take place in order to demonstrate that we walk with proper gait	2,52	0,75
National heroes are model to emulate for children	1,70	0,74
National celebrations teach the important events of Greek history	1,33	0,58
National celebrations help students become better human beings	1,82	0,75
National celebrations teach history	1,47	0,68
National celebrations are boring	2,42	0,78
During the national celebrations we avoid classes	1,72	0,86
We are bored when the teachers speaks at the national celebrations	2,22	0,85
At national celebrations I am tired because I am standing still for many hours	2,14	0,88
I don't like the national celebrations that take place in school	2,52	0,74
Everything that takes place during the school celebration symbolizes something	1,32	0,59
National celebrations are repeated every year without any differentiation	1,76	0,83
I feel proud when I parade	1,30	0,62
Parades take place in order for our parents to take pride of us	2,29	0,82
National celebrations in schools must be abolished	2,67	0,62
National celebrations are a good opportunity to get together with our friends	2,29	0,83
National celebrations are an integral part of school life	1,56	0,72
At the national celebrations of my school I have good time	1,50	0,68
I like decorating the school with the pictures of heroes	1,49	0,71

All the celebrations that take place in school are national celebrations	2,33	0,82
We must coronate heroes	1,38	0,66
We must celebrate the national celebrations	1,71	0,45
We must honor the heroes that sacrificed for their country	1,19	0,49
All students must participate in the school celebrations	1,53	0,71
I like parading	1,37	0,65

Based on Factor Analysis four (4) uncorrelated factor emerged explaining 60,884% of data's total inactivity of the.

The table (t. 5) that follows presents the factorial axes generated by analyzing the specific factors, interpreting their distribution, their cargo and the variables that affect them.

Table 5: Factorial interpretation and explanation of the total variance

1 st factorial axis	Interpretation of variance (%)	Load	Statement
The role and content of school celebrations	(19,196 %)	,746	*Q33. I feel proud when I parade
		,742	*Q42. We must celebrate the national celebrations
		,739	*Q43. We must honor the heroes that sacrificed for their country
		,722	*Q39. I like decorating the school with the pictures of heroes
		,721	*Q38. At the national celebrations of my school I have good time
		,708	*Q44. All students must participate in the school celebrations
		,704	*Q31. Everything that take place during the school celebration symbolizes something
		,677	*Q41. We must coronate heroes
		,636	*Q25. National celebrations teach history
		,629	*Q23. National celebrations teach the important events of Greek history
		,628	*Q19. National celebrations help students learn about the history of their homeland
		,613	*Q37. National celebrations is an integral part of school life
		,514	*Q22. National heroes are model to emulate for children
		,482	*Q15. National celebrations remind us the course of the Greek nation
		Evaluation of parameters of	(16,233 %)
,757	*Q45. I like parading		
,812	*Q26. National celebrations are boring		
,794	*Q28. We are bored when the teachers speaks at the national		

		Load	Statement
		,723	celebrations
		,707	*Q20. Parades must be abolished
		,706	*Q35. National celebrations in schools must be abolished
		,694	*Q29. At national celebrations I am tired because I am standing still for many hours
		,670	*Q30. I don't like the national celebrations that take place in school
		,637	*Q36. National celebrations is a good opportunity to get together with our friends
		,624	*Q34. Parades take place in order for our parents to take pride of us
		,594	*Q27. During the national celebrations we avoid classes
		,590	*Q40. All the celebrations that take place in school are national celebrations
		,516	*Q21. Parades take place in order to demonstrate that we walk with proper gait
			*Q17. Pupils' participation in the parades is compulsory
3 rd factorial axis	Ethnic and political education	(%)	
		,628	*Q13. With national celebrations I learn to cooperate with my schoolmates
		,585	*Q18. National celebrations help pupils become responsible citizens
		,567	*Q12. Only our forefathers made history
		,558	*Q14. Pupils' participation in the school celebrations should be compulsory
		,557	*Q16. National celebrations help us avoid the mistakes of the past
		,535	*Q11. With national celebrations we celebrate wars
		,534	*Q24. National celebrations help students become better human beings
		,472	*Q17. National celebrations are repeated every year without any differentiation
		(13,636 %)	
4 th factorial axis	Reproduction of national identity	(%)	
		,597	*Q1. National celebrations take place in order to remember the achievements of our ancestors
		,594	*Q2. National celebrations remind us our glorified past
		,572	*Q8. National celebrations take place in order to honor our heroes
		,570	*Q7. National celebrations take place in order not to forget Greek history
		,557	*Q9. National celebrations take place in order to remember the events of Greek history
		,546	*Q3. National celebrations take place in order to understand that our forefathers fought for us to live free
		,517	*Q5. National celebrations highlight the virtues of the Greeks
		,511	*Q4. National celebrations teach students how to respect their national heroes
		,510	*Q10. National celebrations help students to realize their duty to their country
(11,819 %)			

