

VIRTUE AND PSYCHIC MOTION IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*
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INTRODUCTION

Early ethical education prepares the soul for the acquisition of laws and correct judgements by providing the soul with correct hedonic experiences and their corresponding attitudes, e.g. the soul is pleased by and praises what is fine whereas it is distressed by and censures what is shameful. [Passage T1]

Early ethical education furnishes the soul with an accurate ethical discriminatory faculty, in the sense that it will get things right about excellences and vices in the form of correctly perceiving (i.e. identifying) or knowing genuine instances of excellences and vices. [Passage T2]

Passages T1 and T2 suggest a connection between the two benefits, namely that certain hedonic experiences are at the basis of perceptually knowing genuine instances of excellences and vices.

CLAIMS

[C1] Simple perception of an excellence or a vice can produce the psychic condition or affection (*πάθος*) corresponding to that excellence or vice in the soul of the perceiving subject; put another way, the perceiving soul can mirror the (psychic) condition of an excellence or a vice by being in mere perceptual contact with it.¹ [Passages T3, T6, and T7]

[A1] Excellences and vices have psychic conditions corresponding to them, e.g. temperance involves a certain psychic condition or affection. — Why? — Well, excellences and vices are either pleasant or distressful to the soul: after all, they either satisfy or frustrate the soul's desires; and what is pleasant (*τὸ ἡδύ*) and what is distressful (*τὸ λυπηρόν*) 'are both a sort of motion [*κίνησις τις ἀμφοτέρω ἑστών*]' (*R.* 9 583 E 10) in the soul.

[A2] A psychic motion (*κίνησις*) is a sort of condition or affection (*πάθος*) in the soul.

[C2] Judgements about excellence and vice are for the most part acquired on the basis of pleasure and distress respectively. [Passages T8 and T9; cf. *R.* 5 462 B 4–8, 463 E 4–464 A 7, *R.* 10 605 D 2–6]

[C3] The soul's constitution or order is basically the soul's ethical discriminatory faculty, in the sense that the perceiving soul mirrors the psychic conditions corresponding to (perceived) excellences and vices and these conditions move the soul in some way either supporting its constitution—which amounts to pleasing the ruling part—or disturbing its constitution—which amounts to distressing the ruling part. (The conditions that please are regarded as excellent whereas the conditions that distress are regarded as vicious.) [Passage T10]

¹ I write 'can' because there is an exception to this principle, namely an excellent soul's resistance to vice will not mirror the vice in question; for instance, the wise and quiet characters who witness a weeping and lamenting character do not mirror the perceived psychic condition to the extent that they themselves resist, condemn, etc. the behavior.

T1	<p>Ἄρ' οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὃ Γλαῦκων, τούτων ἕνεκα κυριωτάτη ἐν μουσικῇ τροφῇ, ὅτι μάλιστα καταδύεται εἰς τὸ ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς ὃ τε ῥυθμὸς καὶ ἄρμονία, καὶ ἐρρωμενέστατα ἄπτεται αὐτῆς φέροντα τὴν εὐσχημοσύνην, καὶ ποιεῖ εὐσχήμονα, εἴαν τις ὀρθῶς τραφῇ, εἰ δὲ μή, τοῦναντίον; καὶ ὅτι αὐτῶν παραλειπομένων καὶ μὴ καλῶς δημιουργηθέντων ἢ μὴ καλῶς φύντων ὀξύτατ' ἂν αἰσθάνοιτο ὁ ἐκεῖ τραφεὶς ὡς ἔδει, καὶ ὀρθῶς δὴ δυσχεραίνων τὰ μὲν καλὰ ἐπαινοῖ καὶ χαίροι καὶ καταδεχόμενος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν τρέφοιτ' ἂν ἀπ' αὐτῶν καὶ γίγνοιτο καλὸς τε κάγαθός, τὰ δ' αἰσχροὶ ψέγοι τ' ἂν ὀρθῶς καὶ μισοῖ ἔτι νέος ὢν, πρὶν λόγον δυνατὸς εἶναι λαβεῖν, ἐλθόντος δὲ τοῦ λόγου ἀσπάζοιτ' ἂν αὐτὸν γνωρίζων δι' οἰκειότητα μάλιστα ὁ οὕτω τραφεὶς;</p> <p>Ἐμοὶ γοῦν δοκεῖ, ἔφη, τῶν τοιούτων ἕνεκα ἐν μουσικῇ εἶναι ἡ τροφή.</p>	<p>401 D 4 D 5</p> <p>E 1</p> <p>E 5 402 A 1</p> <p>A 5 402 A 6</p>
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Aren't these the reasons, Glaucon, that musical training is most important? First, because rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bringing it grace, so that if someone is properly educated in music and poetry, it makes him graceful, but if not, then the opposite. Second, because anyone who has been properly educated in music and poetry will most sharply perceive when something has been omitted from a thing and when it hasn't been finely crafted or finely made by nature. And since he is correctly disgusted, he'll praise fine things, enjoy them, receive them into his soul, and, being nourished by them, become fine and good. He'll rightly censure what is shameful, hating it while he's still young and unable to grasp the reason, but, having been educated in this way, he will kindly welcome the arrival of the reason when it comes recognizing it easily because of its kinship with himself.

