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# Riding a broomstick out of Plato's cave: Elements of Plato found in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series

Camille Winegar Parker

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Riding a Broomstick out of Plato's Cave:  
Elements of Plato found in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

by  
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Thesis

Submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature  
Eastern Michigan University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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in  
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Thesis Committee:

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Ypsilanti, Michigan

Dedication

For my family

## Acknowledgements

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## Abstract

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has become a cultural phenomenon. An analysis of the *Harry Potter* series reveals that underneath the phenomenon status there is great depth. This paper looks at aspects of the novels that mirror elements found in Plato's *The Republic*, specifically his allegory of the cave in Book Seven. Plato's allegory of the cave can be broken down into "four stages," and in the *Harry Potter* novels there are characters who fall in each of these four stages. Through the characters in the four stages we see that the "highest form of knowledge" (Plato 246) to be obtained is that of understanding not only one's own world, or community, but also being able to understand that of the other.

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Chapter One: Introduction  
Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series: Just a Good Read or Good Literature?

“Many people within the fields of literature in general and of children’s literature specifically believe that books come in two distinct categories—those that are good, and those that are popular” (Nodelman, Reimer).

There is no question as to the popularity of the *Harry Potter* series written by J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* sold 8.3 million copies in the first 24 hours in the United States alone (Rich). Lisa Holton, the president of Scholastic Books trade and book fairs division, stated that the “excitement, anticipation, and just plain hysteria that came over the entire country this weekend was a bit like the Beatles’ first visit to the U.S.” (qtd. in Rich). The *Harry Potter* series has been read by children and adults the world over. They have been turned into a marketing success, made into blockbuster movies, and are sold as paraphernalia in stores worldwide. Since there is no question as to the popularity of the series, the question that remains is: are they good?

It is the literary value that has been the center of debate amongst children’s literature scholars since the first book was published. In “Generic Fusion and the Mosaic of *Harry Potter*,” Anne Hiebert Alton states:

The *Harry Potter* phenomenon has taken the world by storm, and in many ways the series appears to be responsible for a renaissance in reading for children all over the world . . . (141)

Many agree that Rowling’s books are encouraging children to read, but still the question lingers – are the novels good literature for children to be reading? Alton discusses Rowling’s use of genre in her novels. She argues that Rowling engages children by combining multiple genres—fantasy, detective fiction, school story, to name a few—so

that the child is looking for the signs or tags of the individual genres throughout the novel and attempting to determine their significance as a whole. Alton states that Rowling's fusion of genres has created something new:

. . . a generic mosaic made up of numerous individual pieces combined in a way that allows them to keep their original shape while constantly changing their significance. (159)

This new mosaic of genres is something that Alton argues enhances the literary value, as well as the involvement of the child, with the notion of genre while reading the series.

Eliza T. Dresang, like Alton, finds literary value in the *Harry Potter* series.

Dresang discusses the mythological and literary heritage of the name *Hermione* in her article, "Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender." She describes the mythological Hermione who demonstrates "a strength of intellect, determination, and the ability to achieve her purpose" (214); the Saint Hermione who also shows great intellect as well as determination and resilience; the Shakespearean Hermione who has ties back to the mythological one; and finally two Hermiones written by early-twentieth-century British authors H.D. and D.H. Lawrence – both of which are strong literary characters, one in search of her identity and the other one who wants to know everything. Dresang argues that these literary ties give the character Hermione Granger a strong heritage: "For the reader versed in literature, the possible literary ties add a depth to Rowling's choice of an 'unusual' name that makes it more than simply unusual" (215).

Despite the opinions of Alton and Dresang and the literary critics who argue that there is literary value to be found in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, it seems that more critics fall on the side of the books being simply popular but not good literature. Deborah

L. Thompson begins her article, “Deconstructing Harry: Casting a Critical Eye on the Witches and Wizards of Hogwarts,” with the following statement:

I begin this chapter with a disclaimer: I love the *Harry Potter* novels. I am among the millions of adults (and children) who have been enchanted by the young orphaned wizard with the unruly hair. While I don’t consider Harry’s stories great literature, they are great reads. (42)

As a reader she loves the works and believes them to be “great reads,” but as a critical reader and a writing critic she proclaims them to be not works of great literature.

Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer write in “Children’s Literature in the Marketplace” that, while the *Harry Potter* books are worthwhile, they are not “particularly distinct or unusual” (124). They hypothesize that the popularity of these novels may be due to the fact that they are formulaic. Readers are drawn to the books because they are familiar and contain nothing new – they state that, had the *Harry Potter* series “been more distinct and unusual, it would likely have been less successful” (125).

Many critics of the *Harry Potter* series point to similar flaws in the novels – that they are formulaic and aimed at one group – the white middle class. Tammy Turner-Vorbeck argues this point in her article, “Pottermania: Good, Clean Fun or Cultural Hegemony?” She claims that the books are not just good clean fun for young readers because the underlying messages are those that do not embrace diversity of any kind. Instead of cultural diversity she claims that what is represented “is an aggregation of quintessential, hegemonic, hierarchical middle-class social and cultural values” (20).

Jack Zipes in his book *Sticks and Stones* dedicates a chapter, “The Phenomenon of Harry Potter, or Why All the Talk?” to discussing the phenomenon of Harry Potter and

the literary value, or lack thereof, found within the novels. Zipes argues a similar line to that of Nodelman and Reimer—that the books are phenomenal because they are so “cute and ordinary” (175). He states that there is “nothing exceptional” (174) about Rowling’s writing and proceeds to describe what it takes to be a phenomenon in our day and age:

To be phenomenal means that a person or commodity must conform to the tastes of hegemonic groups. . . . It is impossible to be phenomenal without conforming to conventionality. . . . Difference and otherness are obliterated in the process.

(Zipes 175)

Thus, Zipes sees the *Harry Potter* books as popular because they are conventional and ordinary. He claims that the books help to “homogenize our children” and that “making children all alike is, sadly, a phenomenon of our times” (188).

This thesis argues that the *Harry Potter* series is not attempting to obliterate difference and Otherness but rather show children how to embrace them. This idea is explored through an examination of the *Harry Potter* series by the light of Plato’s allegory of the cave found in *The Republic*. This allegory looks at prisoners who have been chained since childhood and follows the journey of one prisoner from his chains to his ascent into the upper world and back into the cave. As the prisoner journeys, he moves through four different stages of knowledge. With each new stage his knowledge becomes more complete until he gains what Plato terms “the highest form of knowledge” (246), which can be gained only in the fourth stage.

A critical examination of the characters in the *Harry Potter* series, with the allegory of the cave in mind, shows that there are characters within the books who fall into each of the four stages. It can also be argued that the characters, such as Harry,

Hermione, and Dumbledore, who fall into the fourth stage and have gained “the highest form of knowledge” (Plato 246), are also characters in the novel who have accepted “difference and otherness” (Zipes 175) in the world around them.

Plato is a philosopher whose works have endured over time and are studied in courses, both history and literature, across the world today. A study of the *Harry Potter* series with the lessons and knowledge found within the text of Plato’s *The Republic*, specifically the allegory of the cave, demonstrates that books can overcome the distinct boundaries set up by critics today and be both popular and good literature.

## Chapter Two

### Light, Shadows, and the Other: A Tour of Plato's Cave and a Visit with the Other

“Plato is, by any reckoning, one of the most dazzling writers in the Western literary tradition and one of the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential authors in the history of philosophy” (Kraut).

The works of Plato are read and studied widely throughout schools and universities today. Before the relationship between the allegory of the cave and Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series can be discussed, it is important to understand more about Plato, *The Republic*, and the meaning of the allegory of the cave.

Plato was born in 427 B.C.E. to a distinguished Athenian family involved in politics. He was born into an Athens that was four years into the Peloponnesian War, and the war continued until he was twenty-three years old when it “ended in defeat and humiliation for Athens” (Lee xiv). This was a time of tyranny and upheaval for Athens, and Plato, coming from a wealthy family, was able to see up close many members of the leadership of the time. As an adult, Plato wrote in his Seventh Letter of some of his experiences during this time:

I had much the same experience as many other young men. I expected, when I came of age, to go into politics. The political situation gave me an opportunity. The existing constitution, which was subject to widespread criticism, was overthrown . . . and a committee of Thirty given supreme power. As it happened some of them were friends and relations of mine and they at once invited me to join them, as if it were the natural thing for me to do. My feelings were what were to be expected in a young man: I thought they were going to reform society and rule justly, and so I watched their proceedings with deep interest. I found that

they soon made the earlier regime look like a golden age. . . . When I saw all this, and other things as bad, I was disgusted and drew back from the wickedness of the times. (Lee xvi)

Plato was in a position where it was very natural for him to move into politics and be a leader at this time. He did not agree with the way in which his friends ruled, but it was when those in power put Socrates to death on charges of impiety and corrupting the young that Plato knew he could never be a part of politics. Plato calls Socrates in his Seventh Letter “the most upright man then living” (Lee xvi), and for Plato, Socrates’ “condemnation meant a final disillusionment with contemporary politics” (Lee xviii).

Plato went on to found the Academy, a school for statesmen, where he taught from 386 BCE until his death. Plato’s disillusionment with the state of Athens and the leaders of the time led him to question whether or not a state could be governed “rightly” (Lee xviii). In his Seventh Letter, Plato states the following:

Finally I came to the conclusion that all existing states were badly governed, and that their constitutions were incapable of reform without drastic treatment and a great deal of good luck. I was forced, in fact, to the belief that the only hope of finding justice for society or for the individual lay in true philosophy, and that mankind will have no respite from trouble until either real philosophers gain political power or politicians become by some miracle true philosophers. (qtd. in Lee xviii)

Creating philosophic leaders was the goal of the Academy as well as a general theme of *The Republic*. *The Republic* was written during the earlier years of the Academy, in approximately 375 BCE, and Desmond Lee, in his translator’s introduction to *The*

*Republic*, said that “*The Republic*, in short, is a statement of the aims which the Academy set itself to achieve.” (xx).

It is in *The Republic* that we find “The Simile of the Cave,” now commonly referred to as the Allegory of the Cave. Although this paper focuses primarily on the Allegory of the Cave, it is important to look briefly at the two sections, or similes, preceding the description of the cave: “The Good as Ultimate Object of Knowledge” (which contains the Simile of the Sun) and “The Divided Line.” Plato’s *Republic* is written as a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon (Plato’s brother). After Socrates describes the cave to Glaucon, he states: “[T]his simile must be connected throughout with what preceded it.” (Plato 244) Plato thought there was a connection between the three, and, although there is some dispute as to how connected they are, it is important to summarize briefly what precedes the Allegory of the Cave.

In “The Good as Ultimate Object of Knowledge,” Socrates tells Glaucon that “the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of the form of the good.” He continues to explain that “most ordinary people think that pleasure is the good, while the more sophisticated think it is knowledge” (Plato 229). Socrates says that, while the sophisticated think that the good is knowledge, they are unable to tell you what knowledge is “the good” and that those who believe pleasure is the good must also admit that there are bad pleasures. Thus, they are as confused as the sophisticated. Glaucon questions Socrates as to what he believes is the good, to which he replies:

“. . . I’m afraid it is beyond me, and if I try I shall only make a fool of myself and be laughed at . . . . But I will tell you . . . about something which seems to me to be a child of the good, and to resemble it very closely.” (Plato 231)

From this we learn that the concept of the good is very complicated, so much so that even Socrates does not attempt to describe it but rather tells of the “child of the good” which is known as The Simile of the Sun.

Desmond Lee gives a good summary of the simile of the sun in the following tabular form:

<p>Visible World  <i>The Sun</i>  <i>Source of {growth and</i>  <i>{light</i>  <i>which gives</i>  <i>visibility to objects of sense</i>  <i>and</i>  <i>the power of seeing to</i>  <i>the eye.</i>  <i>The faculty of sight.</i></p>	<p>Intelligible World  <i>The Good</i>  <i>Source of {reality and</i>  <i>{truth,</i>  <i>which gives</i>  <i>intelligibility to objects of thought</i>  <i>and</i>  <i>the power of knowing to</i>  <i>the mind.</i>  <i>The faculty of knowledge.</i></p>
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*Figure 1.* Desmond Lee’s Simile of the Sun Summary (Plato 231).

This table gives us a clear idea of what is being compared: the Sun to the Good, light to truth, visibility to intelligibility, the power of seeing to the power of knowing, and sight to knowledge. Socrates explains that, while it is our eyes that see, they need light in order to see, so we understand that, “though the sun is not itself sight, it is the cause of sight and is seen by the sight it causes” (Plato 233). Knowledge’s relation to the Good is similar to that of sight to the Sun:

When the mind’s eye is fixed on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and knows them, and its possession of intelligence is evident; but when it is fixed on the twilight world of change and decay, it can only form opinions, its vision is confused and its opinions shifting, and it seems to lack intelligence. . . . Then what gives the objects of knowledge their truth and the

knower’s mind the power of knowing is the form of the good. It is the cause of knowledge and truth.” (Plato 234)

The Good is thus the light that illuminates the truth and allows one to have knowledge and understand truth. This simile of the Sun is the first of the three interrelated analogies presented by Plato.