,452 *Q6. National celebrations teach us to love our country

1st axes: The role and content of school celebrations**Table 7: Distribution of the degree of agreement with the views of the first factorial axis**

1st axes: The role and content of school celebrations	I agree	Neither I agree nor I disagree	I disagree
We must celebrate the national celebrations	1133 (86,3%)	137 (10,4%)	44 (3,3%)
We must honor the heroes that sacrificed for their country	1115 (84,9%)	143 (10,8%)	56 (4,3%)
I like decorating the school with the pictures of heroes	843 (64,2%)	296 (22,5%)	175 (13,3%)
At the national celebrations of my school I have good time	800 (60,9%)	369 (28,1%)	145 (11%)
All students must participate in the school celebrations	782 (59,5)	355 (27)	177 (13,5)
Everything that takes place during the school celebration symbolizes something	978 (74,4)	250 (19,1)	86 (6,5)
We must coronate heroes	937 (71,3%)	244 (18,6%)	133 (10,1%)
National celebrations teach history	828 (63%)	345 (26,3%)	141 (10,7%)
National celebrations teach the important events of Greek history	957 (72,8%)	278 (21,2%)	79 (6%)
National celebrations help students to learn about the history of their homeland	996 (75,8%)	232 (17,7%)	86 (6,5%)
National celebrations are an integral part of school life	761 (57,9%)	366 (27,9%)	187 (14,2%)
National heroes are model to emulate for children	621 (47,2%)	466 (35,5%)	227 (17,3%)
National celebrations remind us the course of the Greek nation	938 (71,4%)	298 (22,7%)	78 (5,9%)

The first factor results from 13 variables: Q42, Q43, Q39, Q38, Q44, Q31, Q41, Q25, Q23, Q19, Q37, Q22, Q15) and explains 19,196% of the total variance.

Analysis

Based on the answers, pupils' opinion on the national celebrations at schools is revealed. From the answers given related to the honouring of heroes, pupils agree, with 84,9% and 71,3% respectively, that *we must honour the heroes that sacrificed for the country* and *to coronate heroes*, because *national heroes are model to emulate for children* (47,2%).

The answers on decorating the school with the pictures of heroes, 64, 2% of the pupils states that they do *like decorating the school with the pictures of heroes*.

Pupils agree that *national celebrations teach the important events of Greek history* (72, 8%), *remind us the course of the Greek nation* (71, 4%), *help students to learn about the*

history of their homeland (75, 8%) and teach history (63%). They agree that *everything that takes place during the school celebration symbolizes something* (74, 4%) and that *we must celebrate the national celebrations* (86,3%), *must participate in the school celebrations* (59,5%), *because they have good time* (60,9%). They also agree with the declaration that *national celebrations are an integral part of school life* (57, 9%).

We observe that national anniversaries, school celebrations and the national cultural material as a different historic source reinforce the historical knowledge and seeks the rendering of historical reality.

