

Harry Potter and the Power of Love



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The moral virtues, then, are produced in us neither by nature nor against nature. Nature, indeed, prepares in us the ground for their reception, but their complete formation is the product of habit.

Aristotle

It is our choices Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.

Albus Dumbledore
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...Who then is a Stoic?

As we call a statue Phidias which is fashioned according to the art of Phidias, so show me a man who is fashioned according to the doctrines which he utters. Show me a man who is sick and happy, in danger and happy, dying and happy, in exile and happy, in disgrace and happy.


Show him. I desire, by the gods, to see a Stoic.

Since you cannot show me one fashioned so; then show me at least one who is forming, who has shown a tendency to be a Stoic. Do me this favor. Do not begrudge an old man seeing a sight which I have not seen yet.

Epictetus, Discourses

Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

	Harry Potter Books	Published	Film
Year 1, age 11	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	1997	2001
Year 2, age 12	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	1998	2002
Year 3, age 13	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	1099	2004
Year 4, age 14	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	2000	2005
Year 5, age 15	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	2003	2007
Year 6, age 16	Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	2005	?
Year 7, age 17	Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows	2007	?
—	Quidditch Through The Ages*	2001	—
—	Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*	2001	—
—	The Tales of Beetle the Bard*	2008	
—	Harry Potter Wrap Up?	?	—

J. K Rowling, author. Published in the U.S. by Scholastic Press by arrangement with Bloomsbury Publishing.





*Proceeds from the sale of these books go to charity.

Some things are in our control and others not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions.

The things in our control are by nature free, unrestrained, unhindered; but those not in our control are weak, slavish, restrained, belonging to others. Remember, then, that if you suppose that things which are slavish by nature are also free, and that what belongs to others is your

own, then you will be hindered. You will lament, you will be disturbed, and you will find fault both with gods and men. But if you suppose that only to be your own which is your own, and what belongs to others such as it really is, then no one will ever compel you or restrain you. Further, you will find fault with no one or accuse no one. You will do nothing against your will. No one will hurt you, you will have no enemies, and you not be harmed.

Epictetus, Handbook

Hogwarts Houses				
House	Gryffindor	Hufflepuff	Ravenclaw	Slytherin
Badge				
Symbol	Lion	Badger	Eagle	Snake
Virtue	Courage	Justice	Wisdom/Prudence	Ambition/ Temperance
Element	Fire	Earth	Air	Water
Associated with	Rebirth	Nature	Spirit	Purity
Articles	Swords, strength, and martial power	Wands, sticks, and batons	Pentacles, coins, and riches	Cups, love
Founder Admired	Courage, determination, and strength of heart	Loyalty, patience, hard work, and justice	Sharp mind, wisdom, and cleverness	Resourcefulness, determination, and a certain disregard for the rules
Students Selected for	Daring, bravery	Egalitarianism	Intelligence	Ambition, cunning, and slyness

Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things. Death, for instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the terror consists in our notion of death that it is terrible. When therefore we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never attribute it to others, but to ourselves; that is, to our own principles. An uninstructed person will lay the fault of his own bad condition upon others. Someone just starting instruction will lay the fault on himself. Someone who is perfectly instructed will place blame neither on others nor on himself.

Epictetus, Discourses

Some Overall Themes to Look for

Love	Sacrifice	Leadership
Death	Duty	Understanding and accepting what is and what is not in your control.
Courage	Honor	Frustration
Wisdom	Friendship	Progress
Justice	Loyalty	Ambiguity
Prudence	Constancy	Lying
Reason & Passion	Discipline	Rules and Rule Breaking
Good & Evil	Empathy	Anger
Choice, Fate & Free Will	Power & Ambition	Growing up
Prejudice & Discrimination	Illusion & Reality	And a lot more
	Self-Delusion	

... my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, ... and the immediate source of reason and truth ... and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life, must have his eye fixed.
Plato, The Republic

Ethical Frameworks (some)

Deontological Ethics

Decisions should be made solely or primarily by considering one’s duties and the rights of others.

How people accomplish their goals is usually (or always) more important than *what* people accomplish. So a person’s behavior can be “wrong” even if it results in the “best” possible consequences and a person’s behavior can be “right” even if it results in the “worst” possible consequences.