“The Divided Line” follows “The Good as Ultimate Object of Knowledge” and can be seen as a sequel. It builds upon the two orders of reality – the visible and the intelligible. The following diagram sets out the distinctions described by Socrates to Glaucon:

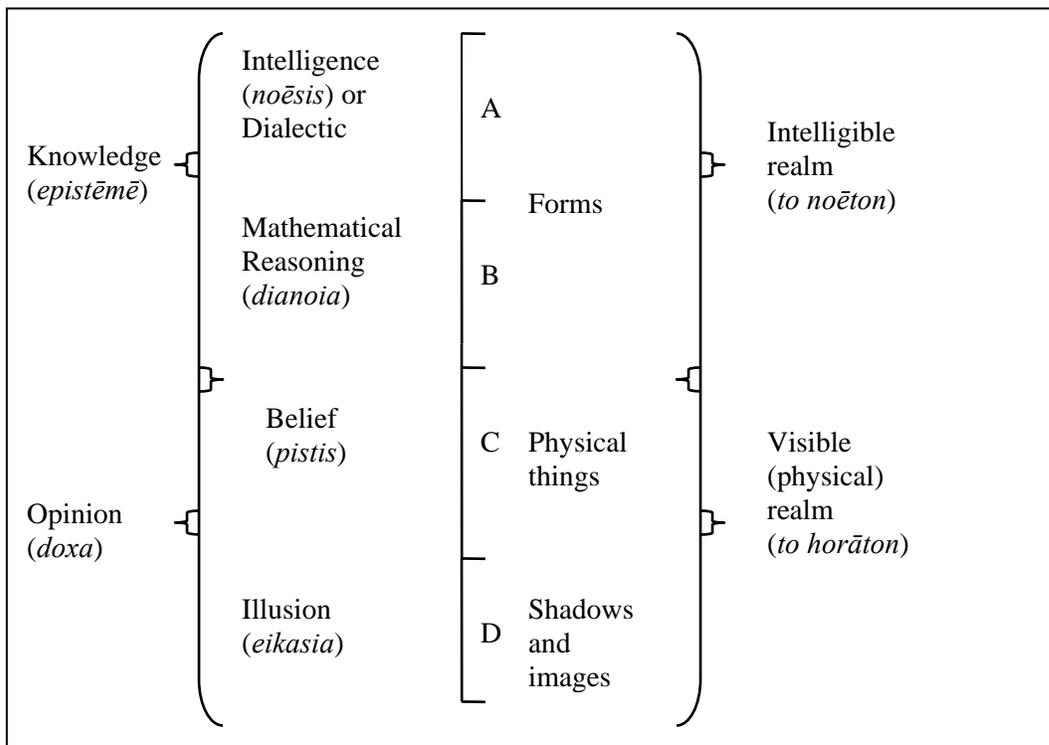


Figure 2. Distinctions Between the Two Orders of Reality: Visible and Intelligible (Plato 236).

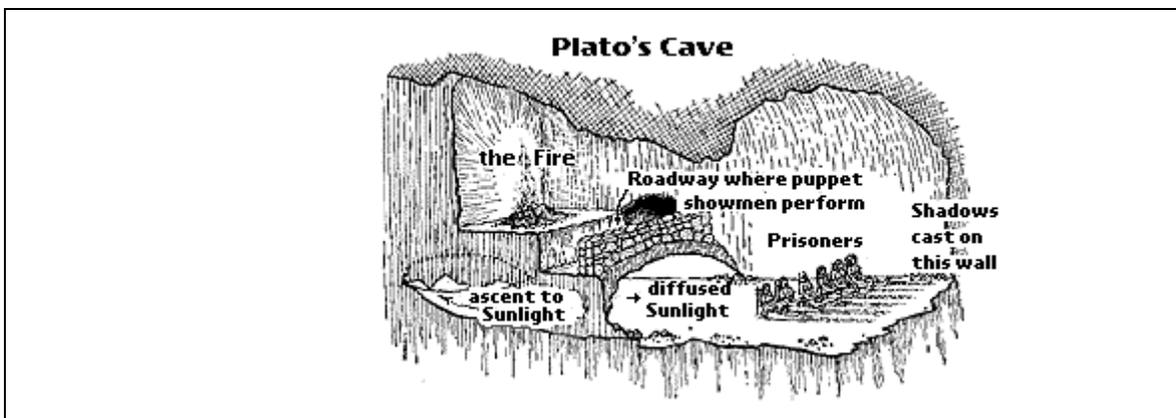
From this diagram, we see that the intelligible realm correlates with knowledge and the visible world with opinion. Within each realm, there are two subsections. At the bottom of the visible realm are the shadows and images (illusion): “by ‘images’ I mean first

shadows, then reflections in water and other close-grained, polished surfaces” (Plato 238). The next level up, still within the visible realm, are physical things (belief): “[O]bjects which are the originals of the images – the animals around us, and every kind of plant and manufactured object” (Plato 238). As we move higher, we move into the intelligible realm. The two subsection both fall under the category of forms. First is mathematical reasoning: “[T]he mind uses the originals of the visible order in their turn as images, and has to base its inquiries on assumptions and proceed from them not to a first principle but to a conclusion” (Plato 238). The highest section in the intelligible realm is intelligence: “[I]t moves from assumption to a first principle which involves no assumption, without the images used in the other sub-section, but pursuing its inquiry solely by and through forms themselves” (Plato 238).

The visible realm, also referred to as opinion, consists of shadows and images, or illusion, in which ordinary people make assumptions based upon their own perception of the shadows. Also in the visible realm, one step above illusion, is belief or physical things. This section of the line is where people use common sense to guide their moral and physical actions. These are described as “a fair practical guide to life but have not been fully thought out” (Plato 216). Moving into the intelligible realm, or that of knowledge, we go to the line where mathematical reasoning through the use of forms is used. This is where one uses mathematical principles to reach one’s understanding. While this is “intelligible,” it uses “assumptions in investigating it” and therefore does “not proceed to a first principle, being unable to depart from and rise above its assumptions” (Plato 239). The highest level is intelligence or dialectic forms because this uses philosophy—it uses “assumptions not as principles, but as assumptions in the true

sense, that is as starting points and steps in the ascent to something which involves no assumption and is the first principle of everything” (Plato 239).

Thus, from looking at “The Divided Line,” we see that the points give us descriptions of different levels of understanding that we can have. If we move on to the third allegory – the cave – we will receive a more in-depth look at the different stages of knowledge and understanding through the images of the prisoners. The following is a picture depicting the events in the allegory of the cave:



*Figure 3. Plato's Cave Drawing (Warmington 316).*

In this allegory, Plato tells of prisoners who have been chained in a cave since childhood. Their legs and necks are “so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads” (Plato 241). There is a fire burning behind the prisoners, “and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show their puppets” (Plato 241). On this road there are men who walk back and forth, talking and carrying different items. Due to the positioning of the prisoners, they are only able to see the shadows on the walls that are cast by the fire, not the men themselves. Because they have never been able to move their heads to see the men or objects, they would “assume that the shadows they saw

were the real things” (Plato 241). They would believe that it was the shadows walking back and forth and the shadows who were talking.

Plato goes on to hypothesize in his allegory about what would happen should one of the prisoners be taken out of the chains and turn to look at the fire himself:

. . . it would hurt his eyes and he would turn back and retreat to the things which he could see properly, which he would think really clearer than the things being shown him. (Plato 242)

If the prisoner were taken out into the sun he would have a similar reaction, but over time he would become accustomed to the light and realize that the sun “is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see” (Plato 243). If the prisoner were to return back to the cave to share his new knowledge with the prisoners, his eyes would now be blinded by the darkness. The returned prisoner, now blinded by darkness, would find himself in the following situation:

And if he had to discriminate between the shadows, in competition with the other prisoners, while he was still blinded and before his eyes got used to the darkness – a process that would take some time – wouldn’t he be likely to make a fool of himself? And they would say that his visit to the upper world had ruined his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting. And if anyone tried to release them and lead them up, they would kill him if they could lay hands on him. (Plato 243)

The chained prisoners would never know the truth of the shadows unless they too were forced out into the sun. Then they could gain the knowledge of the first prisoner, but, as is, they do not have the desire to obtain that knowledge.

Now that we have looked at three similes, what correlation can we find between them? Desmond Lee states that, in looking at the three, we should “remember that they are similes, not scientific descriptions, and it would be a mistake to try to find too much detailed precision” (Plato 401). He then goes on to describe the main connections that his translation assumes:

Tied prisoner in the cave	Illusion
Freed prisoner in the cave	Belief
Looking at shadows and reflections in the world outside the cave and ascent thereto	Reason
Looking at real things in the world outside the cave	Intelligence
Looking at the sun	Vision of the form of the good

*Figure 4.* Desmond Lee’s Main Connections in the Allegory of the Cave (Plato 401-402).

These connections are general but seem to fit very clearly after reading through the three similes. Attaching the terms found in the simile of the sun and the divided line to the allegory of the cave helps the reader to understand more clearly some of the implications and meanings that are to be found in the allegory of the cave.

Mark Wrathall in his essay, “Heidegger on Plato, Truth, and Unconcealment,” describes Martin Heidegger’s breakdown of the cave into four stages. The first stage is where the prisoners are in the cave with their heads looking straight so that they can only see the shadows. “But they do not see the shadows as shadows (because they have no relationship yet to the things and the light that produce the shadows)” (Wrathall 452). The prisoners see the shadows, but, because they have no relationship with the people who cause the shadows or the fire that creates the image of the shadow, they remain unaware. The second stage of the allegory is when “the prisoners are turned around and forced to look at the objects themselves, rather than the shadows” (Wrathall 452). In the

third stage, “[t]he prisoners are removed from the cave, and forced to look at the objects in the higher world – the ideas themselves” (Wrathall 453). The fourth and final stage is when “[t]he liberated prisoner returns to the cave, and, with his new orientation toward the ideas, learns to discern the truth of beings and of man” (Wrathall 453).

Heidegger says of the stages that we “do not understand the first stage at all until we grasp it from the second, and strictly speaking, from the final stage” (17). The allegory of the cave is an illustration of the importance of education, and each stage builds upon the previous. “In education, we learn new comportments, which consist in different ways of holding ourselves out toward things in the world” (Wrathall 451). In each new stage of the allegory of the cave the prisoner learns new comportments that allow him “to disclose the world in a new way,” but we do not fully understand the prisoner’s knowledge until we see him at the fourth and final stage (Wrathall 451). Wrathall states that “[o]nly with the return do the ideas play their proper role – namely, they give us that intelligibility on the basis of which beings can appear as what they are” (453). It is with the return in the fourth stage that the prisoner is able to move from “reason” to “intelligence.” The prisoner makes this move because he understands not only that the sun is responsible for what he saw when he ascended out of the cave but that it also plays a role in what he saw when he was in the cave. He understands that the fire, like the sun, created the light by which the chained prisoners saw the shadows rather than the original people.

Heidegger states that the descent back into the cave is significant because of the freed prisoner’s new role as liberator:

It is clear from this that liberation does not achieve its final goal merely by ascent to the sun. Freedom is not *just* a matter of being *unshackled*, nor just a matter of being free for the light. Rather, genuine freedom means *to be a liberator* from the dark. The descent back into the cave is not some subsequent diversion on the part of those who have become free, perhaps undertaken from curiosity about how cave life looks from above, but is the only manner through which freedom is genuinely *realized*. (66)

Heidegger asserts that the freed prisoner must return in order to attempt to liberate his fellow prisoners from their chains. In order for one to be a true liberator, he must understand the world of those that he is trying to liberate (the prisoners), as well as the world to which he is trying liberate the prisoners. Plato states that, upon the freed prisoner's return, he would be blinded by the darkness and that the prisoners would "kill him [the liberator] if they could lay hands on him" rather than be released from the chains. The freed prisoner would have to stay until his eyes could readjust to the darkness so that he could make out the shadows on the wall before he could try to tell the prisoners what causes those shadows or of the "good." So, in a sense, "the highest form of knowledge" (Plato 246) that is gained in the fourth and final stage is that of being able to cross social boundaries or understand that of the Other.

We learn from Jacques Lacan that, at an age as early as six months, a young child begins the formation of the "I" through the recognition of "his own image in a mirror" (1). However, the image in the mirror is only a reflection of the baby, so the relationship becomes more complex:

I am led, therefore, to regard the function of the mirror-stage as a particular case of the function of the *imago*, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality – or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*. (4)

The relationship then of the baby with the image in the mirror is a relationship between the inner self, *Innenwelt*, and the outer environment, the *Umwelt*. The “I” or the “Ideal I” that the child sees in the mirror is an image of the Other, but it is through this relationship that the child begins to understand the “I” and thus the Other.

Simone De Beauvoir writes about the Other in her book, *The Second Sex*. She looks at the Other from the standpoint of women; man is “the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other” (xvi). Although her main dialogue concerns the relationship between men and women, she talks about groups in general and their relationship with the Other. We set ourselves up as the “One,” and, in doing so, we “at once set up the Other over against itself” (xvii). She describes how, when one is in a small village, it is those who do not belong to the village that are “strangers” or the Other. It is when one becomes a traveler that he is “shocked to find himself in turn regarded as a ‘stranger’ by the natives of neighboring countries” (xvii). We see from these examples that “otherness is a fundamental category of human thought” (xvii).

If “otherness” is a fundamental part of the human thought process, being able to understand the Other is truly “the highest form of knowledge” (Plato 246), as seen in the allegory of the cave. Looking at the *Harry Potter* novels through the light of Plato’s allegory of the cave, we see that there are characters who fall into each of the four stages of knowledge. In comparing characters from each of these four stages, we are able to see the differences in the amount of knowledge at each stage. Heidegger states that we “do

not understand the first stage at all until we grasp it from the second, and, strictly speaking from the final stage” (17). It is important to remember that Plato thought it necessary to have philosophers as rulers for a city to be ruled justly.

