**INTRODUCTION**

**Book *Citizenship Education and the Personalization of Democracy***

**Hubert Hermans & Rob Bartels**

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The basic motive for writing this book is that contemporary society needs young adults who learn to personalize democracy, that is, to make citizenship an integral part of their everyday lives. Why? Given the recent spread of nationalism in many countries around the world and the increasing trend toward authoritarianism of their citizens, teachers and educators are becoming more and more aware of the necessity of citizenship education with special attention to critical thinking, personal and social responsibility, and ecological awareness. A recent report of the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA) (Schultz et al., 2018), summarizes research in secondary schools in 24 countries under the title “Becoming citizens in a changing world.” The study showed that the three goals that teachers deemed the most important for the development of their students were: promoting students’ critical and independent thinking (61%), promoting students’ knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities (57%), and promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment (51%) (p. xvi).

Our proposed book not only endorses these aims but also adds a significant *psychological* dimension. It not only promotes critical thinking in general but also self-critical thinking in that it invites students to examine their own beliefs, values, and identities.[[1]](#footnote-1) As authors we aim not only to emphasize the responsibilities of citizens in general but also their own personal and social responsibilities as world citizens. Moreover, we want to enhance respect for the environment and stimulate the development of an “ecological identity” that makes students aware that they themselves are part of the earth. The book achieves these aims not only by providing critical information about basic democratic principles, but also, and even primarily, by personalizing democracy: exploring the experiences of students in their own lives through thought-provoking questions, guiding concepts, self-quizzes, exciting games and interactive exercises. The book is written in such a way that the language is accessible to undergraduate and graduate educational levels at higher education and at the same time refers to situations in their own personal lives.

Why is such a book urgent? In general, democracy has long been considered as one of the most precious achievements of contemporary society. In marked contrast to this view is the recent finding that presently there is, in many countries, dissatisfaction regarding the actual functioning of democracy. In an international survey by the Pew Research Center (Kent, 2019) across 27 nations in 2018, it appeared that, overall, people were more dissatisfied than satisfied with the way democracy is working in their countries. Although the satisfaction was high in some countries (e.g., Sweden, Indonesia, Philippines), it was very low in other countries (e.g., Mexico, Greece, Brazil). Even in the US, traditionally seen as the democratic pinnacle of our civilization, more respondents were dissatisfied than satisfied. The finding that the average dissatisfaction across the nations under investigation was higher than the rate of satisfaction, may serve as a wake-up call to all those people who are devoted to its basic principles.

Despite these findings, citizens generally have a strong preference for such democratic principles as freedom of speech, freedom of elections and the right to demonstrate. Many people believe that the world is a better place with protection of civil rights by democratic institutions such as parliamentary systems, judiciary systems, and the rule of law. But is it enough to just merely *endorse* such privileges that our recent history has offered us?

**Which difference does this book make?**

We argue in this book that democracy needs much more than just *agreeing* with democracy. A democratic society needs citizens who want more than expressing their preference for free elections, freedom of speech and constitutional rights. These conditions are too non-committal for developing a society in which people interact with each other in a genuinely democratic way. Democracy is then only vital if it is rooted in the personal experiential world of the people who live in such societies. This is exactly the core message of this book. It is not intended to enhance *knowledge* about democracy, but to explore and develop your personal democratic *attitude*. This attitude involves not only the way you interact with important people in your immediate environmentbut also with how you think and feel about other groups in the society. It also touches upon the way you interact with yourself and how you react to your own emotions when confronted with serious political debates and discussions. In this book you will start to explore how you might develop tolerance and understanding for individuals and groups who differ from you as a person. But you will also learn to explore the thoughts and emotions that arise in yourself by ‘the otherness’ of someone else and what responses this might trigger in yourself.

This book doesn’t only give you instruments to explore your democratic attitude vis-à-vis other persons and yourself, it also wants to help you to stimulate and further develop this attitude. The book invites you in the first place to explore what democracy means in your own personal life. Then, via background information, you will be given questions, exercizes, and other means to give your democratic attitude an extra stimulant. This is in a nutshell what developing “inner democracy” means: to further your personal democratic attitude vis-à-vis yourself and other people. After all, also within your inner self you can act in a more or less democratic manner. This manifests itself in the acknowledgement and tolerance of inner conflicts and inner contrary viewpoints in your contact with other persons who hold different opinions, viewpoints, and motivations. Inner democracy then means that we acquire knowledge about conflicting points of view and learn how to respond to them in a way that does justice to ourselves and other people.