Yes, I agree that those are the reasons to provide education in music and poetry. (Pl. R. 3 401 D 4–402 A 6)²

T2	<p>Ὡσπερ ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, γραμμάτων περὶ τότε ἰκανῶς εἶχομεν, ὅτε τὰ στοιχεῖα μὴ λανθάνοι ἡμᾶς ὀλίγα ὄντα ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς ἔστιν περιφερόμενα, καὶ οὐτ' ἐν μικρῶ οὐτ' ἐν μεγάλῳ ἠτιμάζομεν αὐτά, ὡς οὐ δέοι αἰσθάνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πανταχοῦ προθυμούμεθα διαγιγνώσκειν, ὡς οὐ πρότερον ἐσόμενοι γραμματικοὶ πρὶν οὕτως ἔχομεν.</p> <p>Ἀληθῆ.</p> <p>Οὐκοῦν καὶ εἰκόνας γραμμάτων, εἴ που ἢ ἐν ὕδασι ἢ ἐν κατοπτροῖς ἐμφαίνονται, οὐ πρότερον γνωσόμεθα, πρὶν ἂν αὐτὰ γνῶμεν, ἀλλ' ἔστιν τῆς αὐτῆς τέχνης τε καὶ μελέτης;</p> <p>Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.</p> <p>Ἄρ' οὖν, ὃ λέγω, πρὸς θεῶν, οὕτως οὐδὲ μουσικοὶ πρότερον ἐσόμεθα, οὔτε αὐτοὶ οὔτε οὓς φαμεν ἡμῖν παιδευτέον εἶναι τοὺς φύλακας, πρὶν ἂν τὰ τῆς σωφροσύνης εἶδη καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ ἐλευθεριότητος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπείας καὶ ὅσα τούτων ἀδελφὰ καὶ τὰ τούτων αὐτῶν ἐναντία πανταχοῦ περιφερόμενα γνωρίζωμεν, καὶ ἐνόητα ἐν οἷς ἔνεστιν αἰσθάνομεθα, καὶ αὐτὰ καὶ εἰκόνας αὐτῶν, καὶ μήτε ἐν μικροῖς μήτε ἐν μεγάλοις ἀτιμάζομεν, ἀλλὰ τῆς αὐτῆς οἰώμεθα τέχνης εἶναι καὶ μελέτης;</p> <p>Πολλὴ ἀνάγκη, ἔφη.</p>	<p>402 A 7</p> <p>B 1</p> <p>B 5</p> <p>C 1</p> <p>C5</p> <p>402 C 9</p>
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² References to pages, sections, and lines of Plato's *Republic* are based on Sling's edition. Translations of the *Republic* are generally loosely based on the translation by G. M. A. Grube, as revised by C. D. C. Reeve, in Cooper (1997).

Then, it is just as when we adequately understood our letters, when the letters —the few there are— did not escape our notice in all things in which they tumble about and neither in small nor in large things we lightly esteemed them as if there be no need to perceive them; but everywhere we were eager to distinguish them, since we would not yet be competent about letters until we understood them in this way.

True.

Is it not the case for images of letters too —if somehow either in bodies of water or in mirrors they were to be reflected— that we shall not yet know [sc. images of letters], until we knew them [sc. the letters], since it [sc. knowing images of letters] belongs to the same craft and discipline?

Absolutely.

Then, by the gods, am I right in saying that in this way and not before we shall be musically trained, whether ourselves or those we say that one must educate to be our guardians, until we know the forms of temperance, courage, liberality, magnificence, and those akin to them, and moreover their opposites, which are tumbling about everywhere, and we perceive their presence in the things in which they are, both them and their images, and we do not dismiss them either in small or in large things, but we think them [sc. perceiving the forms tumbling about everywhere and perceiving their images] to belong to the same craft and discipline?