In looking at the fourth stage in the *Harry Potter* series, we see that the “highest form of knowledge” (Plato 246) gained by characters such as Harry, Hermione, and Dumbledore places them as the leaders of their communities because they are able to understand not only their own world, or community, but also that of the Other. In looking at the characters in the *Harry Potter* series through the scope of Plato’s four stages, we will see that Rowling is not trying to “homogenize our children,” as Zipes claims (188), but rather letting the children unravel for themselves the knowledge to be gained by being able to cross and understand the social boundaries that society has put up.

### Chapter Three Left in the Dark: An Examination of Characters in Stage One

This section will explore the relationship between stage one of Plato's allegory of the cave and the characters in the *Harry Potter* series who fall into stage one – the Muggles. Stage one in the allegory of the cave consists of prisoners who have been chained in a cave since childhood. Their legs and necks are “so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads” (Plato 241). There is a fire burning behind the prisoners and a road running between the fire and prisoners where men walk back and forth, talking and carrying different items. Due to the positioning of the prisoners, they are only able to see the shadows on the walls that are reflected off of the fire, not the men themselves. Because they have never been able to move their heads to see the men or objects they “assume that the shadows they saw were the real things” (Plato 241). They believe that it was the shadows that were walking back and forth and the shadows who were talking rather than the actual men. Plato's Socrates explains, “In every way they would believe that the shadows of the objects we mentioned were the whole truth” (Plato 241).

In this stage we see that the prisoners are “forced to see only shadows . . . because they have no relationship yet to the things and the light that produce the shadows” (Wrathall 452). The prisoners have been chained since childhood and have had no opportunity to gain a greater level of understanding. This is certainly an unusual set of circumstances, and even Glaucon comments that this is “an odd sort of prisoner” (Plato 241). Yet the significance of this stage extends beyond the physical walls of the cave as

Plato's Socrates tells the reader that "[t]hey are drawn from life" (241) and Heidegger refers to the experiences of the chained prisoners as "the everyday situation of man" (22).

It is easy to understand how the prisoners could believe that the shadows are actually original objects, but how can this be the "everyday situation of man" as Heidegger proposes it to be? Mark Wrathall explains how people in the everyday world cannot recognize the shadows as shadows: "[W]hen we become comfortable with something, it becomes invisible to us, so that we actually understand it very poorly" (448). Once our world is familiar and comfortable, we rarely stop to carefully examine it, and, therefore, there are many things that are "invisible" to us or that we see but understand "very poorly." The prisoners in the cave have been chained since childhood and live in a world of illusion. Although it is not completely their fault they still live in a world in which they only see shadows. In Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, the Muggles, or non-magical humans, are a group that resemble the chained prisoners in the allegory of the cave.

The Muggles live in their everyday world but are unaware of the existence of witches and wizards. Mark Wrathall in his essay, "Heidegger on Plato, Truth, and Unconcealment," helps explain how the prisoners in Plato's cave could not understand that there was more to the shadows and, subsequently, why the Muggles cannot see the witches and wizards for what they are:

Our familiarity with the everyday world reveals beings in one particular way. But we are completely absorbed in the world with the everyday significance it holds for us, and thus we are not aware that there could be any other way to uncover things. (452)

The Muggles are so “aware” of their everyday world and how it is supposed to work that they are unable to “uncover” it in any other way.

Michael Silberstein, in his article “Space, Time, and Magic,” posits that the Muggle and wizard worlds are on the same “space-time continuum” (Silberstein 188). He looks to a passage in the *Goblet of Fire*, where Mr. Weasley explains about magical and non-magical places, to build his argument:

The trouble is, about a hundred thousand wizards turn up at the World Cup, and of course, we just haven’t got a magical site big enough to accommodate them all. There are places Muggles can’t penetrate, but imagine trying to squeeze a hundred thousand wizards into Diagon Alley or platform nine and three-quarters. So we had to find a nice deserted moor, and set up as many anti-Muggle precautions as possible. (69)

From this quote we learn that there are magical places, such as Diagon Alley and platform nine and three quarters – but these “magical sites are small and perhaps rare” (Silberstein 188). In order for the wizards to have a large gathering like the Quidditch World Cup they must set up places that are hard for Muggles to penetrate. Because we know that the Muggle and wizard worlds are both on the same Earth, we also know that it is possible for the Muggles to see and interact with witches and wizards. They don’t recognize witches and wizards as such because “[t]hey know their way around their own proper abode, and are not to be dissuaded from what they recognize straightforwardly as beings” (Heidegger 23).

Although Muggles sometimes notice unusual activity and people, they pass the activities off as strange and the people as “weirdos.” In Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the*

*Sorcerer's Stone* we see one example of Muggles noticing unusual activity but passing it off as simply out of the ordinary. On the evening news, a reporter gives the following account:

And finally, bird watchers everywhere have reported that the nation's owls have been behaving very unusually today. Although owls normally hunt at night and are hardly ever seen in daylight, there have been hundreds of sightings of these birds flying in every direction since sunrise. Experts are unable to explain why the owls have suddenly changed their sleeping pattern. (6)

The weatherman goes on to comment that not only have the owls been acting odd today but that:

Viewers as far apart as Kent, Yorkshire, and Dundee have been phoning in to tell me that instead of the rain I promised yesterday, they've had a downpour of shooting stars! Perhaps people have been celebrating Bonfire Night early – it's not until next week, folks! (6)

In one day, there are two highly bizarre events, but they are simply passed off as happenstance. There is no reason for the Muggles to jump to the conclusion of witches and wizards; they only see the shadows and nothing more.

When Harry is picked up by the Knight Bus in the *Prisoner of Azkaban* we get some insight as to why the wizards believe Muggles don't notice them. The Knight Bus is very noisy and Harry questions the bus driver, Stan, as to why the Muggles can't hear the bus: "Them!" said Stan contemptuously. "Don' listen properly, do they? Don' look properly either. Never notice nuffink, they don'" (*Prisoner* 36). The wizards see Muggles as a group of highly unobservant people. The Muggles are too absorbed in their

own world and daily lives to listen and look and notice something as out of place as the Knight Bus.

In the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, we see an example of Muggles interacting with the wizards and witches in person. Many in the wizarding world are heading to the International Quidditch Cup, but the Cup takes place within the bounds of the Muggle world, so the witches and wizards must interact with the Muggles. The Weasleys and Harry and Hermione are staying at a large camping ground run by a Muggle. When Mr. Weasley has to pay for the tent space, he struggles with the Muggle money, and the owner, Mr. Roberts, comments that there seem to be many foreigners: “[a]nd not just foreigners. Weirdos, you know? There’s a bloke walking ‘round in a kilt and a poncho” (77). He notices that they don’t fit in but assumes that they are just foreigners or “weirdos,” nothing more.

In “Finding Platform 9¾: The Idea of a Different Reality,” Gareth B. Matthews discusses the idea of “Seeing but Not Noticing” (183). The Muggles clearly see events that are out of the ordinary, but they don’t take the time to notice or to inspect them. Matthews explains the reason for this:

We should know that what we see and what we hear is shaped by what we *expect* to see and hear. And what we count as real is heavily influenced by what we have been socialized to count as real. The Harry Potter stories underscore this point. (184)

Mr. Roberts is an example of this idea. He sees people walking around in unusual clothing, and he tells Mr. Weasley that two people just tried to pay him “with great gold coins the size of hubcaps ten minutes ago” (*Goblet* 77). He even goes so far as to say that

it seems “like some kind of rally. . . . They all seem to know each other. Like a big party” (*Goblet 77*). He is able to see that all of the people coming to the campground are connected, that they dress strangely and either are unfamiliar with his currency or try to pay him with a currency he has never seen before – but he can’t connect these ideas together to scrutinize further.

Matthews discusses how, when people do notice situations or people whose beliefs or actions differ from their own, they often choose not to discuss it for fear of being thought of as “crazy.” Matthews talks about psychiatrist Ian Stevenson’s extensive research into people who remember having a previous life. Stevenson studied the Native Americans in Alaska who believe in reincarnation but many of whom have married non-Indians:

Thus an Indian wife, who grew up in the belief that she had already lived another life, might marry someone with no such belief—indeed, someone who would think it totally weird to believe he had had a previous life. The Native American wife might never share her belief in having had a previous life with her husband for fear he would think she was crazy. And thus, unknown to him, her belief system would be very, very different from his. (Matthews 183)

This husband and wife have very different belief systems but do not know because the wife fears, or more probably knows, that her belief would be seen as “crazy” and socially unacceptable in her new society.

It is as though in society anything we see that is different from “what we have been socialized to count as real” is explained off as either foreign or weird or kept to oneself (Matthews 184). All of the examples looked at so far in the *Harry Potter* novels

support this idea. There is no explanation for the owls; the weatherman thinks that those who claimed to see shooting stars may be misidentifying fireworks, and Mr. Roberts thinks the wizards and witches are foreigners. Mr. Roberts expects to see and hear just weird foreigners, and so that is what he sees and hears. If Mr. Roberts were able to determine that the people at his campground were not simply foreigners but rather witches and wizards, would he share that information with his friends? Probably not.

Rowling creates a situation in which the reader is able to notice that what the Muggles think are simply shadows are actually real objects that they fail to fully recognize or understand. The readers know that it is the Muggles who are mistaken because there clearly is a wizard world in each novel. The question remains then: why do the Muggles live in such a world? At least part of the answer is because it is easy.

Heidegger states that the prisoners enjoy their world because:

There amidst the shadows, in his shackles, he finds his familiar ground, where no exertion is required, where he is unhindered, where nothing recoils upon him, where there is no confusion, and where everyone is in agreement. (27)

The Muggles live in this same world. It is easier not to notice the witches and wizards than to notice them. From childhood, Muggles have been socialized to believe that witches and wizards are not real and there is no such thing as magic.

We can see that both the Muggles and the prisoners in the cave live in a world of darkness and do not even realize that they are in darkness. However, it must be noted that the Muggles in the *Harry Potter* series find themselves in a similar situation to that of the prisoners who have been chained since childhood in the cave in that they are unable to see the shadows as more than shadows because they “have no relationship to

light” (Heidegger 21). The Muggles do have a hard time seeing beyond the shadows; however, the wizards play a part in keeping the Muggles in the dark. When Mr. Roberts begins to be suspicious of the unusual activity, a wizard appears out of nowhere and casts a spell on him:

Instantly, Mr. Roberts’s eyes slid out of focus, his brows unknitted, and a look of dreamy unconcern fell over his face. Harry recognized the symptoms of one who had just had his memory modified. (*Goblet* 77-78)

The wizards don’t allow Mr. Roberts to remember all of the clues in case he does put them together and is able to see beyond the shadows. In fact, it seems that Mr. Roberts is a more observant Muggle, or at least in a position to see so much that he can’t help but be observant, because the wizard who modifies Mr. Roberts memory tells Mr. Weasley: “Been having a lot of trouble with him. Needs a Memory Charm ten times a day to keep him happy” (*Goblet* 78).

Another example of the wizards interfering with the Muggles’ ability to gain knowledge comes in *The Goblet of Fire* when the wizards set up the Quidditch World Cup stadium. Mr. Weasley tells Harry about the stadium and the set up:

Seats a hundred thousand. . . . Ministry task force of five hundred have been working on it all year. Muggle Repelling Charms on every inch of it. Every time Muggles have got anywhere near here all year, they’ve suddenly remembered urgent appointments and had to dash away again . . . bless them.” (95 – 96)

The magic of the wizards keeps the Muggles from getting too close to their hundred thousand seat stadium. Although most of the time the Muggles are “completely absorbed in the world with the everyday significance” (Wrathall 452) it holds for them and,

therefore, are unable to see the shadows, there are times when the wizards interfere and work to help the Muggles stay in the first stage of the allegory.

Most of the prisoners remain chained in the cave and are unable to move beyond their state of knowledge. Similarly, most of the Muggles never leave the comfort of their world where they either turn a blind eye towards the idea of wizards and witches or remain in ignorance because of the wizards' magic. However, despite the fact that most never turn to see the fire or leave the cave, it is possible for them to do so. The allegory of the cave shows a prisoner who is released from the chains and able to see the fire and leave the cave. In the *Harry Potter* series, there are also Muggles who have left the first stage of knowledge and moved on to the second and third stage and even people, Harry and Hermione, who began in the Muggle world—without knowledge of the wizard world—and are able to make it to the fourth and final stage.

Subsequent chapters will look into those who fall within the second, third, and fourth stages of knowledge; however, it is important to remember for this stage that one can leave this state of illusion and ignorance. Whether one is in this state by force, either by chains or help of the wizards, or by not fully seeing the clues that lie in front of him, it will require a liberator to know that this state is one of illusion. But, for the readers of the *Harry Potter* novels, Rowling plays the role of the liberator through the inclusion of the Muggles. Readers see that the Muggles are in an illusionary state, but, as is shown in subsequent chapters, the simple act of seeing the fire, or being liberated, does not mean one will choose to follow the liberator in order to gain a “relationship to [the] light” and thereby a greater understanding and knowledge of the world (Heidegger 21).

## Chapter Four Blinded by the Light: An Examination of Characters in Stage Two

The second stage of the allegory is when “the prisoners are turned around and forced to look at the objects themselves, rather than the shadows” (Wrathall 452). The prisoners now see the men and the fire that creates the shadows. Seeing this creates the desire in the prisoner to “turn back and retreat to the things which he could see properly, which he would think really clearer than the things being shown him” (Plato 242).