2nd axes: Evaluation of school celebrations

Table 8: Distribution of the degree of agreement with the views of the second factorial axis

2 nd factorial axes: Evaluation of school celebrations	I agree	Neither agree nor disagree	I disagree
National celebrations are boring	240 (18,3%)	2828 (21,5%)	792 (60,2%)
We are bored when the teachers speaks at the national celebrations	367 (27,9%)	278 (21,2%)	669 (50,9%)
I like parading	955 (72,7%)	230 (17,5%)	129 (9,8%)
Parades must be abolished	129 (9,8%)	178 (13,6%)	1007 (76,6%)
I feel proud when I parade	1021 (77,7%)	179 (13,6%)	114 (8,7%)
National celebrations in schools must be abolished	116 (8,8%)	190 (14,5%)	1008 (76,7%)
At national celebrations I am tired because I am standing still for many hours	432 (32,9%)	262 (19,9%)	620 (47,2%)
I don't like the national celebrations that take place in school	200 (15,2%)	229 (17,4%)	885 (67,4%)
National celebrations are a good opportunity to get together with our friends	319 (24,3%)	287 (21,8%)	708 (53,9%)
Parades take place in order for our parents to take pride of us	308 (23,4%)	317 (24,1%)	689 (52,4%)
During the national celebrations we avoid classes	722 (54,9%)	226 (17,2%)	366 (27,9%)
All the celebrations that take place in school are national celebrations	299 (22,8%)	271 (20,6%)	744 (56,6%)
Parades take place in order to demonstrate that we walk with proper gait	211 (16,1%)	202 (15,4%)	901 (68,5%)
Pupils' participation in the parades is compulsory	622 (47,3%)	323 (24,6%)	369 (28,1%)

The second factorial axis emerges from 14 variables: Q26, Q28, Q45, Q20, Q33, Q35, Q29, Q30, Q36, Q34, Q27, Q40, Q21, Q17) and explains 16,233% of the total variance. On the specific factorial axes, the declarations are focused on the Evaluation of school celebrations.

We observe that 72,7% of the pupils of our research agree with the declaration *I like parading because they feel proud when (they) parade* (77,7%). We can also notice that pupils in 56, 6% disagree with the declaration that *all the celebrations that take place in school are national celebrations*. Although that pupils agree that *during the national celebrations (we) avoid classes* (54,9%), they disagree with the declaration that *at national celebrations I am tired because I am standing still for many hours* (47,2%), the declaration that they *(I) don't like the national celebrations that take place in school* (67,4%), the declaration that *national celebrations are a good opportunity to get together with our friends* (53,9%), the declaration that *they (we) are bored when the teachers speaks at the national celebrations* (50,9%) and that *national celebrations are boring* (50,9%).

At the same time they disagree with the declaration that *parades, as a necessary complement of national celebrations, take place in order to demonstrate that we walk with proper gait* (68,5%), *in order for our parents to take pride of us* (52,4%) and they end up agreeing on the maintaining of parades with 76,7%.

3rd axes: Ethnic and political education

Table 9: Distribution of the degree of agreement with the views of the third factorial axis

3 rd factorial axes: Ethnic and political education	I agree	Neither agree nor disagree	I disagree
With national celebrations I learn to cooperate with my schoolmates	458 (34,9%)	418 (31,8%)	438 (33,3%)
National celebrations help pupils become responsible citizens	524 (39,9%)	467 (35,5%)	323 (24,6%)
Only our forefathers made history	256 (19,5%)	396 (30,1%)	662 (50,4%)
Pupils' participation in the school celebrations should be compulsory	493 (37,5%)	407 (31%)	414 (31,5%)
National celebrations help us avoid the mistakes of the past	514 (39,2%)	467 (35,5%)	333 (25,3%)
With national celebrations we celebrate wars	359 (27,3%)	308 (23,4%)	647 (49,3%)
National celebrations help students become better human beings	512 (39%)	524 (39,8%)	278 (21,2%)
National celebrations are repeated every year without	644	333	337

any differentiation	(49%)	(25,4%)	(25,6%)
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The third factorial axis emerges from 8 variables: Q13, Q18, Q12, Q14, Q16, Q11, Q24, Q32), explaining 13,636% of the total variance. The third factor expresses the view that the school events contribute to the attainment of the objectives of education and socialization, but they also intervene in the formulation of the behavior of students as future citizens.