It is very necessary. (Pl. R. 3 402 A 7–C 9)

T3	<p>Οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν πολλὴν μίμησιν καὶ ποικίλην ἔχει, τὸ ἀγανακτικόν, τὸ δὲ φρόνιμόν τε καὶ ἡσύχιον ἦθος, παραπλήσιον ὃν αἰεὶ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ, οὔτε ῥάδιον μιμήσασθαι οὔτε μιμουμένου εὐπετέες καταμαθεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ πανηγύρει καὶ παντοδαποῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰς θεάτρα συλλεγομένοις; ἀλλοτρίου γάρ που πάθους ἢ μίμησις αὐτοῖς γίνεται.</p> <p>Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.</p> <p>Ὁ δὲ μιμητικὸς ποιητὴς δῆλον ὅτι οὐ πρὸς τὸ τοιοῦτον τῆς ψυχῆς πέφυκε τε καὶ ἡ σοφία αὐτοῦ τούτῳ ἀρέσκειν πέπηγεν, εἰ μέλλει εὐδοκιμήσειν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἀγανακτικόν τε καὶ ποικίλον ἦθος διὰ τὸ εὐμίμητον εἶναι.</p> <p>Δῆλον.</p>	<p>604 E 1</p> <p>E 5</p> <p>605 A 1</p> <p>A 5</p> <p>A 6</p>
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So, does this element, the irritable one, admit a many and diverse imitation whereas the wise and quiet character, being nearly always close to itself, is neither easy to imitate nor easy to understand being imitated, especially at a festival where all kinds of people are gathered together in theaters? For —I suppose— the imitation is of a passion alien to them.

By all means.

It is clear that the imitative poet of all persons is not naturally relating to the soul's element such as this [sc. wise and quiet] nor his wisdom is bent upon pleasing it, if he expects to be popular among the many, but he is naturally relating to the irritable and variegated character because it is easily imitated.

It is clear. (Pl. R. 10 604 D 7–605 A 6)

T4	<p>Τί δέ; σώφρονα οὐ τῇ φιλίᾳ καὶ συμφωνίᾳ τῇ αὐτῶν τούτων, ὅταν τὸ τε ἄρχον καὶ τὸ ἀρχομένῳ τὸ λογιστικόν ὁμοδοξῶσι δεῖν ἄρχειν καὶ μὴ στασιάζωσιν αὐτῷ;</p> <p>Σωφροσύνη γοῦν, ἢ δ' ὅς, οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἢ τοῦτο, πόλεώς τε καὶ ιδιώτου.</p>	<p>442 C 9</p> <p>D 1</p> <p>D 4</p>
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And isn't he temperate because of the friendly and harmonious relation between these same elements, whenever the ruler and the ruled are of the same judgement that the rational part should rule and they don't form a faction against it?

Temperance is surely nothing other than that, both in a city and in an individual. (Pl. R. 4 442 C 9–D 4)

T5	<p>Τῷ φιλοσόφῳ ἄρα ἐπομένης ἀπάσης τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ μὴ στασιαζούσης ἐκάστῳ τῷ μέρει ὑπάρχει εἰς τε τᾶλλα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν καὶ δικαίῳ εἶναι, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς τὰς ἑαυτοῦ ἕκαστον καὶ τὰς βελτίστας καὶ εἰς τὸ δυνατόν τὰς ἀληθεστάτας καρποῦσθαι. Κομιδῇ μὲν οὖν.</p>	<p>586 E 4 E 5 587 A 1 A 3</p>
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Consequently, when the entire soul follows the philosophical part and does not create faction, each part both does what belongs to it and is just; moreover, each part enjoys its own pleasures, namely the best and —to the extent possible— the truest.

Absolutely. (Pl. R. 9 586 E 4–587 A 3)

T6	<p>λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ· δύναται γὰρ καὶ φόβον παῦσαι καὶ λύπην ἀφελεῖν καὶ χαρὰν ἐνεργάσασθαι καὶ ἔλεον ἐπαυξῆσαι. ταῦτα δὲ ὡς οὕτως ἔχει δεῖξω· δεῖ δὲ καὶ δόξῃ δεῖξαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι· τὴν ποίησιν ἄπασαν καὶ νομίζω καὶ ὀνομάζω λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον· ἥς τοὺς ἀκούοντας εἰσῆλθε καὶ φρίκη περίφοβος καὶ ἔλεος πολὺδακρυς καὶ πόθος φιλοπενθής, ἐπ’ ἄλλοτρίων τε πραγμάτων καὶ σωμάτων εὐτυχίαις καὶ δυσπραγίαις ἰδιόν τι πάθημα διὰ τῶν λόγων ἔπαθεν ἢ ψυχῇ.</p>	<p>51 55 59</p>
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Speech is a powerful ruler. Its substance is minute and invisible, but its achievements are superhuman; for it is able to stop fear and to remove sorrow and to create joy and to augment pity. I shall prove that this is so; I must also prove it by opinion to my hearers. All poetry I consider and call speech with metre. Into those who hear it comes fearful fright and tearful pity and mournful longing, and at the successes and failures of others’ affairs and persons the mind suffers, through speeches, a suffering of its own. (Gorg. DK B11.8–9)³