Wrathall explains Heidegger’s view on why this would occur:

A new form of unhiddenness occurs as they learn the distinction between what is seen immediately and what can be shown to them when they are torn out of their everyday modes of comportment. (Wrathall 452)

Although the prisoners do not want to be aware of the fire, and it confuses them because the shadows seem clearer than the figures themselves, they do gain a greater level of “unhiddenness” in this stage. They are aware, whether or not they want to be, of the existence of the fire and the humans behind them.

Heidegger explains why the prisoners gain this greater level of unhiddenness:

*Closeness* to beings, i.e. the being-with what is there . . . the inner proximity or distance of being-human to beings, the *degree* of the unhiddenness of beings, and the *heightening* of beings themselves as beings – these three are intertwined.

Above all we must be clear that beings separate out into those that are more and those that are less *beingful*. There are ‘beings that are more beingful’. Closeness and distance to beings changes the beings themselves. (26)

In the first stage, the prisoners, or the Muggles, have their backs turned against the fire and thus see only shadows of the humans or witches and wizards. They are distant from the beings and therefore can only interpret them with that knowledge. However, we see in this second stage that the prisoners are turned around towards the fire and the men that create the shadows. They are now closer to the beings and therefore, see the beings at a greater “degree of unhiddenness” and the beings themselves are “heightened.” The beings are changed. This change does not mean acceptance of what is seen, but their knowledge is increased, and there is certainly a higher degree of unhiddenness in regards to the beings.

In the *Harry Potter* series, the Dursley family and the Prime Minister of England from the sixth novel fall into this second stage of knowledge. They have seen the fire, or the wizards, but the images are not clear. Both the Dursleys and the Prime Minister want to turn back around and look at the shadows. Although they have achieved a higher degree of unhiddenness, they do not desire it. Heidegger asks the question, “What kind of standard does the prisoner employ in wanting to return to the shadows and in claiming *them* as the more unhidden?” (27) This question is important to consider. This stage is shown to give the prisoner far more than what he had as a shackled prisoner, and Plato states that “whoever is turned towards the more beingful beings, sees and talks more correctly” (qtd. in Heidegger 26). Yet, upon gaining this knowledge, the Dursleys and the Prime Minister wish they did not have it. Heidegger gives the answer to his question in the following quote, which we discussed in regard to stage one:

There in the cave, turned to the shadows, he has no inkling of what will happen when he must see in the light; he has no pain in his eyes, and above all, there

amidst the shadows he moves within that which . . . he is capable of, which demands no great effort of him, and happens of its own accord so to speak. There amidst the shadows, in his shackles, he finds his familiar ground, where no exertion is required, where he is unhindered, where nothing recoils upon him, where there is no confusion, and where everyone is in agreement. (27)

Although the prisoners may not realize it while in stage one, the first stage is the easy and familiar one compared to stage two. That is why they wish to retreat. Heidegger goes on to ask, “What does turning around to the things themselves *require*?” (27) Since it is clear that the prisoners (and the Dursleys and the Prime Minister) wish they were not in the second stage of knowledge, it is pertinent to ask what they would need to do in order to turn around and truly see the objects. Heidegger explains what he sees as required:

Release from the shackles, but this is only the *beginning* of emancipation. What is supposed to eventuate is a turning around to the light. This liberation fails; it does not come to fulfillment. Proof: he who has been unshackled wants to go back to his former situation! (27)

The Dursleys and the Prime Minister are in this stage because they have been released “from the shackles” and have seen the wizards themselves rather than just the shadows. But they do not reach the point of being able to see the light and desire to “go back to [their] former situation” (Heidegger 27).

The Dursley family’s actions show time and again their desire to pretend they are unaware that Harry is a wizard or that there is even a wizarding world. They attempt to create an atmosphere in their home where they are only aware of the shadows. This is

difficult with Harry living with them in the summers, but they will not allow him to talk of his wizarding world, and only rarely will they admit to their awareness of his world.

In the third book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Rowling explains the Dursleys' feelings about Harry as a wizard:

These days they lived in terror of anyone finding out that Harry had spent most of the last two years at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The most they could do, however, was to lock away Harry's spellbooks, wand, cauldron, and broomstick at the start of summer break, and forbid him to talk to the neighbors.

(2-3)

Imagine the neighbors' reaction if Harry were to mention something about a school of "Witchcraft and Wizardry" – the neighbors would think he was crazy along with the Dursleys, as they are still in the first stage of knowledge.

In the article, "Dursley Duplicity: The Morality and Psychology of Self Deception," Diana Mertz Hsieh discusses the relationship between the Dursleys and self deception. Hsieh begins by looking at the early philosophers' view of knowledge. She writes:

Socrates fittingly spoke of the need to 'know thyself' and to understand the nature of virtue in pursuing a moral life. Aristotle famously began his *Metaphysics* with the claim that 'All men by nature desire to know.' (22)

Their perspective was that people wanted to know the truth, but recent philosophers and psychologists have "increasingly challenged this longstanding vision of the role of knowledge in human life" and claim "that self-deception is necessary or unavoidable" (Hsieh 22). Hsieh describes two different authors' explanations on why self-deception is

beneficial or even necessary in society today. David Nyberg wrote *The Varnished Truth*, in which he opines that “self-deception allows us to maintain ‘coherence and stability’ in our personal identity and protects us from the painful gap between ‘what we are and what we wish we were’” (Hsieh 23). Similarly, Robert Solomon argues in his article, “What a Tangled Web: Deception and Self-Deception in Philosophy,” that “our ‘flaws and feelings’ make honest self-assessment ‘intolerable’ and that genuine self-understanding can be ‘devastating to [our] self-image and sense of self’” (Hsieh 23). Hsieh argues that in looking at the Dursley family in the *Harry Potter* novels, we see the “fundamental weaknesses in these arguments in favor of self-deception” (22).

Self-deception is supposed to be a way to “insulate a person from disturbing reminders of the truth” (Hsieh 26), but, as we see at the start of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, Vernon Dursley is unsuccessful despite all of his efforts. When Vernon Dursley leaves for work one morning, he notices a cat reading a map, but a second glance reveals only an ordinary cat:

Mr. Dursley blinked and stared at the cat. It stared back. As Mr. Dursley drove around the corner and up the road, he watched the cat in his mirror. It was now reading the sign that said Privet Drive—no, *looking* at the sign; cats couldn’t read maps *or* signs. (3)

Mr. Dursley tries to pass off the cat, but, as he drives in to work, he notices a lot of people in cloaks, and he is especially disturbed by an older man “wearing an emerald-green cloak” (3). Mr. Dursley knows that wizards and witches exist, so he tries to completely block out anything that could have to do with them; he doesn’t even “approve of imagination” because it is too closely related to a world he does not wish to see

(*Sorcerer's* 5). It is when he hears these cloak-wearing people talking about the Potters and their son Harry that the connection cannot lie hidden. When he returns home that night, he doesn't dare tell Petunia about his unusual sightings and hearing the name *Potter* on the street. Instead, he, in a roundabout way, asks what the Potters' son's name is, only to confirm it is Harry. Petunia is shocked at his questioning because "[a]fter all, they normally pretended she didn't have a sister" (*Sorcerer's* 7). These unusual events led up to Harry being left on their porch to live because Harry's parents have been killed, but these activities before show very vividly how "self-deception is integral to their response to magic, helping them close their minds to both its existence and their connection to it" (Hsieh 25). However, they are unsuccessful – they are constantly reminded of wizards. Even before Harry's arrival, they notice the unusual, but, after Harry arrives and begins attending school at Hogwarts, we see that their attempts to deceive both themselves and their neighbors continue.

Hsieh states that a second negative effect of self-deception is that it "will spread beyond the original denial to related issues" (26). This is certainly the case with the Dursleys. Not only do they have reminders of wizards, but they also don't like anything out of the ordinary. We see in the following example that they are so paranoid about magic that they ban common Muggle phrases from their household. At the start of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, there is a scene where Harry tells Dudley that he forgot "the magic word" (2), a common Muggle phrase referring to the word "please." However, Uncle Vernon has this to say to Harry about using "the magic word" (2):

WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU . . . ABOUT SAYING THE ‘M’ WORD IN OUR HOUSE? . . . I WARNED YOU! I WILL NOT TOLERATE MENTION OF YOUR ABNORMALITY UNDER THIS ROOF! (2)

Uncle Vernon refuses to even say the word “magic” or have it said in his home.

However, from this quote, it is evident that he is well aware of Harry’s relation to magic and the magical world. Uncle Vernon wishes he had no knowledge concerning the matter, but, if he must be aware, then he at least does not want Harry reminding him of it.

In the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, we see Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia’s knowledge of the wizard’s mail system:

You’re a nasty little liar. What are all those [. . .] owls – doing if they’re not bringing you news? [. . .] Aha [. . .] Get out of that one, boy! As if we didn’t know you get all your news from those pestilential birds! (6)

The Dursleys show their knowledge here and that they have been “forced to look at the objects themselves, rather than the shadows” (Wrathall 452), but it is clear that they still are unwilling to truly accept what they have seen.

The Dursleys’ reaction to their movement from the first stage into the second goes back to some ideas discussed in the first stage. In the last chapter, we saw Gareth B. Matthews’s statements on seeing what we are expected to see and hear: “And what we count as real is heavily influenced by what we have been socialized to count as real” (184). Even though the Dursley’s have been shown the “fire” – or the wizards – they still don’t want to count them as real because it goes against what they have been “socialized to count as real.” Just as the Native American wife, as discussed by Matthews, would not share her belief in a previous life with her husband for fear of being thought of as

“crazy,” the Dursleys won’t share their knowledge with others and even attempt to hide that knowledge from themselves.

When we meet the Prime Minister in Book 6, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, we see that he, like the Dursleys, wishes to live in a world of self-deception and will not share his knowledge for fear of being thought crazy. It was shortly after the Prime Minister won his election that he heard a picture coughing and announcing the arrival of the Minister of Magic. We see by his reaction that he was shocked:

Naturally, he had thought that the long campaign and the strain of the election had caused him to go mad. He had been utterly terrified to find a portrait talking to him, though this had been nothing to how he felt when a self-proclaimed wizard had bounced out of the fireplace and shaken his hand. (*Half-Blood 5*)

He thinks that he must be mistaken. When the Minister of Magic compliments him on how well he is taking it (the last Prime Minister tried to throw him out the window and thought it a hoax), the Prime Minister responds: “‘You’re—you’re *not* a hoax, then?’ It had been his last, desperate hope” (*Half-Blood 6*).

As their interaction continues, the Prime Minister learns that the Prime Ministers before him were also visited. The Prime Minister asks, “Why hasn’t a former Prime Minister warned me—?” to which the Minister of Magic, Fudge Cornelius, responds with a laugh:

‘My dear Prime Minister, are *you* ever going to tell anybody?’ . . . The Prime Minister had stood there, quite motionless, and realized that he would never, as long as he lived, dare mention this encounter to a living soul, for who in the wide world would believe him? (*Half-Blood 6*)

This interaction shows how deep the society's disbelief in magic and wizards and witches runs – even the Minister of Magic is aware that he is safe in approaching the Prime Minister because he will keep the secret safe forever – out of fear.

The Prime Minister tries to convince himself that his night with the Minister of Magic was all a hallucination:

In a vain attempt to rid himself of all reminders of this uncomfortable encounter, he had given the gerbil to his delighted niece and instructed his private secretary to take down the portrait of the ugly little man who had announced Fudge's arrival. To the Prime Minister's dismay, however, the portrait had proved impossible to remove. (*Half-Blood 7*)

The Prime Minister is unable to remove all reminders; it is too late: he has already seen the fire. After this first encounter, he is on the same level as the Dursleys – he is firmly in stage two, wishing he were in stage one. However, unlike the Dursleys, we will see in the third stage chapter that the Prime Minister is forced to move into stage three because of his position of power and the relationship that he forms with the Minister of Magic.

In the interaction between the Dursleys and the Prime Minister and the wizarding community, the idea of the Other is furthered for the reader. As Simone de Beauvoir discussed in her book, *The Second Sex*, we set ourselves up as the “One,” and, in doing so, we “at once set up the Other over against itself” (xvii). For the Dursley family and the Prime Minister, they are humans and English. Witches and wizards truly are the Other in that they do not fit into any existing category of Other. Wizards are thought not even to exist, so it is not a category of Otherness like someone from Spain would be –

human, Spanish. It is very clear that the wizards are so much the Other for the Dursleys and the Prime Minister that they wish to believe the wizards do not exist.

It is interesting for the reader to notice the idea discussed by de Beauvoir that, when one becomes a traveler, he is “shocked to find himself in turn regarded as a ‘stranger’ by the natives of neighboring countries” (xvii). We see the Dursleys and the Prime Minister regarded as the Other. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, we see Mr. Dursley called a “Muggle” by a wizard on the street. Although Mr. Dursley is unable to comprehend the idea that someone might consider him the Other (he thinks he heard himself called “a Muggle, whatever that was”), the reader sees him as the Other from the wizard’s point of view.

Because the Prime Minister eventually moves to the third stage, we are able to see in him a difference in regards to the Other from the Dursley family. The Prime Minister refers to the Minister of Magic in his head as “the *Other* Minister” (*Half-Blood* 10) – he has been able to be categorized as an existing Other. But, as we will see in the third stage, the Prime Minister also has enough knowledge of the Minister of Magic and the wizarding world to realize that he is considered as the Other to them. While his understanding is at a basic level, it allows him to be called by Rowling “not a foolish man” (*Half-Blood* 10), whereas the entire Dursley family are depicted as a closed-minded idiots who are not to be emulated.