Along this route, this book wants to make a contribution to the development of *personal citizenship*. This form of citizenship is more than just knowledge about your rights and duties in the society. It addresses the way you shape democracy in your interaction with yourself and with individuals and groups that are different from you. In this context we give ample attention to the fundamental importance of dialogue: in what respect can you and do you want to entertain a dialogical relationship with other people and with your own self. This implies that you can learn to listen in an attentive way to other people and that you acknowledge the impulses and emotions that get invoked in you and learn how you can respond to these emotions. A productive inner dialogue promotes a mutually productive relationship between reason and emotion. Democracy doesn’t just occur in a voting place, but also, and especially, at home, at school, on the street and at moments when you start an inner dialogue and start your own self-exploration.

In that self-exploration you will begin to investigate the different ways you can deal with situations in your own society: as a student in relation to your teachers, as a student in relation to your fellow students, as a sports fanatic in relation to other sports lovers, as a contact on Facebook and in your relationship with different cultural groups that are part of our global society. We call the various ways you assume a position vis-à-vis other persons, *I*-positions and you will learn in this book that all those *I*-positions are more or less democratically organized. They all want to have a justified place in your life. One of the most striking new aspects of this book is the idea that the *inner society of I-positions* forms a micro-society that is a part of the society at large and that this micro-society can also be democratically organized. The way you organize your life has direct implications for the way you deal with other individuals and with the *I*-positions within yourself. When we talk about *I*-positions, we have also we-positions in mind, as “I” and “we” are often intimately related. In this book we explore the connection between your personal inner life and the relations you maintain with other people in the society. That is why we entitled the book: Citizenship Education and the Personalization of Democracy.

*The basic message behind this title is to stimulate an awareness that you are an important agent in our society. Your engagement is needed. It is important to know who you are and how you are shaped by the world as a member of a functioning democracy and how you define your own role as a participating member in this world.*

**The structure of the book**

From our assumption that democracy starts in yourself we propose that the basic principles *opposition*, *cooperation*, and *participation* are timely and relevant in situations in which international media refer to growing nationalist and populist movements and divisive identity struggles. Although these trends may express an explicit or implicit desire for the protection of national and group identities in a globalizing world, they typically seek to divide communities and countries along the lines of citizenship, race, language, and nationality. This suggests that global conversations about how we understand our personal role in democracy and global citizenship is and urgent.

*Opposition* (Part 1)

A democratic society does not exist without opposition or conflict. Democracy can only be vital and viable when space is given to individuals or groups who hold points of view regarding political and societal concerns that differ from the majority. A full-grown democracy is characterized by respect for minorities and by being open to their viewpoints, possibilities, and desires. Discussion, competition, and conflicting arguments all offer possibilities in bringing together a diversity of opinions and ways of exploring them. Democracy allows alternative voices to be expressed and to be taken seriously, even when they conflict with each other.

A fundamental argument of this book is that we don’t just apply opposition to democracy at large, but also, in the form of inner opposition, apply it to the relations a person has within themselves. Inner democracy implies that participants in a society are capable of not just having opposition to other individuals but also within themselves. In this book we invite you to explore how you can not only allow yourself to react in a critical way to other individuals but also to different voices within yourself. When you allow opposition in yourself in a productive way and when you are capable of correcting or nuancing some of your original opinions, then space opens up to escape from your own bubble and explore alternative opinions and viewpoints on their own merits, both toward other individuals as well as toward yourself. This book challenges you to get out of your comfort zone and to assume, temporarily, the point of view of someone else who has a different opinion and from there to change or broaden your original opinions without relinquishing altogether your original point of view.