Consequential Ethics

The consequences of a particular action form the basis for any valid moral judgment about that action. So, a morally right action is an action which produces good consequences.

What people accomplish is usually (or always) more important than *how* people accomplish their goals. The consequences of a person’s behavior determines the morality of the behavior.

Teleological/Virtue Ethics

Focuses on what makes a good *person*, rather than what makes a good *action*.

Good consequences will result from a person's acting in accord with virtue, i.e., being a virtuous person and bad consequences will result from a person acting in accord with vice, i.e., being a vicious person. So the only thing that is good is acting virtuously (motivated by virtue), and the only thing that is bad is the opposite, acting viciously (motivated by vice).

Teleological or Virtues ethics requires teaching, experience, and time to develop so that a person's actions become/are habitually virtuous.

Absolutist Ethics

Fixed and unchanging ethical rules apply to all individuals in all cultures. Usually these rules are/were laid down by the immutable God who is able to be understood by reason. If we apply ourselves to the task of reasoning, we will always know which moral rule to use in any particular case. Morality is objective. All rational beings following rational methods will agree what those rules are and how to apply them.

Relativist/Subjective Ethics

The view that what is moral is what I feel is moral. Morality is a matter of feeling and not a matter of reason; no one's ethical views are more "rational" than anyone else's. There is no objective morality. All moral views are equally (un)reasonable.

Plato's Republic and Symposium

Plato, in *The Republic*, divides the soul into three parts, Rational/Wisdom, Spirited/Courage, and Appetitive/Passionate. A just person emerges when that person courageously follows the dictates of wisdom about what is right and just and exercises self-control over their emotions and desires in accord with wisdom.

This is extended into the structure of the just city with Philosopher Kings, Auxiliaries, and the People.

He who is making progress, having learned from philosophers that desire means the desire of good things, and aversion means aversion from bad things; having learned too that happiness and tranquility are not attainable by man otherwise than by not failing to obtain what he desires, and not falling into that which he would avoid; such a man takes from himself desire altogether and defers it, but he employs his aversion only on things which are dependent on his will. For if he attempts to avoid anything independent of his will, he knows that sometimes he will fall in with something which he wishes to avoid, and he will be unhappy. Now if virtue promises good fortune and tranquility and happiness, certainly also the progress toward virtue is progress toward each of these things. For it is always true that to whatever point the perfecting of anything leads us, progress is an approach toward this point.

Epictetus, Discourses

Plato also speaks of the Idea (Form) of the Good, which when experienced transforms a person into one who understands true Good and cannot then do evil. In the *Symposium* Plato introduces Love as a transformation element seemingly transcendent to the Idea of the Good.

My View

1. The Potter books show Harry and his friends developing and perfecting an essentially teleological ethic based on Aristotle and the Stoics.
2. Rowling “rejects” Consequential, Absolutist, Relativistic, and Deontological ethics.
3. But, in keeping with her use of ambiguity, there are times when we could equally talk of a Deontological and Consequential ethic.
4. Hermione (Wisdom), Harry (Courage), and Ron (Temperance) correspond to Plato’s tripartite soul. Therefore, they constitute a unity. Their virtuous characters motivate their virtuous actions which then result in just outcomes.

Wisdom is the chief and leader: next follows temperance; and from the union of these two with courage springs justice. These four virtues take precedence in the class of divine goods.

Plato, The Laws

When, therefore, it is our duty to share the danger of a friend or of our country, we ought not to consult the oracle whether we will share it with them or not. For, though the diviner should forewarn you that the auspices are unfavorable, this means no more than that either death or mutilation or exile is portended. But we have reason within us, and it directs, even with these hazards, to the greater diviner, the Pythian god, who cast out of the temple the person who gave no assistance to his friend while another was murdering him.

Epictetus, Handbook

5. The single most powerful force in the books is simply the overwhelming Power of Love. Love brings with it a host of virtues – loyalty, respect, constancy, empathy, truth, courage, sacrifice, pride, etc. It is the source of all virtues. Once glimpsed it is impossible not be virtuous. These virtues form our heroes characters so that they act in a consistently virtuous fashion.