A prisoner who remains in the second stage does so because “what is shown to him does not take on any clarity and definiteness. For this reason he wants to return to his shackles” (Heidegger 28). If the world of the Other is not seen in “clarity and definiteness,” then one can not expect him to understand it. In Wrathall’s essay, he

describes how the second stage fails in giving the prisoners or, in this case, the Dursleys the knowledge necessary to comprehend what has been shown to them:

Thus, the liberation fails because it simply shows the prisoner things in a new light without also equipping the prisoner with the practices needed to be able to cope with the things so apprehended. Until the prisoner is given the practices and habits necessary to deal with the things that are articulated according to the ideas – until he is liberated or set free for these things – he won't be able to give up the everyday situation. (Wrathall 452-452)

The Dursleys (and the Prime Minister at first) are aware of the existence of the wizard world but are unable to understand it. The Prime Minister eventually ascends to the sun and is “given the practices and habits necessary to deal with the things that are articulated” (Wrathall 452-453), and so he has a greater knowledge of the Other, as we will see in stage three. However, it may be argued that the Dursleys are given ample opportunities to move into the third stage of knowledge but simply refuse to do so—they never actually make that step and thus they are not “able to give up the everyday situation” (Wrathall 452-453).

## Chapter Five

### Strangers in a Strange Land: An Examination of Characters in Stage Three

It is in the third stage that the liberation begins. Here “[t]he prisoners are removed from the cave, and forced to look at the objects in the higher world – the ideas themselves” (Wrathall 453). The removal from the cave into the outside world is the pivotal point within the allegory.

As discussed earlier in Plato’s similes, “The Good as Ultimate Object of Knowledge” and “The Divided Line,” there are two orders of reality – the visible and the intelligible. When one moves from the visible realm into the intelligible realm, he moves from opinion to knowledge. This shift in realms comes when one leaves the second stage and enters into the third. Those in the second stage of the allegory, in the visible realm of opinion, are in the stage of belief or physical things. This section of the line is where people use common sense to guide their moral and physical actions. These are “a fair practical guide to life but have not been fully thought out” (Plato 216). Those in the third stage—the intelligible realm of knowledge—use mathematical reasoning through the use of forms. This is where one uses mathematical principles to reach an understanding. While this is “intelligible,” it uses “assumptions in investigating it” and therefore “did not proceed to a first principle, being unable to depart from and rise above its assumptions” (Plato 239). This shift from opinion to knowledge helps the prisoner to gain a greater level of freedom and understanding. This understanding that is to be found in stage three comes in mini-stages within the third stage, thereby allowing prisoners, or characters, to be in stage three yet have varying degrees of understanding.

In the allegory of the cave, Plato writes that, if the prisoner was “forcibly dragged up the steep and rugged ascent” into the sunlight, when “he emerged into the light his eyes would be so dazzled by the glare of it that he wouldn’t be able to see a single one of the things he was now told were real” (242). In the beginning of the third stage, the released prisoner has little more understanding than those in the second stage. His knowledge is greater because he has climbed the “steep and rugged ascent” (242) out of the cave and into the outside world, but he is blinded by the sun. Plato describes how the prisoner “would need to grow accustomed to the light before he could see things in the upper world outside the cave” (242) and the process the prisoner goes through in order to be able to see in the outside world:

First he would find it easiest to look at shadows, next at the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the objects themselves. After that he would find it easier to observe the heavenly bodies and the sky itself at night, and to look at the light of the moon and stars rather than at the sun and its light by day. . . .

The thing he would be able to do last would be to look directly at the sun itself, and gaze at it without using reflections in water or any other medium, but as it is in itself. (Plato 242 – 43)

Even after entering the upper world, the prisoner must work in order to see and understand the world around him. As he moves his eyes from the shadows to the reflections in water and then to the objects themselves, the prisoner will gain a greater understanding with each movement. After he is able to look at the sun itself, Plato states that he will come to the following conclusion:

that it is the sun that produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world, and is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see. (Plato 243)

It is not until the very end of stage three that the prisoner begins to understand how the outside world and the world of the cave relate to one another.

In the *Harry Potter* novels, we see characters who fall in different levels of knowledge within the third stage. In the first part of stage three are most of the wizards as well as some Muggles – the Prime Minister and Hermione’s parents. They have climbed the steep ascent into the outside world but are either still blinded by the light or are slowly beginning to look at the shadows or reflections. The wizards never reach this point. Mark Wrathall explains that the “liberation requires force, work, and exertion, strain and suffering to break out of our everyday orientation to the world” (453). The wizards never put forth this effort to “break out of [their] everyday orientation to the world” (Wrathall 453). Although they leave the cave, so to say, and gain greater knowledge than those in the second stage, they do not see and comprehend the sun in order to gain the full knowledge available to those in the third stage.

There are some wizards who, at times, show that they are looking at the objects themselves when they demonstrate knowledge of the Muggle world and see that there are aspects of the Muggle world that are useful and intelligible. Finally, there are some in the *Harry Potter* novels, specifically Lord Voldemort, who have managed to reach the full knowledge to be gained in the third stage and are able to understand the role that the sun plays in both the outer world and the cave. This section will explore the third stage in depth and examine the substages where characters from the *Harry Potter* series fall

within the stage. In looking at the progression of the characters within this stage, it becomes apparent that in the movement from being blinded by the outside world to understanding the role of the sun, there is a shift in knowledge and understanding of both oneself as well as the Other.

The first part of the third stage is when the prisoner is “so dazzled by the glare of it [the light] that he wouldn’t be able to see a single one of the things he was now told were real” (Plato 242). The Prime Minister in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is an excellent example of a character who is dazzled by the wizarding world and does not believe that what he is seeing is real. When the Minister of Magic first visits the Prime Minister, the latter believes it is a hoax and, after the meeting, gives away the gerbil (originally his teacup but the Minister of Magic transformed it) and attempts to take down the portrait through which the wizard appeared, but the portrait would not come off of the wall. He clearly is unable to see what has been placed before him.

The prisoner’s eyes, however, begin to adjust and he is able to start seeing “shadows,” after the shadows he is able to look at “the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the objects themselves” (Plato 242). Heidegger states that “[l]iberation, in the sense of turning away towards the light of the sun, is *violent*. . . . The ascent demands work and exertion, causing strain and suffering” (32). This process is not easy, and we see that with the Prime Minister. Like the prisoner in the allegory of the cave, the Prime Minister is “forced up along a rugged path” (Heidegger 32). He has not chosen this violent push from the darkness into the light, yet he is forced to have his eyes adjust so that he can see what the light produces in the upper world.

Heidegger states that the “adaptation of vision from darkness to light occurs in various stages. At first, the vision which loves darkness and shadows searches for everything outside the cave which is most closely related to darkness . . .” (32). We see that in the beginning the Prime Minister tries to convince himself that what he has seen is a “hoax” or a “hallucination” (*Half-Blood* 6, 7). Heidegger goes on to explain that after searching for darkness:

vision arrives at the things themselves, but then the released prisoner still sees better by night, where vision slowly grows accustomed to the illuminated things – the smooth light, the unblinding light of the stars and the moon. (32)

As time goes on, he must admit to seeing at least the shadow of Cornelius Fudge. When the portrait on the wall coughs, he knows what is coming – a visit from the Minister of Magic. After agreeing to see Fudge, we see the Prime Minister try to “not betray a flicker of surprise” (*Half-Blood* 3) at his arrival:

He hurried back to his desk, straightening his tie as he went. He had barely resumed his seat, and arranged his face into what he hoped was a relaxed and unfazed expression, when bright green flames burst into life in the empty grate beneath his marble mantelpiece. (*Half-Blood* 3)

After Fudge’s initial visit and the Prime Minister’s obvious shock, he doesn’t want to be seen as shocked again because “[h]e was, after all, the Prime Minister and did not appreciate being made to feel like an ignorant schoolboy” (*Half-Blood* 5).

Fudge had told the Prime Minister that he probably wouldn’t see a lot of him, because he only comes when there is a problem. But three years after introducing himself, Fudge comes back to tell him about the escape of Sirius Black, “a known

Muggle killer” who may rejoin “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named” (*Half-Blood* 8). The visits and the bad news continue as the Prime Minister is told of dragons being used for a Triwizard Tournament, a mass breakout from the Azkaban prison and now his latest visit where the Prime Minister learns in more depth how their two worlds are intertwined (*Half-Blood* 7-9).

The Prime Minister tells Fudge: “How should I know what’s going on in the—er—Wizarding community? . . . I have a country to run and quite enough concerns at the moment” (*Half-Blood* 10). To this Fudge responds:

We have the same concerns . . . The Brockdale Bridge didn’t wear out. That wasn’t really a hurricane. Those murders were not the work of Muggles. And Herbert Chorley’s family would be safer without him. We are currently making arrangements to have him transferred to St. Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. . . . Prime Minister, I am very sorry to have to tell you that he’s back. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is back. (*Half-Blood* 10)

The Prime Minister is struggling to deal with all of these unexplainable things occurring in the Muggle world, and it turns out they are caused by wizards in the wizarding world. They are unexplainable because Muggles don’t know about wizards, much less what is going on in their world.

As the Prime Minister realizes that Fudge is dealing with the same issues as he is, and worse – it turns out Sirius Black wasn’t a murderer, and he was, in fact, murdered on Ministry of Magic premises – he begins to see by the light of the moon and the stars:

To his great surprise, the Prime Minister felt a fleeting stab of pity for Fudge at this point. It was, however, eclipsed almost immediately by a glow of smugness at

the thought that, deficient though he himself might be in the area of materializing out of fireplaces, there had never been a murder in any of the government departments under *his* charge . . . . (*Half-Blood* 11)

For even a fleeting moment, the Prime Minister sees the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, as more than “the *Other* Minister”( *Half-Blood* 10). He is able to see how the two are similar in some ways and have to deal with similar issues. Although this moment is short, it does demonstrate that the Prime Minister is beginning to understand the Other, or at least acknowledge the existence of the Other.

The Prime Minister’s acknowledgement of the Other is clearly stated at the end of the chapter. After being given more details on all of the problems occurring in both the wizarding and Muggle world, meeting the new Ministry of Magic, Rufus Scrimgeour, and being told that his secretary, Kingsley Shacklebolt, is actually a highly trained Auror watching over him, the two wizards tell the Prime Minister that they will keep him updated and are ready to be on their way. We then see the Prime Minister admit, out loud, for the first time the existence of wizards and their world:

The Prime Minister gazed hopelessly at the pair of them for a moment, then the words he had fought to suppress all evening burst from him at last. “But for heaven’s sake—you’re *wizards*! You can do *magic*! Surely you can sort out—well—*anything*!” (*Half-Blood* 18)

The Prime Minister has become “accustomed to the illuminated things” (Heidegger 32) and is able to express out loud the existence of wizards. Despite the fact that he is making his statement to wizards and not Muggles—a much larger step—he does demonstrate “persistence and courage to endure the individual stages of adaptation to the

light” (Heidegger 32). He certainly has not reached the end of the third stage, but he has moved up in his knowledge, and it has been a painful process to do so.

Fudge responds to the Prime Minister’s statement and tells him, “[T]he trouble is, the other side can do magic too, Prime Minister” (*Half-Blood* 18). This statement shows the Prime Minister that this world of the Other, which in some ways could not be more opposite from his own, is in many ways the same. In this chapter of the sixth book, the reader sees the Prime Minister, through his interactions with Fudge and Scrimgeour, learn more about himself and his relation with the Other. While the Prime Minister has certainly not accepted or fully understood the Other or even penetrated the world of the Other, he has seen in some small ways what he and the Other have in common – and this is a step towards understanding the Other. Rowling writes that “[W]hatever the press and the opposition might say, the Prime Minister was not a foolish man” (*Half-Blood* 10). Being described as “not foolish” demonstrates that the Prime Minister has surpassed his Muggle friends and gained a greater knowledge and understanding of the world around him.

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the students head to Diagon Alley to buy their books before heading off on the Hogwarts Express for the school year. Diagon Alley is the same as always, but in this book the reader sees Hermione and her Muggle parents shopping for textbooks for the upcoming year. Mr. Weasley “was distracted almost at once by the sight of Hermione’s parents, who were standing nervously at the counter” (*Chamber* 56). Mr. Weasley, who is intrigued by Muggles, is quite surprised and excited to see the Grangers in Diagon Alley. In the first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, Harry notices upon his first visit to Diagon Alley that no one else on

the street seems to be able to see the Leaky Cauldron—the entrance into Diagon Alley—that they hurry by without even noticing. The Grangers' entrance into Diagon Alley, a place of magic, shows that they have penetrated the wizard world. While they certainly did not enter by performing magic of their own, they have been “removed from the cave and forced to look at the objects in the higher world—the ideas themselves” (Wrathall 453). The Grangers are described as looking nervous and are “shaking with fright” after seeing Hagrid break up a fight between Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Weasley, so it is clear that they are not comfortable in this world. However, they support Hermione in her studies at Hogwarts and their simple penetration into the wizarding world demonstrates that they are not at the second-stage understanding of most Muggles. Their third-stage understanding is minimal, but the presence of a Muggle within the boundaries of one of few magical spaces is rare and shows a willingness to look at the objects, or people, within the wizarding world.