*Cooperation* (Part 2)

In a democratic society it is not possible to move on with only conflict and opposition. There should be a moment when you come to cooperation. In that cooperation space needs to be given to discuss central themes of the society that ask for solutions or answers (e.g., climate change, the power of digital giants communication platforms, immigration). Along this route coalitions can arise among parties or groups that contribute their own answers to those questions and explore possible solutions. When a constructive coalition arises, the participants can *learn* something from each other that was not present beforehand. This learning from each other applies not only in the political realm, but everywhere where people live or work together: at work, in school, in the family, or a sports club. Working and living together requires a continuous learning process in which you let someone else express certain views from which you can learn something you didn’t know beforehand or even something that is completely new for you.

A basic characteristic of inner democracy is that we not only learn from each other, but also, and closely related to it, from ourselves. When it comes to learning, we observe that we do not pick up much new information from friends who just pat us on our heads compared to opponents who give critical comments about our behavior and beliefs. Critique or revision can also come from a friend or fellow student who has the courage to tell us things we do not like very much to hear. Those remarks can haunt us, we remember them and we will keep walking around for a while with those comments. Time to learn! Our most stubborn opponent are our emotions that arise when we get challenged by criticism or painful comments. That is a possible turning point. Do we give priority to the negative emotion and ignore the opposing voice or do we move forward through that emotion and turn it to our advantage? That is why we pay a lot of attention in this book to the concept of inner dialogue between emotion and reason as a prerequisite for a learning process and as a source of self-correction and self-innovation.

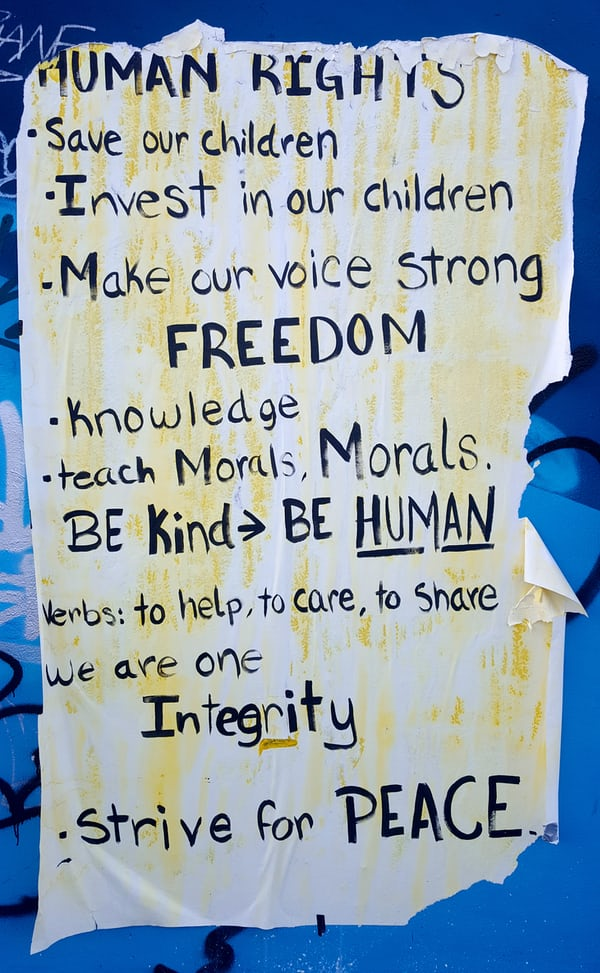


Figure I1. Plea for democracy

Source: Unsplash.

*Participation* (Part 3)

When you make room for opposition and then, consequently, learn from each other in cooperative endeavors, then active participation of citizens in a globalizing society is essential. Participation emerges by using rights (e.g. freedom of speech, freedom of religion, giving each other equal rights) and obligations vis-à-vis the society (e.g. complying with the law, offering help in emergencies, paying taxes). If citizens are not willing to comply with their obligations and accept responsibilities, when they do not abide the law, and if they are not willing to make their contribution to a “good society”, then we can no longer speak of a democracy.

Participation is not just a guiding principle in the society at large but also in our inner selves. Divergent situations invoke in us different *I*-positions. These function not just as roles we play in social interactions (as a parent, an employee, a student). They can also be personal as in a situation in which we react in a deviant way when we feel we are treated unjustly. They are also personal if we are cooperative when someone asks for our help or when we share a secret with a friend. All those *I*-positions ask for attention because each one of them, in particular situations, play a role in our inner society of mind.