T7	<p>[...]. λογίζεσθαι γάρ, οἶμαι, ὀλίγοις τισὶν μέτεστιν ὅτι ἀπολαύειν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλοτρίων εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα· θρέψαντα γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνοις ἰσχυρὸν τὸ ἔλεινόν οὐ ῥᾶδιον ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῦ πάθεσι κατέχειν. Ἀληθέστατα, ἔφη.</p>	<p>606 B 5 C 1</p>
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[...]. For —I suppose— only a few are able to calculate that enjoyment of others’ [*sc.* sufferings] is necessarily transferred to our own; for example, being nourished by the other cases, a strong pity is not easy to hold in check in our own sufferings.

That’s very true. (Pl. R. 10 606 B 5–C 1)

T8	<p>Ἐκαστος τῶν μισθαρνούντων ἰδιωτῶν, οὓς δὴ οὗτοι σοφιστὰς καλοῦσι καὶ ἀντιτέχνους ἡγοῦνται, μὴ ἄλλα παιδεύειν ἢ ταῦτα τὰ τῶν πολλῶν δόγματα, ἃ δοξάζουσιν ὅταν ἀθροισθῶσιν, καὶ σοφίαν ταύτην καλεῖν. οἷόνπερ ἂν εἰ θρέμματος μεγάλου καὶ ἰσχυροῦ τρεφομένου τὰς ὀργὰς τις καὶ ἐπιθυμίας κατεμάνθανεν, ὅπῃ τε προσελθεῖν χρῆ καὶ ὅπῃ ἄψασθαι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅποτε χαλεπώτατον, ἢ πραότατον, καὶ ἐκ τίνων γίνεται, καὶ φωνὰς δὴ ἐφ’ οἷς ἐκάστας εἴωθεν φθέγγεσθαι, καὶ οἷας αὖ ἄλλου φθεγγομένου ἡμεροῦταί τε καὶ ἀγριαίνει, καταμαθὼν δὲ ταῦτα πάντα συνουσία τε καὶ χρόνου τριβῆ σοφίαν τε καλέσειεν καὶ ὡς τέχνην συστησά-</p>	<p>493 A 6 A 10 B 1 B 5</p>
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³ Translation by MacDowell (1982).