The majority of the witches and wizards fall into the first part of stage three as well. The wizards find themselves in the part of stage three where they are looking at shadows and reflections rather than the actual objects themselves. However, the wizards find themselves in a very different situation than the Prime Minister or the Grangers. Unless a wizard is Muggle-born and later joins the wizarding world at the age of twelve, then the wizard is born into an elementary stage-three knowledge. The wizards do not have to go through the violent ascent from the cave to the outside world, which “demands work and exertion, causing strain and suffering” (Heidegger 32). Because of the nature of the wizarding world, wizards are always aware of the existence of the Muggle world, which places them in the third stage. However, despite their awareness of Muggles and

their world, it is very clear that most wizards do not understand the Muggle world or any of the value it could hold. This lack of understanding places them at the start of the third stage, and, in order to move to the full third stage knowledge or onto the fourth stage, the wizard would be required to put in the type of exertion Heidegger describes so that they might “break out of [their] everyday orientation to the world” (Wrathall 453).

We see the wizards’ knowledge of, yet inability to function in and comprehend, the Muggle world in the example looked at earlier of the pilgrimage by the wizards to see the International Quidditch Cup in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Before the International Quidditch Cup begins, the Weasley family wants to invite Harry to attend the games with them, but they know they must receive permission from the Dursleys first. Mrs. Weasley decides to send a letter requesting permission via Muggle mail. After reading the letter, Uncle Vernon “held up the envelope in which Mrs. Weasley’s letter had come, and Harry had to fight down a laugh. Every bit of it was covered in stamps except for a square inch on the front, into which Mrs. Weasley had squeezed the Dursleys’ address in minute writing (*Goblet* 30-31).

Mrs. Weasley knows that she can not send a letter via owl post, the regular wizard way, but she does not know exactly how the Muggle mail systems works. To ensure delivery she fills the envelope with stamps. Her use of stamps is so excessive that the mailman brings the letter to the door hoping the Dursleys will have some sort of explanation as to who is so unaware of where and how to place stamps on an envelope. Mrs. Weasley certainly understands at least shadows or reflections of how the Muggle world works, but she is unable to see the actual images that would allow her to obtain a clearer picture of how the Muggle world functions.

Once Harry, Hermione, and the Weasleys arrive at the International Quidditch Cup, we see how confused wizards are by the Muggle world. The wizards don't want the Muggles to notice them and their tournament with witches and wizards flying on brooms, so they attempt to dress and act as though they are Muggles. Mr. Weasley has a difficult time determining the denominations of the Muggle money, so Mr. Roberts, owner of the campground, asks him if he is foreign and tells him that "[Y]ou're not the first one who's had trouble with money. [. . .] I had two try and pay me with great gold coins the size of hubcaps ten minutes ago" (*Goblet* 77). Mr. Weasley knows enough about their world to procure the correct type of money, but does not know how to use it. Others show even less awareness and more ignorance when they try to pay with money that is not even the correct currency.

Once they find their camping spot, Mr. Weasley tells them:

We'll be putting these tents up by hand! Shouldn't be too difficult . . . Muggles do it all the time. . . . Here, Harry, where do you reckon we start? [. . .] [H]e and Hermione worked out where most of the poles and pegs should go, and though Mr. Weasley was more of a hindrance than a help, because he got thoroughly overexcited when it came to using the mallet, they finally managed to erect a pair of shabby two-man tents. (*Goblet* 79)

Mr. Weasley is excited about the prospect of putting up a tent as Muggles do but is unable to do it without the help of Harry and Hermione, who spent their childhoods in the Muggle world. Most of the wizards give up and use magic to set up their tents, and others enhance the inside of the tent and add chimneys. Harry is surprised, after setting

up a small two-man tent, to enter into the tent to see “what looked like an old-fashioned, three-room flat, complete with bathroom and kitchen” (*Goblet* 80).

All of the wizards, in order to comply with the Cup regulations, are supposed to dress as Muggles so they will not be suspected. Mr. Crouch, a strict rule-follower and member of the Ministry, had “complied with the rule about Muggle dressing so thoroughly that he could have passed for a bank manager; Harry doubted even Uncle Vernon would have spotted him for what he really was” (*Goblet* 90). However, most others are not so successful. Harry, Hermione, and Ron see two wizards arguing: one is wearing a flowery nightgown and the other is trying to convince him to wear a pair of trousers. The wizard wearing the flowery nightgown protests, “I bought this in a Muggle shop. [. . .] Muggles wear them” (*Goblet* 83). The Ministry wizard replies, “Muggle *women* wear them, Archie, not the men, they wear *these*” (*Goblet* 84).

Through these examples, we see that most wizards are not fully aware of the inner workings of the Muggle world. We see, however, that they are aware that the Muggle world exists and are not afraid to act in it. We see that some wizards procure Muggle money and others buy clothes in Muggle shops. Although some wizards and witches are clearly more successful at functioning in the Muggle world than others, all of them know how to enter. This ability to enter the Muggle world and to attempt to use objects within it shows an understanding that is no longer blinded by the light but rather slowly adjusting to seeing the shadows and reflections.

There are some wizards, however, who demonstrate a desire to know and understand more of the Muggle world and see how aspects of their world can be useful to them as wizards. In *The Chamber of Secrets*, we see that Fred and George have taken the

time to study up on some of the tricks Muggles use instead of magic. When they come to rescue Harry from the Dursleys', and the boys are faced with the task of getting Harry's trunks out of a locked room without using magic—they aren't allowed to in the summer while attending Hogwarts—George pulls a Muggle hairpin from his pocket and begins to pick the lock, while Fred explains to Harry that “[a] lot of wizards think it's a waste of time, knowing this sort of Muggle trick . . . but we feel they're skills worth learning, even if they are a bit slow” (*Chamber* 26). Fred and George have taken the time to study up on Muggles non-magical tricks, and this knowledge they have proves to be useful to them.

Mr. Weasley is another character who is fascinated by Muggles and how their world and objects within their world work. There are many instances in which Mr. Weasley investigates the Muggle world, but in *The Order of the Phoenix* we see an example when Mr. Weasley tries to use Muggle healing techniques for his own wounds:

Well—now don't get upset, Molly, but Augustus Pye had an idea. . . . He's the Trainee Healer, you know, lovely young chap and very interested in . . . um . . . complementary medicine. . . . I mean some of these old Muggle remedies . . . well, they're called stitches, Molly, and they work very well on—on Muggle wounds—. (*Order* 506 – 7)

Mr. Weasley has been bitten by a snake, and his wounds are fairly serious. The Trainee Healer and he think that the Muggle remedies seem like a great idea and are willing to use them. Mr. Weasley's wounds are magical, and the stitches do not work. Although Mrs. Weasley is furious, Hermione explains to Ginny, Harry, and Ron that stitches “do work well on non-magical wounds. . . . I suppose something in that snake's venom dissolves them or something” (*Order* 507). Hermione understands that the Muggle

remedies have value within the Muggle world. Although Mr. Weasley frequently shows an incomplete understanding of the Muggle world and its workings, he also shows a desire to learn more about their world and to try to implement aspects of their world that he thinks could be useful in his own world. This places him at a higher level of understanding than most of the other wizards who acknowledge the Muggle world but try to avoid it at all costs.

Throughout the novels, Ron Weasley is depicted as a wizard who knows little of the Muggle world and has little desire to understand the Other. He is not malicious towards the Other, but simply lacks an understanding and relationship it. He is supportive of Muggle-born wizards—Hermione is one of his best friends—and is appalled by those who use the word “mudblood.” In *The Deathly Hallows* Ron shows a clear lack of understanding in his interactions with Griphook the goblin. Griphook expresses his anger over Wizards not allowing goblins to carry wands, to which Ron replies:

Well goblins won't share any of their magic either . . . You won't tell us how to make swords and armor the way you do. Goblins know how to work metal in a way wizards have never—. (*Deathly* 488)

Ron is clearly unable to see magic from the viewpoint of goblins. There has been a long dispute between wizards and magical creatures about their powers and ways in which they can use them, and Ron shows that his understanding stops at the wizarding point of view.

Later when Griphook asks for the Gryffindor sword in exchange for his help breaking into the bank, Ron suggests:

We tell Griphook we need the sword until we get inside the vault, and then he can have it. There's a fake in there, isn't there? We switch them, and give him the fake. (*Deathly* 507)

Ron sees no problem with his idea but is very embarrassed when Hermione tells him, "That . . . is despicable. Ask for his help, then double-cross him? And you wonder why goblins don't like wizards, Ron?" (*Deathly* 507). Hermione is disgusted that Ron would show such little understanding for the Other. When it is pointed out that he has no understanding, he is embarrassed, but he would never have reached that point on his own.

At the end of the seventh novel, however, Ron is shown as a wizard who has moved towards a greater understanding of the Other. As the battle at Hogwarts is going on and students are being taken to safety, it is Ron who remembers the house-elves down in the kitchen. He tells Harry and Hermione that "we should tell them to get out. We don't want any more Dobbies, do we? We can't order them to die for us—" (*Deathly* 625). The fact that he remembers the house-elves at this time demonstrates that he is beginning to gain an understanding and respect for the Other. Earlier in the series, Ron probably would not have remembered the house-elves or, if he had, may not have thought it worthwhile to save them.

Severus Snape is a character who, like Ron, shows that a change has occurred and a greater understanding of the Other is coming into place. Snape is seen as a character who despises the Other throughout the series. He does not like Harry and takes every chance he can to punish him. In the *Order of the Phoenix*, Harry looks into the Pensieve and sees an old memory of Snape's. Harry's father, James, and his friends were bullying Snape, and Lily, Harry's mother, tells them to "Leave him ALONE!" (*Order* 647). After

a discussion between James and Lily, James lets Snape down from the air and tells him that he was lucky Lily Evans was there to stand up for him, to which Snape replies: “I don’t need help from filthy little Mudbloods like her!” (*Order* 648). This image of Snape is the one that is at the forefront throughout the novels.

It is not until the end of *The Deathly Hallows* that the reader gets a glimpse into another side of Snape, a side that demonstrates a higher understanding of the Other. Snape risks his life in deceiving Lord Voldemort so that he might help to protect Harry Potter, the son of Lily Potter, whom he loved. Snape also shows that his acceptance of the use of the word ‘Mudblood’ has changed. When Phineas Nigellus—the portrait that Snape, Harry, Hermione, and Ron have access to—tells Snape that he has seen Harry and “The Mudblood,” Snape responds: “Do not use that word!” (*Deathly* 689). The information on the transformation of Snape is very limited, but the evidence given points to a change that moves Snape from a lower third level knowledge to one that demonstrates at least an elementary knowledge of and understanding of the Other.

On the opposite end of knowledge from those wizards who wish to know more of the Other are the wizards who don’t want to know any more about the Muggle world because they believe they are inherently better than Muggles. They take it even further, though, in that they believe that anyone who is Muggle-born is not worthy to be a wizard or witch. Elizabeth E. Heilman and Anne E. Gregory discuss this relationship between pure-blood wizards and Muggle-born wizards in their article “Images of the Privileged Insider and Outcast Outsider.” They tell of how the dispute between purebloods and mudbloods goes back to the very founders of Hogwarts:

Salazar Slytherin felt that Hogwarts should be a school only for those of pureblooded wizarding families, and that those from Muggle families should be denied entrance. He did not think that Muggle-born wizards and witches could be trusted. (Heilman 251)

The other three founders disagreed, and Slytherin was eventually asked to leave Hogwarts, although his name stayed with the Slytherin house, being one of the four houses in Hogwarts.

The Malfoys are a family that is of pureblood descent and look down on those who are not. Draco Malfoy takes any chance he gets to let Hermione Granger, a Muggle-born witch, know how he feels about non-purebloods:

“At least no one on the Gryffindor team had to buy their way in,” Hermione said sharply. “They got in on pure talent.”

The smug look on Malfoy’s face flickered.

“No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood,” he spat.

Harry knew at once that Malfoy had said something really bad because there was an instant uproar at his words. (*Chamber* 112)

Harry, having never heard the term “Mudblood” before, understands from the reaction of the crowd that it is a horrible insult. Ron later explains to him that “Mudblood’s a really foul name for someone who is Muggle-born” (*Chamber* 115). Throughout the novels the Malfoys and other wizarding families like them are depicted in a very negative light.

Their belief that as pure-bloods they are better than everyone else does not place them at a higher status in the text, but rather a lower one. Although they certainly have power

within the novel with their money and status, their determinedness to view the Other as always lesser shows them to be ignorant.

According to Heidegger, those wizards who are born into the wizarding world, although they do have a third stage knowledge, have not been genuinely liberated because “in all genuine becoming and growing, no stage can be leapt over” (32). The wizards leap over the knowledge to be gained in the first and second stages as well as the violence and pain it can take to get to the third stage knowledge. For the Prime Minister, the pathway and the pain involved to reach only the beginning of the third stage is great. Yet, we see that he begins to have a greater understanding and knowledge of the Other than most wizards and even more so than a wizard such as Mr. Weasley, who desires to know of the Other. Heidegger states that “the genuine liberation does not only depend on an act of violence but requires persistence and courage to endure the individual stages of adaptation to the light” (32). This is especially apparent with those who reach the full knowledge to be gained at the third stage. In the *Harry Potter* novels, one character who gains a full third stage knowledge is Lord Voldemort.