Participation in a localized and globalized world has important consequences for the definition of citizenship. Traditionally, citizenship is defined as “the status of a person recognized under the custom or law as being a legal citizen of a sovereign state or belonging to a nation.”[[2]](#footnote-2) For participation as an engaged citizen in a globalizing world, a broader definition is required. We propose a definition of *multilevel citizenship* that, closely associated with identity formation, functions at different levels of inclusion: (a) I as an individual; (b) I as a group member; (c) I as part of humanity; and (d) I as part of the earth. The advantage of this conception is that it broadens citizenship beyond the individual level (I as an individual) and beyond the group level (e.g., I as belonging to this nation or my ethnic identity). It also gives space to I as a representative of humanity who is able and willing to act as a global citizen in a highly interconnected world. And, crucial in a period of climate change, it has the potential of making people aware of their being part of the earth. We will argue in Part 3 of this book that each of these levels coexist with specific responsibilities: personal responsibility (I as an individual person), social responsibility (e.g., I as a citizen of this country), collective responsibility (I as a global citizen), and ecological responsibility (I as part of the earth). A democratic citizen develops the capacity to *move flexibly from one level of inclusion to another*, contingent on the demands of the situation at hand and, correspondingly, is able to respond with different kinds of responsibility as the result of an inner dialogue. The innovative implication of this view is that citizenship is not something you “have” (“possess”) as a member of a country, state, or city viewed as an “external” community. The central idea is that you are also, and even primarily, a citizen of your own society of mind that participates, at the same time, in the society at large.

In this micro-society we find *I*-positions that have an important influence on the society at large. An example we describe in this book is the relation between ‘I as a consumer’ (individual level) and ‘I as a global citizen’ (collective level). These positions are sometimes in conflict with each other in situations in which we need to make a choice. A certain choice demands an inner dialogue that determines the ultimate result of the choice we make in a specific situation (e.g., I know that our food choices have a direct impact on the future of the rainforests , but I like to eat meat, what do I do?).

The recent outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic that has shocked the world order and will alter it in the long run, adds to the necessity of the idea of a multi-level citizenship. As Alemanno (2020) writes, the COVID-19 infection is not the first nor will it be the last of a series of real or potential catastrophes – be they pandemics, natural disasters, or terrorist attacks – that have taken us by surprise. No other emergency has led to such disrupting lock-down measures world-wide, to the paralysis of the world economy and to the unveiling gap between global economic interdependence and nation-state governance. No other risk management response has raised so many novel legal, ethical, moral, and political issues. No other pandemic has been covered continually by a 24-hour news cycle, amplified by social media users, often reporting conflicting information simultaneously. No other crisis has suddenly reshaped our individual and collective ideas of uncertainty and risk. Ultimately, no other event carries the potential to disrupt our democratic, economic, legal, social and cultural systems. These development are an unprecedented challenge to our multi-level citizenship. It dramatically affects not only our individual lives, but also the relationships between social groups as economically disadvantaged groups are afflicted more seriously than are more advantaged groups. The awareness that we are highly interdependent on a global scale requires us to give a response to the pandemic that transcends the boundaries of any social, political, or national group. This new situation compels us to think not only as individuals or group members but also as members of humankind as the broadest level of our solidarity. The pandemic has even an impact on an ecological level as it alters our relationship with animals, nature and the earth itself. Therefore, we emphasize in Part 3 of this book that the development of inner democracy requires our participation at different identity levels: I as individual, we as members of social groups, we as part of humanity, and we as part of the earth.

The foregoing shows that there is a close relation between the external democracy in a society at large and internal democracy in the micro-society of *I*-positions and we-positions in ourselves. Basic characteristics, like opposition, cooperation, and participation, can be applied in both domains whereby communication channels arise that facilitate a flexible moving back and forth from one domain to the other. The result is that self and society are no longer considered as separate components (my own little world versus the big society) but as parts of a self & society interconnection. The self is a micro-society, that not only “moves along” with changes in the macro-society but also influences that society as being part of it, in a more or less productive way.

**Pedagogical foundation**

From a pedagogical point of view, the book is inspired by John Dewey’s (1938) three democratic principles as elaborated in their practical implications by MacMath (2008): (a) all human beings are morally equal; (b) we can solve any problem if we work collaboratively; and (c) we are all capable of forming intelligent and well-informed opinions.