...Do but consider that there only will it befall him, as he sees the beautiful through that which makes it visible, to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth ...I am persuaded of it; in which persuasion I pursue my neighbors, to persuade them ...the best helper that our human nature can hope to find is Love. Wherefore I tell you now that every man should honor Love, as I myself do honor all love-matters with especial devotion, and exhort all other men to do the same; both now and always do I glorify Love’s power and valor as far as I am able.

Plato, Symposium

Harry’s Development	
Book 1, age 11	Hero and Victim. Death, acceptance of and willingness to risk it. Self-examination leads to a greater degree of comfort with things beyond, out of, his control.
Book 2, age 12	Bigotry and Discrimination, Self Identity. He gains an understanding that choices make people who and what they are

	rather than inborn traits or abilities.
Book 3, age 13	Moral responsibility in a world of ambiguity. Appearances can be deceiving. Context matters, following rules (orders) is not always the moral thing to do. Justice. He becomes more conscious of how moral principles must be applied in context of a given situation.
Book 4, age 14	Placing a higher value on moral abilities and virtue, e.g., empathy, solidarity, planning, friendship, etc., than on self gain and glory. He gains more appreciation of his self worth, his strengths and weaknesses and the need for solidarity, empathy, and acceptance of “fate”. The right choice is not always the easy choice.
Book 5, age 15	He develops a better understanding of the need for careful planning, analysis, consideration, self-restraint, that good intentions are not enough, and that we cannot “know” the full implications of our actions.
Book 6, age 16	He comes to an acceptance, like Dumbledore and his parents, of moral and virtuous duty and the responsibilities and burdens this brings.
Book 7, age 17	He becomes a person “ <i>who is sick and happy, in danger and happy, dying and happy, in exile and happy, in disgrace and happy</i> ” (Epictetus) and is able to “... use the Mirror of Erised like a normal mirror, that is, he would look into it and see himself exactly as he is.” (Dumbledore)

For this reason if a man put in the same place his interest, sanctity, goodness, and country, and parents, and friends, all these are secured: but if he puts in one place his interest, in another his friends, and his country and his kinsmen and justice itself, all these give way being borne down by the weight of interest. For where the "I" and the "Mine" are placed, to that place of necessity the animal inclines: if in the flesh, there is the ruling power: if in the will, it is there: and if it is in externals, it is there. If then I am there where my will is, then only shall I be a friend such as I ought to be, and son, and father; for this will be my interest, to maintain the character of fidelity, of modesty, of patience, of abstinence, of active cooperation, of observing my relations. But if I put myself in one place, and honesty in another, then the doctrine of Epicurus becomes strong, which asserts either that there is no honesty or it is that which opinion holds to be honest.



Epictetus, Handbook

For now who among us is not able to discuss according to the rules of art about good and evil things? “That of things some are good, and some are bad, and some are indifferent: the good then are virtues, and the things which participate in virtues; and the bad are the contrary; and the indifferent are wealth, health, reputation.”

Epictetus, Discourses

Anybody can become angry – that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

More Information on Harry Potter

Baggett, David (editor), *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts*, Carus Publishing Company, Illinois, 2004

Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973

Kern, Edmund, *The Wisdom of Harry Potter: What Our Favorite Hero Teaches Us About Moral Choices*, Prometheus Books, New York, 2003

Morris, Tom, *If Harry Potter Ran General Electric: Leadership Wisdom From the World of the Wizards*, Doubleday, New York, 2006

There are many many more books on Harry and company. Just try the internet.

For more on Dumbledore's and Harry's understanding of virtue try:

- Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, and
- Epictetus, *The Discourses* and the *Enchiridion (Handbook)*; and

They can be ordered from any bookstore or from the internet.

If you are seriously afflicted with PotterMania try:

The Harry Potter Lexicon – <http://www.hp-lexicon.org/index-2.html>

It has all kinds of information on Harry and links to even more.

How long are you going to wait before you demand the best for and of yourself and in no instance bypass the discriminations of reason? You have been given the principles that you ought to endorse, and have you endorsed them? ... whenever you encounter anything that is difficult or pleasurable or highly or lowly regarded, remember that the contest is now, you are at the Olympic games, you cannot wait any longer, that your progress is wrecked or preserved by a single day and a single event...

Epictetus, Discourses