In the sixth novel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the reader is given details on Lord Voldemort and his past. Lord Voldemort is a descendant of the Gaunt family, “a very ancient Wizarding family noted for a vein of instability and violence” (*Half-Blood* 212). Voldemort’s family is also in the same line as Salazar Slytherin, one of the founders of Hogwarts who speaks Parseltongue, the language of snakes. Voldemort’s grandfather, Marvolo, and uncle, Morfin, were very unstable and treated Voldemort’s mother, Merope, very poorly because they thought she was a Squib, a wizard or witch who does not possess magical powers. When Marvolo and Morfin are

hauled off to the Azkaban prison, Merope leaves the house and marries a Muggle, Tom Riddle, Sr. Dumbledore suspects that Merope was a witch with magical powers who simply did not use them when being tortured by her father but did put them to use to create a love potion to make Tom Riddle, Sr., fall in love with her. The potion wore off, and Tom Riddle, Sr., left Merope while she was pregnant with their son, Tom Riddle, Jr., or Lord Voldemort.

Voldemort's mother stumbled into an orphanage where she had her son and died an hour later. She requested that he be named Tom Marvolo Riddle, after his father and her father. Voldemort was, thus, left to be raised in an orphanage since neither Tom, Sr., nor Marvolo ever came looking for him. Being raised in a Muggle orphanage and knowing nothing of his parents, Voldemort was unaware that he was a wizard or that there were such things as witches and wizards. Voldemort was quick to accept the fact that there is a wizarding world. When Dumbledore explains to him what type of school Hogwarts is, Voldemort tells Dumbledore of the unusual things he has been able to do:

“[I]t’s magic, what I can do? . . . I can make things move without touching them. I can make animals do what I want them to do, without training them. I can make bad things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to . . . . I knew I was different . . . I knew I was special. Always, I knew there was something.” (*Half-Blood* 271)

Voldemort already knew he was able to do unusual things and had a desire to be different from others and seen as special. This allows him to quickly believe that there is a world of wizards and witches and that he is one of them.

All of the information we receive on Voldemort's childhood is through Dumbledore's memories or memories that he has collected from others. After Dumbledore shows Harry the memory where he tells Voldemort that he is a wizard, Dumbledore comments on Voldemort's powers at the age of eleven:

“His powers, as you heard, were surprisingly well-developed for such a young wizard and—most interestingly and ominously of all—he had already discovered that he had some measure of control over them, and begun to use them consciously. And as you saw they were not the random experiments typical of young wizards: He was already using magic against other people, to frighten, to punish, to control.” (*Half-Blood* 276)

Before Voldemort even knew he was a wizard, he had surprising control over his use of magic, especially considering he did not know that what he was doing was magic. But even more telling for the person he was to become was that he already had the desire to use magic to place him above others and “to frighten, to punish, to control” others around him.

Voldemort takes the Hogwarts Express and enters into his life as a wizard at Hogwarts. He is placed into the Slytherin house and “showed no sign of outward arrogance or aggression at all”; rather, he “seemed polite, quiet, and thirsty for knowledge. Nearly all were most favorably impressed by him” (*Half-Blood* 360-61). During his years at Hogwarts he is named a prefect and receives “top grades in every examination” (*Half-Blood* 430). Dumbledore explains to Harry that, for Voldemort, “Hogwarts was where he had been happiest; the first and only place he had felt at home” (*Half-Blood* 431).

Because Voldemort was raised in a Muggle orphanage, he already knows and understands the Muggle world. It is in the Wizarding world that he must learn to see more than the shadows and reflections of objects. He does this during his time in school. When Dumbledore first meets young Voldemort, he is very arrogant and shows little respect to those around him, but, during his time at Hogwarts, he puts away this arrogance in order to gain as much knowledge as he can. Voldemort is one of the top students in his class and is seen as a student who has great potential to be a leader in the Wizarding world.

Heidegger states that one who becomes genuinely liberated no longer wants to go back to his previous state of knowledge “for he now sees through the shadowy character of his whole cave existence” (32). Upon graduation from Hogwarts, Voldemort has a strong knowledge of how both the Muggle and Wizarding worlds work, and he has no desire to live the life he did in the Muggle world. He has gained a greater understanding of the world. In order for Voldemort to gain this greater understanding, he needs to have an “*understanding* of what it *is* that one encounters” (Heidegger 37). Heidegger uses the example of a book. One may be able to see a book, but, without the understanding of what a book means, one only sees the book and does not perceive it. The prisoners in the cave do see a form of light through the shadows of the fire, but without the understanding of what light *is*, they do not truly *see* the light.

Voldemort is able to see and understand what a book is in both the Muggle and Wizarding world. He understands the powers that Muggles have and those that wizards have, and sees the power a wizard can have within the Muggle world. During his time in the orphanage, before he even knows he is a wizard, he learns that he “can make bad

things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to” (*Half-Blood* 271). Voldemort is able to use his powers as a wizard to hurt and annoy those around him, and they, as Muggles, have no power to retaliate or even to defend themselves against him. Voldemort is able to look at the sun itself and understand its role in both of the worlds. It is this knowledge that makes him such a powerful wizard.

Although Voldemort is a very powerful wizard, he is a wizard who is in the third stage and not the fourth and final stage. He does not possess the highest level of learning. One key difference between the knowledge found in the third and fourth stages is that the fourth stage requires a return to the cave in order to fully understand the two worlds. So why would one reach the third stage and not make the return in order to fully understand the Other and have this highest level of learning? Voldemort returns to the Muggle world only physically—he does not connect the two worlds in relation to one another. Voldemort knows of and, to an extent, even understands the Other, but he also despises the Other and, thus, does not see the value in the Other.

In the allegory of the cave, Plato’s character Socrates discusses how once the freed prisoner has reached the highest form of knowledge he, as lawmaker, must prevent the chained prisoner from behaving as they currently do. He goes on to explain their current behavior:

Remaining in the upper world, and refusing to return again to the prisoners in the cave below and share their labours and rewards, whether trivial or serious. (Plato 246)

If he remains in the upper world and refuses to share the labors of those below him, then he does not properly understand the purpose of the “highest form of knowledge” and thus

does not fully have this “highest form of knowledge” that Plato urges his students to seek. Glaucon tells Socrates that, in requiring people to return to the prisoners, they are requiring them to “live a poorer life than they might live” (Plato 246). Socrates gives the following explanation:

The object of our legislation . . . is not the special welfare of any particular class in our society, but of the society as a whole; and it uses persuasion or compulsion to unite all citizens and make them share together the benefits which each individually can confer on the community; and its purpose in fostering this attitude is not to leave everyone to please himself, but to make each man a link in the unity of the whole. (Plato 246-7)

In order to have the fourth level knowledge, one must be “a link in the unity of the whole” and must understand the value of the Other and not place oneself above the Other. This is where Lord Voldemort falls short and so cannot enter into the fourth stage. Voldemort does not want to be a link in the whole or share the labors of the community. He wants to be set up on a level all by himself.

Voldemort shows this desire not to be connected with others through his Muggle given name, Tom Riddle. He tells Dumbledore that he does not like the name Tom because “[t]here are a lot of Toms” (*Half-Blood* 275). Dumbledore discusses with Harry Voldemort’s dislike of his name:

There he [Lord Voldemort] showed contempt for anything that tied him to other people, anything that made him ordinary. Even then, he wished to be different, separate, notorious. (*Half-Blood* 277)

Voldemort's name was too common to keep. In *The Chamber of Secrets*, Voldemort himself shows Harry that he used the letters of his name "Tom Marvolo Riddle" to create his name "I am Lord Voldemort" (314). He then goes on to explain the change in his name:

"You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father's name forever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother's side? I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No Harry—I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer in the world!" (*Chamber* 314)

Lord Voldemort himself confirms Dumbledore's statements that the name Tom was too ordinary and Voldemort wanted nothing to tie him to the ordinary.

Lord Voldemort was willing to go much further than changing his name to cut himself off from anything ordinary. During his time at Hogwarts, he spent the summers back in the Muggle orphanage. One summer he set off to find the House of Gaunt where his grandfather Marvolo and Morfin had lived; his grandfather was already dead, but Morfin was still there. Voldemort stupefied his uncle and used his wand to kill his father Tom Riddle, Sr., as well as his paternal Muggle grandparents. Morfin admitted to the crime, and Voldemort was never suspected. But Voldemort was still able to take out his revenge on his Muggle father who had left his mother, and at the same time rid himself of the Muggles who gave him ties to the Muggle world.

At one point, Voldemort comes to Dumbledore seeking a job at Hogwarts.

Dumbledore denies him the job, but they discuss different types of magic:

“Certainly,” said Voldemort, and his eyes seemed to burn red. “I have experimented; I have pushed the boundaries of magic further, perhaps, than they have ever been pushed—”

“Of some kinds of magic,” Dumbledore corrected him quietly. “Of some. Of others, you remain . . . forgive me . . . woefully ignorant.”

For the first time, Voldemort smiled. It was a taut leer, an evil thing, more threatening than a look of rage.

“The old argument,” he said softly. “But nothing I have seen in the world has supported your famous pronouncements that love is more powerful than my kind of magic, Dumbledore.”

“Perhaps you have been looking in the wrong places,” suggested Dumbledore.

*(Half-Blood 443-4)*

Dumbledore believes that love is more powerful than Voldemort’s evil use of magic.

Love is a form of acceptance of the Other, and it is this that Voldemort lacks. Voldemort sees no power in love, or in accepting that which is the Other, and in doing so he prevents himself from moving into the fourth stage of knowledge.

The next chapter will look more closely at the fourth stage and the acceptance of the Other, but it is important to see that it is the unwillingness to return and share the duties of the prisoner that keeps one from the fourth stage. In not returning, one shows that he is unwilling to accept the Other.

The third stage is truly the pivotal stage. Characters within this stage move from the realm of opinion to that of knowledge. Yet it is clear in looking at characters within the *Harry Potter* novels that the levels of knowledge obtained within the third stage vary greatly. Heidegger discusses the freedom to be attained in the third stage and how it is greater than that in the second:

[I]t is not only a matter of removing the shackles, i.e. of freedom *from* something. Such freedom is simply getting loose, and as such is something negative. Unshackledness has no content in itself. He who has just been unshackled becomes insecure and helpless, is no longer able to cope; he even regards those who are still shackled as possessing an advantage in terms of this negative freedom. . . . the “positive” which genuine freedom offers him, i.e. support and certainty, peace and solidity. This is what genuine positive freedom offers; it is not only freedom *from* but freedom *for*. (43)

Those in the second stage are unshackled and therefore free, but it is a negative freedom because they do not understand it. Whereas in the third stage the freed prisoners begin to have a positive form of freedom that offers “support and certainty, peace and solidity” (Heidegger 43). They are not just free from the shackles, but rather free to gain new knowledge and a greater understanding of the world around them that they were not able to see in previous stages.

## Chapter Six

### Philosopher Kings (and Queens): An Examination of Characters in Stage Four

There are a few wizards who have not only gained the full knowledge available at the third level, but who have moved on to the knowledge available at the fourth stage as well. The fourth stage is when “[t]he liberated prisoner returns to the cave, and, with his new orientation toward the ideas, learns to discern the truth of beings and of man” (Wrathall 453). The prisoner has now become enlightened and when he returns to the cave, or other world, he is able to see “how everything hangs together” (Wrathall 453). With the return, the picture is complete, and the prisoner is able to see how the two different worlds of knowledge interact together.

In the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, the reader sees Harry go through the stages throughout the novel. At the start of the novel, Harry is living a life, although not exactly normal, in the Muggle world. Harry lives in a small cupboard space under the stairs, and his relatives, the Dursleys, hate him. Harry goes to a regular school, eats everyday food, and even gets to go to the zoo for the first time. Every so often he does something out of the ordinary, such as the instance at the zoo where he speaks to the snake. While this is by no means a normal activity in the Muggle world, Harry is also astounded by it and cannot comprehend what has happened. He never thinks that it could be a sign that he is a wizard.

Harry moves to the second stage when Hagrid, the groundskeeper at Hogwarts, brings him his letter of acceptance into Hogwarts and tells him: “Harry – yer a wizard” (*Sorcerer’s* 50). Harry responds by saying, “I’m a *what?*” (*Sorcerer’s* 51). Harry is in

shock and listens to Hagrid as the truth about his past, his parents, and the Wizarding world unfolds.

When Harry goes with Hagrid to Diagon Alley to get his school supplies, he enters into the third stage as seen in the allegory of the cave. When Harry comes to the Leaky Cauldron, the reader gets the following description:

It was a tiny, grubby-looking pub. If Hagrid hadn't pointed it out, Harry wouldn't have noticed it was there. The people hurrying by didn't glance at it. Their eyes slid from the big book shop on one side to the record shop on the other as if they couldn't see the Leaky Cauldron at all. In fact, Harry had the most peculiar feeling that only he and Hagrid could see it. (*Sorcerer's* 68)

Harry is surprised to see the building and is fairly sure that the other humans, or, as he is now learning, "Muggles," cannot see it. Once inside this semi-hidden Leaky Cauldron, Harry earns entrance into Diagon Alley:

He tapped the wall three times with the point of his umbrella. The brick he had touched quivered – it wriggled – in the middle, a small hole appeared – it grew wider and wider – a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid, an archway onto a cobbled street that twisted and turned out of sight. (*Sorcerer's* 71)

Just as the prisoner left the cave and was blinded by the sun, Harry has now left the Muggle world and wishes he "had about eight more eyes" so that he could take in all that he is seeing in this new fantastical world (*Sorcerer's* 71). The majority of the wizards never make it past the first part of the third stage, entering the upper world, because:

The liberation requires force, work, and exertion, strain and suffering to break out of our everyday orientation to the world. (Wrathall 453)

We see a glimpse of this “work, and exertion, strain and suffering” when Harry is dropped off at the train station and tries, without much success, to find platform nine and three-quarters.