The principle of *moral equality* implies that student-relevant histories have an equal place within the curricula. This means that students should be able to see their multicultural histories reflected in school curricula. Teachers are invited to actively seek out the multicultural experiences of their students and give that information a place in the curriculum. Empowerment of students is derived from knowledge and social relations that each respect their own histories, languages, and cultural traditions. In this sense, democracy is linked to transformative dialogue and actions that have the potential of altering the oppressive conditions in which marginalized groups in our society are living. This means a shift from traditional definitions of society in terms of a strictly political agenda of national government to considering democracy as a transformative tool for citizens to re-imagine their society. The principle of moral equality functions as the pedagogical basis of Part 1 of this book that deals with *opposition* and space for discussion between individuals and groups that are considered as equal human beings from a moral point of view.

In order to realize the *principle of collaboration*, students are invited to listen to others, to share their opinions and thoughts , and to provide peer assessment and feedback. A democratic pedagogy implies that students are engaged in a collaborative dialogue in which they are encouraged to discuss controversial issues and become involved in teamwork. These practices not only need to permeate the classroom, they also exist between the classroom and the community at large. The community can be brought into the classroom by inviting local speakers or local politicians and the students can orient themselves to the community. This “outward-looking” community approach is defined broadly, including not only the interactions with other individuals and groups but also local and global connections. Local community members can be brought into the classroom for presentations and projects, global connections can be made by communication with students in other countries through the internet and multimedia. The principle of collaboration is a central issue in Part 2 that focuses on *cooperation*.

The *principle of developing intelligent and well-informed opinions* is essential in Dewey’s assertion that reflection, as a method of intelligence, is central to a democracy where citizens participate in the reconstruction of values so that they find a basis in themselves to decide what to believe and what not to believe. To make informed judgments, explicit instructions in critical thinking are needed as well as opportunities to practice decision-making. Explicit instructions in critical thinking requires the capacity to take multiple perspectives while simultaneously making connections between these perspectives. Explicit instructions are required to help students define and develop various fundamental mind sets. These mind sets include an “awareness of one’s own thinking processes, inquisitiveness, fair-mindedness, tolerance, sensitivity, open-mindedness, persistence, and the ability to set goals and make plans” (Kassem, 2000, p. 31). The principle of forming intelligent and well-informed opinions is the pedagogical basis of Part 3 on *participation*.

**The methodology of this book**

Each of the three parts of the book (opposition, cooperation, and participation) is divided among five to seven chapters in which the idea of inner democracy is further explored. In each of those chapters we apply the principle of “circular learning”, not very different from Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning. We ask you at the beginning of a chapter what you know about a certain topic and what your experiences are, for instance, about empathy, polarization, or narcissism. Then we give background information about these specific topics and we describe what is known about that subject in the scientific literature. As a response to this information, we give you the opportunity to ask critical questions about the content of that specific chapter. The knowledge you have acquired in that chapter as well as your reflections can be discussed with your fellow students.

Table I.1 Sections within each chapter and description of its content

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sections** | **Description** |
| From your own experience | What you have already experienced? |
| Background information | What is known about this topic in the literature |
| Critical questions | Inviting you to look critically at the preceding text |
| Exercises | Practices to bridge knowing and doing |
| Reflection | Returning to your own experience: What is changed? |

At the end of each chapter we present some *exercises* in which you can apply what you have learned. You can do these exercises together with your fellow students under the guidance of the teacher, so you can discuss the results with each other. Sometimes we will offer exercises that you can do individually. The purpose of these exercises is to apply the theoretical insights you have learned to everyday situations and we offer you specific guidelines about the various ways you can do this. And finally, there is an opportunity for *reflection*, the intention of which is making the circle go round and make the connection between what you have learned with your prior knowledge.

We present the substance of the book in 18 short chapters. In those chapters we describe certain basic concepts (e.g., “*I*-position”, “boundaries of the self,” “consumption”) in various different contexts. Inspired by the principle of *distributed learning* (Kang, 2016; Kirschner, 2017),these concepts will return repeatedly in the successive chapters so you can apply them in various different situations. This not only helps you to apply the concepts in different situations in a flexible manner, but also their storage in long-term memory.