	<p>μενος ἐπὶ διδασκαλίαν τρέποιτο, μηδὲν εἰδὼς τῆ ἀληθείᾳ τούτων τῶν δογμάτων τε καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ὅτι καλὸν ἢ αἰσχρὸν ἢ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἢ δίκαιον ἢ ἄδικον, ὀνομάζοι δὲ πάντα ταῦτα ἐπὶ ταῖς τοῦ μεγάλου ζώου δόξαις, οἷς μὲν χαίροι ἐκεῖνο ἀγαθὰ καλῶν, οἷς δὲ ἄχθοιτο κακά, ἄλλον δὲ μηδένα ἔχοι λόγον περὶ αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ τὰναγκαῖα δίκαια καλοῖ καὶ καλά, τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἀναγκαίου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν, ὅσον διαφέρει τῷ ὄντι, μήτε ἑωρακῶς εἶη μήτε ἄλλω δυνατὸς δεῖξαι, τοιούτος δὴ ὢν πρὸς Διὸς οὐκ ἄτοπος ἂν σοὶ δοκεῖ εἶναι παιδευτής; Ἔμοιγ', ἔφη.</p>	<p>C 1</p> <p>C 5</p> <p>C 9</p>
	<p>Each of the private wage-earners, whom these [<i>sc.</i> people] call 'sophists' and regard as rivals in craft, teaches anything but the very convictions of the many, that is, their judgements whenever they are assembled together —and this he calls 'wisdom'. It is just as if someone were learning the passions and appetites of a huge and strong beast he is rearing: how to approach and handle it; when it is most difficult to deal with or most docile, and what makes it so; what sounds it utters in either condition; and what tones of voice soothe or anger it. And having learned all this through associating and spending time, he calls this 'wisdom' and gathering it together as if a craft he starts to teach it. Knowing nothing in reality about these convictions and appetites which is fine or shameful, good or bad, just or unjust, he uses all these [<i>sc.</i> terms] in conformity with the great beast's judgements, calling the things it enjoys 'good' and the things that anger it 'bad'; he has no other account to give of them, but he calls what he is compelled to do 'just' and 'fine', neither having seen nor being able to explain to another how much the natures of necessity and goodness really differ. Don't you think, by Zeus, that such a man would make a strange educator? I do, indeed. (Pl. <i>R.</i> 6 493 A 6–C 9)</p>	
T9	<p>[...]· πράττοντας, φαμέν, ἀνθρώπους μιμῆται ἢ μιμητικὴ βιαίους ἢ ἐκουσίας πράξεις, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πράττειν ἢ εὖ οἰομένους ἢ κακῶς πεπραγέναι, καὶ ἐν τούτοις δὴ πᾶσιν ἢ λυπουμένους ἢ χαίροντας. μὴ τι ἄλλο ἢ παρὰ ταῦτα; Οὐδέν.</p>	<p>603 C 5</p> <p>C 10</p>
	<p>[...]. Imitative poetry —we say— imitates human beings engaged in actions under compulsion or voluntarily, and supposing to have done either well or badly from their acting, and either feeling distress or taking pleasure in all these [<i>sc.</i> actions] of course. Is there perhaps something other in addition to this? Nothing. (Pl. <i>R.</i> 10 603 C 5–10)</p>	
T10	<p>Τὸ δὲ γε ἀληθές, τοιοῦτον μὲν τι ἦν, ὡς εἴκειν, ἢ δικαιοσύνη, ἀλλ' οὐ τι περὶ τὴν ἕξω πρᾶξιν τῶν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν ἐντός, ὡς ἀληθῶς περὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, μὴ ἐάσαντα τὰλλότρια πράττειν ἕκαστον ἐν αὐτῷ μηδὲ πολυπραγμονεῖν πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γένη, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι τὰ οἰκεῖα εὖ θέμενον καὶ ἄρξαντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ κοσμήσαντα καὶ φίλον γενόμενον ἑαυτῷ καὶ συναρμόσαντα τρία ὄντα, ὥσπερ ὄρους τρεῖς ἁρμονίας ἀτεχνῶς, νεάτης τε καὶ ὑπάτης καὶ μέσης, καὶ εἰ ἄλλα ἄττα μεταξὺ τυγχάνει ὄντα, πάντα ταῦτα συνδήσαντα καὶ παντάπασιν ἓνα γενόμε- νον ἐκ πολλῶν, σῶφρονα καὶ ἡρμωσμένον, οὕτω δὴ πράττειν ἦδη, ἐάν τι πράττη ἢ περὶ χρημάτων κτήσιν ἢ περὶ σώματος θεραπείαν ἢ καὶ πολιτικόν τι ἢ περὶ τὰ ἴδια συμβόλαια, ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις ἡγούμενον καὶ ὀνομάζοντα δικαίαν μὲν καὶ καλὴν πρᾶξιν, ἢ ἂν ταύτην τὴν ἕξιν σφῶζι τε καὶ συναπερ-</p>	<p>443 C 9</p> <p>C 10</p> <p>D 1</p> <p>D 5</p> <p>E 1</p> <p>E 5</p>

γάζεται, σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτη τῇ πράξει
ἐπιστήμην, ἄδικον δὲ πράξιν, ἣ ἂν αἰεὶ ταύτην λύη, ἀμαθίαν
δὲ τὴν ταύτη αὖ ἐπιστατοῦσαν δόξαν.
Παντάπασι, ἣ δ' ὅς, ὃ Σώκρατες, ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

444 A 1

A 3

And in truth —as it seems— justice is something of this sort, not something pertaining to someone's doing his own externally, but pertaining to doing his own internally, verily pertaining to himself and what belongs to him; he neither allows each part within him to do what belongs to the others nor does he allow the classes within the soul to meddle with one another, but he regulates well what is really his own, rules himself, puts himself in order, becomes a friend to himself, and harmonizes the three parts —just like three defining notes of an octave, lowest, highest, and middle; and if there happen to be some other parts, all these he binds together and he becomes entirely one from many, temperate and harmonious. Only then does he act and when he does anything —whether acquiring wealth or treating his body or even something political or in private contracts— in all these he regards as and calls 'just' and 'fine' the action that preserves and helps achieve this very state, and 'wisdom' the knowledge set over this very action; but he regards as and calls 'unjust' the action that always unbinds this [*sc.* state], and 'ignorance' the judgement set over this [*sc.* action].

That's absolutely true, Socrates. (Pl. R. 4 443 C 9–444 A 3)