We observe that 662 pupils (50, 4%) know that not only *our forefathers made history* and that we do not only *celebrate wars with national celebrations* (647 pupils, 49, 3%). Although 644 pupils (49%) estimate that *national celebrations are repeated every year without any differentiation*, they consider that *participation in the school celebrations should be compulsory* (493, 37, 5%), because *national celebrations help us avoid the mistakes of the past* (514, ποσοστό 39, 2%), *become responsible citizens* (524, 39, 9%), even though they are not certain if *national celebrations help students become better human beings* (524, ποσοστό 39,8%). However, they think that *with national celebrations they (I) learn to cooperate with their (my) schoolmates* (458, 34, 9%).

We see that there is a relation between the official national ideology (Spanakou, 1994: 55) and the school national celebrations, since the axes on which they organize concern the ideological level aiming at the reproduction of national myths and stereotypes.

National and politic education seems to be directly linked to the projects of educational policy in addition to the social functions – operations of the educational system.

4th axes: *Reproduction of national identity*

Table 10: Distribution of the degree of agreement with the views of the fourth factorial axis

4 th factorial axes: <i>Reproduction of national identity</i>	I agree	Neither agree nor I disagree	I disagree
National celebrations take place in order to remember the achievements of our ancestors	1044 (79,5%)	197 (15%)	73 (5,5%)
National celebrations remind us our glorified past	1074 (81,7%)	185 (14,1%)	55 (4,2%)
National celebrations take place in order to honor our heroes	1055 (80,3%)	176 (13,4%)	83 (6,3%)
National celebrations take place in order not to forget Greek history	951 (72,4%)	250 (19%)	113 (8,6%)
National celebrations take place in order to remember the events of Greek history	986 (75%)	235 (17,9%)	92 (7,1%)
National celebrations take place in order to understand that our forefathers fought for us to live free	1104 (84%)	168 (12,8%)	42 (3,2%)
National celebrations highlight the virtues of the Greeks	299 (22,7%)	902 (34,2%)	113 (8,6%)
National celebrations teach students how to respect their national heroes	902 (68,7%)	309 (23,5%)	103 (7,8%)

National celebrations help students realize their duty to their country	782 (59,5%)	371 (28,2%)	161 (12,3%)
National celebrations teach us to love our country	1028 (78,2%)	222 (16,9%)	64 (4,9%)

The fourth factorial axis emerges from 10 variables: Q1, Q2, Q8, Q7, Q9, Q3, Q5, Q4, Q10, Q6) and explains 11,819% of the total variance. On this specific factorial axes, declarations focus on the reproduction of national identity.

We observe that with 79,5% (1044) pupils consider *national celebrations take place in order to remember the achievements of our ancestors, to remind us our glorified past* (1074, 81,7%) as well as to *not to forget Greek history* (951, 72,4%), especially to *remember the events of Greek history* (986, 75%). At the same time pupils agree that *national celebrations take place in order to honour our heroes* (1055, 80,3%), to *teach students how to respect their national heroes* (902, 68,7%), and those that *fought for us to live free* (1104, 84%). Also, *national celebrations teach us to love our country* (1028, 78,2%) in addition to *realize our duty to our country* (782, 59,5%).

Finally, 902 (34,2) pupils do not give a clear answer on the declaration that *national celebrations highlight the virtues of the Greeks*.