To strengthen the memory storage of what has been learned so far, we give, at the end of each part, a *selfquiz* consisting of 10 multiple-choice questions to check if you have correctly digested the background information. To pass the quiz, you need to give at least 7 correct answers to the 10 questions. In case you do not pass the test, you are invited to re-examine the chapters of that part and answer the quiz questions again. The correct answers are included in the appendix at the end of the book. This method ensures that you get specific feedback about the level of your knowledge regarding a certain topic and that you have mastered the contents of the chapters.

**Readership**

The intended readership of this book are educators at BA and MA college and university level and their students as prospective teachers at elementary and secondary school levels. The primary focus will be future teachers at the secondary level, with those who teach at the elementary level as the secondary focus. We created a website that includes specific guidelines, practices, and exercises that are helpful to apply the subjects and topics of the book at both the elementary and secondary levels.

The book is particularly useful for the following target groups:

- Teachers and students of courses on *Civic and Citizenship Education* (CCE). This subject is taught in various education programs in the emerging area of civic studies and in teacher-education programs in Schools of Education. While civics relates to civic knowledge, citizenship is more broadly defined and addresses attitudes, values, dispositions, and skills. Citizenship is the primary focus of our book. The tenor of our book can be found in Wikipedia’s article on “Civic education in the United States” (read May 11, 2019) which explains that 21st century education has shifted to reflect youths’ “personally expressive politics” and “peer-to-peer relationships” that promote citizenship engagement. This is exactly what we promote in our book.

- Teacher training in *pedagogy* as a discipline and practice implies teaching children and young students to learn to develop themselves not only as individuals but also as citizens of the larger community. As such, young students will learn about themselves (with a focus on personal responsibility), what it means to engage with the social world around them (social responsibility), how to become constructive and contributing members of the society at large (collective responsibility) and how to be ecologically aware citizens (ecological responsibility).

- Teachers/professors and their students in *Schools of Education*. We are focusing on (a) professional teacher-education programs leading to Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Education (M.ED.), or Master of Arts in Teaching degrees, both at the undergraduate and graduate level (Master’s degree), and

(b) *Introductory government and political science* classes and courses that are taught in the first year of Political Science curriculum. The book would also be useful as a reference for instructors teaching introductory courses on Government/Civics.

- As the book includes many psychological topics, it can also be used by *teachers of psychology* who are interested in the interface of psychology and political science. In particular, we think of courses in political psychology.

- Finally, we see this book as a supplementary text in *English Education classrooms* where teaching about equity, diversity, and issues of social justice is promoted. The book is also useful for helping students gain insight in their identity formation via the specific methods as described in the previous section.

The book is written “in the language of the student” and as such is usable at freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior levels at the undergraduate level. At the graduate level the book can be used for students who want to pursue a master’s or Ph.D. degree in education. Depending on the nature of a specific curriculum, the book can be used in courses for students who pursue a degree with a major or double major or who do advanced course work on a graduate level.

**In short**

The goal of the method chosen for this book is to build a bridge between democracy at large and democracy in ourselves. We consider this mini-democracy as a necessary ingredient for democracy at large, from the point of view that a vital democracy needs to have its roots in the fertile soil of our personal thoughts, emotions, and experiences. With the help of the three concepts – opposition, cooperation, and participation – we are building a bridge between self and society, as a way to relate macro-democracy and inner democracy. Because democracy in general is considered as an essential asset in our society, it makes sense to establish a connection between the way we interact with each other in the society and the way we relate to ourselves, our personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions.[[3]](#footnote-3) This can all be summarized with the slogan that democracy should not be endorsed but lived.

1. See also Johnson & Morris (2010) who include values and identities in their concept of critical citizenship. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See “citizenship” as defined by Wikipedia, read November 20, 2019. See also Caves (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The scientific basis of the concept of inner democracy was explored in two earlier works of Hubert Hermans: *Society in the self: A theory of identity in democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) and *Inner Democracy: Empowering the mind against a polarizing society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). For personalizing politics see also Caprara & Vecchione’s (2017) book *Personalizing Politics and Realizing Democracy.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)