Table 11: Distribution of the degree of agreement of pupils by sex and factorial axis

Axes	Boys		Girls		Total	
	M**	S***	M	S	M	S
1st axes: <i>The role and content of school celebrations*</i>	19,92	3,958	19,53	3,626	19,72	3,790
2nd factorial axes: <i>Evaluation of school celebrations *</i>	24,74	4,738	25,72	4,671	25,23	4,700
3rd factorial axes: <i>Ethnic and political education*</i>	13,74	3,001	14,14	3,073	13,94	3,030
4th factorial axes: <i>Reproduction of national identity *</i>	13,39	3,183	13,24	3,229	13,31	3,200

* $p > 0,05$

** M = Average

*** S = Standard deviation

[(1st axes: $t = 1,365$, $df = 1312$, $p = 0,173 > 0,005$), (2nd axes: $t = 3,538$, $df = 1312$, $p = 0,000 < 0,005$), (3rd axes: $t = 2,575$, $df = 1312$, $p = 0,010 < 0,005$), (4th axes: $t = 0,533$, $df = 1312$, $p = 0,539 > 0,005$)]

Final Remarks

In general we see that on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd axes, the averages of the agreement degree of boys and girls move near the response *neither I agree nor I disagree*, while displaying a tendency to agree with the statements of the 4th axis (t. 11).

We note that the national celebrations in elementary school promote basically national and less politic education as a civic, international education, because a) on the one hand they contribute to the formation of national identity, by deleting the content and limits of “national” memory and b) on the other hand participate in the shaping and engraving of national (Stathis, 1994: 100-101).

National celebrations seem to consort with the nationalizing role of the historical science and are organized in such a way as to support national aspirations (Liakos, 1994: 28).

Thus, school’s celebrations and parades are amplifiers of production and reproduction of the dominant national and class ideology. Students of the Greek primary school involved in this grid of national and religious ideological concordance are directed to the development of a purely national education. This fact demonstrates the negative cultural consequences of a one-dimensional form of education and of society (Marcuse, 1968). Social and historic education seems to be downgraded as Ministers of Education promote the core subjects and leave no place for learning how society worked within heterogeneous, multicultural communities (Ross, 2008: 60).

Nevertheless multiple, formal citizenship is now possible, because of the increase level of international migration and settlement. In this context, the role of the school must be redefined in order to reflect the current social, political and moral needs within civic education. In this context, the role of the school must be redefined because in today's multicultural school; national festivities make up an “empty signified” since in the school environment a total homogenization of citizens on specific standards is arranged (Barry, 1983). The new educational demand refers to the current social, political and moral needs within civic education.

As Ross remarks “while many politicians would settle for a passive citizen, who votes, subscribes to the state, and obeys the law, many others including perhaps most teachers would hope to empower active citizens, who critically engage with and seek to affect the course of social events” (Ross, (2008: 23).

In following Aristotle’s investigation of the citizenship through both the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics, we read the connection between ethics and politics. The Nicomachean Ethics offer an account of civic education: it acknowledges the authoritative role of the political community and the law with regard to education, and it clarifies how this education bears on concerning the question on the “good”.

Aristotle is able to explore a concern central to human experience that liberal thought obscures: the relation between the good life and the nobility and justice that constitute morally virtuous action. Aristotle shows that as the educator to virtue, the political community necessarily elevates this life as best and seeks to reconcile two ends as proper to right action: common good and perfection in virtue as an end in itself.

In his account of the most complete virtue, justice, he establishes that the deepest problem of civic education is the irrepressible tension between these two ends:

The main aim of the education is knowledge with respect to virtue.

εἰ γὰρ μὴ οὕτως εἶχεν, οὐδὲν ἂν ἔδει τοῦ διδάξοντος, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἂν ἐγίνοντο ἀγαθοὶ ἢ κακοί

Aristotle's ethics concerns the social and political virtue vs the individual's.

Οἱ γὰρ νομοθέται τοὺς πολίτας
ἐθίζοντες ποιοῦσιν ἀγαθοῦς,
καὶ τὸ μὲν βούλημα παντὸς
νομοθέτου τοῦτ' ἐστίν, ὅσοι δὲ μὴ
εὔ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν ἀμαρτάνουσιν,
καὶ διαφέρει τούτῳ πολιτεία
πολιτείας ἀγαθῆ φαύλης (Collins, 2009).

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