Harry finds himself “stranded in the middle of a station with a trunk he could hardly lift, a pocket full of wizard money, and a large owl” (*Sorcerer’s* 91). He asks a guard for help, but to no avail – there is no platform nine and three-quarters. He hears a group of people talking about Muggles, so he approaches them, the Weasleys, to ask how he can find this platform nine and three-quarters. He is told to “walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten. Don’t stop and don’t be scared you’ll crash into it, that’s very important” (*Sorcerer’s* 93). This is not something that Harry would do in the Muggle world – you don’t walk straight into a brick barrier unless you are seeking injury. We see Harry work to “break out of our everyday orientation to the world” (Wrathall 453) in the following description:

He pushed his trolley around and stared at the barrier. It looked very solid.

He started to walk toward it . . . ] He was going to smash right into that barrier and then he’d be in trouble – leaning forward on his cart, he broke into a heavy run – the barrier was coming nearer and nearer – he wouldn’t be able to stop – the cart was out of control – he was a foot away – he closed his eyes ready for the crash –

It didn’t come . . . he kept on running . . . he opened his eyes. [ . . . ] A sign overhead said Hogwarts Express, eleven o’clock. (*Sorcerer’s* 93)

Harry is able to break through his expectations, set up by his years in the Muggle world, and step into the upper world to begin to understand the sun as the prisoner did, or, for him, the Wizarding world.

At the end of the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, we see Harry return from Hogwarts to the train station to meet the Dursleys and spend the summer in their home. Wrathall says that “[o]nly with the return do the ideas play their proper role – namely, they give us that intelligibility on the basis of which beings can appear as what they are” (453). Although this book shows Harry go through the four stages, there is much more to the fourth stage than a physical return to the cave. As discussed with Lord Voldemort in stage three, he does return physically to the cave, or the Muggle world, but it is not enough for him to move onto the fourth stage.

Heidegger describes the fourth stage as one in which we learn nothing new: “There is no longer an ascent, but rather a turning back. We turn back around to where we previously were, to what we already know” (58). With the return to the cave, the released prisoner is putting together all of the knowledge that he has gained, and is then able to understand that knowledge in such a way that he can share it with others.

In the allegory of the cave, Plato's character Socrates reminds Glaucon that “the eyes may be unsighted in two ways, by a transition either from light to darkness or from darkness to light, and [one must] recognize that the same thing applies to the mind” (244). Just as the prisoner is blinded by the fire and the sunlight when he ascends into the upper world, he too will be blinded by the darkness when he leaves the light of the sun and descends back into the cave. This is important because the other prisoners will likely think he is a fool, but “he will not be disturbed when the cave-dwellers laugh at him and

his words” because he will understand that he is only temporarily blinded (Heidegger 65).

Once his eyes readjust to the darkness he will:

see a thousand times better than they [the prisoners] do and will distinguish the various shadows, and know what they are shadows of, because you [the returned prisoner] have seen the truth about things admirable and just and good. (Plato 247)

Given time, the returned prisoner will understand the shadows far better than the prisoners because of the knowledge he has gained in the second and third stages. In the *Harry Potter* series there are certainly occasions when either Muggles or other wizards view Harry, Hermione, and Dumbledore as fools. Harry is not believed when he proclaims that he saw Lord Voldemort kill Cedric Diggory and that the Dark Lord is back; Hermione is thought to be crazy when she wants to start up S.P.E.W., an organization to help elves gain rights in the Wizarding world; and the Dursleys think Dumbledore odd, and perhaps presumptuous, when he refuses to change who he is every day as a wizard and treats them as he would any other wizard in his visit in *The Half-Blood Prince*.

Although those who have reached the fourth stage are sometimes thought of as the Other, they have reached this stage because, with the return to the cave, they are now able to understand and appreciate the value of the Other. Heidegger explains how with the return the prisoner is now able to see the Other:

He is now able, for the first time, to comprehend the *situation* of the prisoners, to understand why they do not recognize the shadows *as* shadows, and why they take them instead for the beings to which they must comport themselves. (64-65)

Because the prisoner has reached the fourth stage, he is able to understand why the chained prisoners see the shadows as actual beings – they do not know of or understand the role of the fire in the cave or the sun in the upper world. The released prisoner’s willingness to return and be amongst the prisoners and decipher their shadows, rather than remain in the upper world relishing in his knowledge and superiority to those in the cave, allows him to gain this final piece to the puzzle. He is able to see the purpose of individuals, as well as himself, in the “society as a whole,” he is able to understand the importance of making “each man a link in the unity of the whole” (Plato 247).

The ability to cross social boundaries or understand that of the Other is not easily done; thus, not many make it all the way to the fourth stage. Simone de Beauvoir states in her book, *The Second Sex*, that “otherness is a fundamental category of human thought” (xvii). Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* expounds upon this idea that otherness is a part of our everyday thinking in his exploration of the relationship between the researchers who gave the Orient its name and those who actually live in what was deemed the Orient. Said quotes a British colonial officer, Lord Cromer, as saying:

I content myself with noting the fact that somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European. (qtd. in Said 39)

Lord Cromer saw in the Orientalist everything that he was not. Said goes on to describe what men like Cromer had described the Orientalist to be, and therefore what they saw themselves, Europeans, to be: “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (40). The Orientalist is the opposite or the Other in every way from what the European sees himself

to be. Perry Nodelman describes the study of the Other in his article, “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children’s Literature”:

Orientalism is thus inherently and inevitably a study of what theorists often call *the other*—of that which is opposite to the person doing the talking or thinking or studying. Since the opposite of studying is an inability to study, the other is always conceived by those who study it to be unable to study itself, to see or speak for itself. Thus, what the study will always focus on is how and why the other lacks one’s own capabilities. (29)

When one studies, or even creates something or someone in one’s own mind to be the Other, one is focusing on how the Other is opposite to one’s self or “how and why the other lacks one’s own capabilities” (Nodelman 29).

This phenomenon is easy to see in the relationship between the Muggles and the Wizards. The Wizards see the Muggles as the Other because they cannot perform magic. They see a world without magic as primitive and assume that those who cannot use magic must be of a lesser intelligence and ability than those who can. Those Muggles who are aware of the existence of Wizards see them as the Other because they can use magic. There is no such thing as magic, and the Muggles don’t need it, so why and how could others possess it?

The Other as the opposite of oneself is clear between Muggles and Wizards, but it is present in many other situations throughout the *Harry Potter* series as well. There is the difference between Muggles who know and those who don’t know of the existence of the wizards—the Dursleys try not to be seen as the Other amongst their neighbors and friends. Within the Wizarding world there are purebloods and mudbloods, rich and poor

wizards, intelligent and not. There are so many categories and situations in which one can create or be the Other.

With so much Otherness it becomes more apparent why there are so few who have gained the “highest form of knowledge” and are able to understand the Other and cross social boundaries into that of the Other (Plato 246). It is difficult because one must overcome “a fundamental category of human thought” in order to accept the Other (de Beauvoir xvii). Not only that, but one must also realize that in accepting the Other, one may become the Other.

In looking at the characters of the *Harry Potter* series who have reached the fourth stage, we see that they have done so through their ability to see the world from the light of the knowledge gained through the stages. They are able to understand why the Other is the Other, and are also able to accept the Other and cross social boundaries into the world of the Other. Those who have reached the fourth stage certainly do not have a perfect understanding and acceptance of the Other; however, they have accepted Otherness in some circumstances and are attempting to do so in other areas. In some circumstances, these characters are viewed as the Other by their peers, but they are also set up as leaders by Rowling and as characters for the readers to see as the heroes and heroines of the novel.

The three main characters that fit into stage four are Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Professor Albus Dumbledore. However, there are hints that some minor characters may fit into this stage as well. One minor character that shows signs of fourth stage knowledge is Kingsley Shacklebolt. At the start of *The Half-Blood Prince* the Muggle Prime Minister meets with Rufus Scrimgeour and Cornelius Fudge and is told

that he needs great security during these difficult times. An Auror, Kingsley Shacklebolt, has been assigned to work as his secretary and to be his security. Before the Muggle Prime Minister is aware that Kingsley is a wizard, he tells the two wizards that Kingsley is “highly efficient, gets through twice the work the rest of them—” (*Half-Blood* 17). The Muggle Prime Minister is very satisfied with Kingsley’s work.

In *The Deathly Hallows* the Dursley family must leave their house to go under the protection of wizards as they might be targets for Voldemort. Kingsley and Mr. Weasley visited the Dursleys earlier to explain the importance of their going into hiding. After this meeting, Vernon Dursley saw Kingsley on television with the Muggle Prime Minister. When Harry is persuading them to go into hiding, Vernon Dursley tells Harry that he wants to be under the protection of Kingsley:

Kingsley had mastered the knack of dressing like a Muggle, not to mention a certain reassuring something in his slow, deep voice, had caused the Dursleys to take to Kingsley in a way that they had certainly not done with any other wizard . . . . (*Deathly* 34)

It is apparent that Kingsley has learned about Muggles and the way they live in order to seem as though he is a part of their society. He is able to cross the social boundary between wizard and Muggle and dress and act in such a way that Muggles believe him to be one of their own.

It is through a comment he makes on a radio program *Potterwatch* that his understanding of the Other is made clear. He talks about how Muggles are unaware as to what is causing all of the turmoil in their world:

“However, we continue to hear truly inspirational stories of wizards and witches risking their own safety to protect Muggle friends and neighbors, often without the Muggles’ knowledge. I’d like to appeal to all our listeners to emulate their example, perhaps by casting a protective charm over any Muggle dwellings in your street. Many lives could be saved if such simple measures are taken.”

*(Deathly 440)*

Even during a time where witches and wizards are in danger and dying, Kingsley shows concern for Muggles. When one of the other radio hosts asks him what he would say to listeners who say “‘Wizards first,’” he responds:

“I’d say that it’s one short step from ‘Wizards first’ to ‘Purebloods first,’ and then to ‘Death Eaters,’ . . . We’re all human aren’t we? Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving.” *(Deathly 440)*

Kingsley is able to see that despite all of the categorizations of Otherness that are created—such as Muggles, Wizards, Purebloods, Death Eaters—that we are really all the same, human. He sees that the Muggles need protection as much as any wizard, and asks those who listen to their program to help the Muggles by placing protective charms over their houses. Although Kingsley is a minor character who is not seen a lot throughout the series, he shows in the times he is seen that his knowledge is that which is found in the fourth stage.

Hermione Granger is a witch who, like Harry, was raised in the Muggle world and went through all of the stages to reach the fourth stage of knowledge. In his will, Dumbledore leaves Hermione the original copy of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a book

of children's stories. Ron is shocked to find out that neither Harry nor Hermione have ever heard of any of the stories, to which Hermione replies:

“Ron, you know full well Harry and I were brought up by Muggles! . . . We didn't hear stories like that when we were little, we heard ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs’ and ‘Cinderella’—.” (*Deathly* 135)

Even in the seventh book when Hermione has been a part of the Wizarding world for some time, she is learning new things that are different from those she learned in the Muggle world during her childhood.

Hermione shows her knowledge of the Muggle world in *The Deathly Hallows* when she Disapparates with Ron and Harry to different places that she is aware of in the Muggle world. She explains to them that she thinks they are “safer out in the Muggle world, it's not where they'll expect us to be” (*Deathly* 163). Whether it is a street in London or a place that she went camping with her parents, it is apparent that she knows and understands the Muggle world.

Hermione's knowledge of the two worlds, and her ability to put that knowledge together in order to understand and stand up for the Other, is most apparent through her attempts to help house-elves. In Rowling's fourth novel, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Hermione becomes outraged by the treatment of house-elves. House-elves are not paid, must follow their masters' orders and keep their secrets. They have no freedom unless they are fired from their duties, and then they have no money or means to make money. When Hermione finds all this out, she says, “You know, house-elves get a *very* raw deal! [. . .] It's slavery, that's what it is!” (*Goblet* 125). When Hermione questions to

see if they get holidays, sick leave, and pensions, she is told that “[h]ouse-elves don’t want sick leave and pensions!” (*Goblet* 182).

Hermione sets up a group whose aim is to get more rights and freedoms for the house-elves; her ideas are received with little success. There are only a few wizards who seem to care at all about house-elves and their rights. Some critics proclaim that the fact that Hermione is ridiculed is yet another example of her being pushed down because of her role as a woman. Eliza T. Dresang points out in her article “Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender” that, although she is ridiculed and “made to seem extreme and unreasonable and that initially the house-elves seem worse off for her efforts to help,” (228) this is because she is advocating for the Other:

This is, however, precisely what happens when any individual advocates for massive social reform. History documents that those who opposed slavery were not enthusiastically welcomed or even understood by most of their contemporaries. (Dresang 228)

The house-elves are a group that is considered as the Other by witches and wizards. When Hermione starts to investigate and complain against the treatment of house-elves, she is not widely accepted because she also becomes the Other. There are some who support her cause, however. Professor Dumbledore is one who is able to see what Hermione sees and grants Dobby, a house-elf, “ten Galleons a week, and weekends off” (*Goblet* 379).

Hermione is incredibly intelligent and surely has the knowledge of slavery and its effects on the Muggle world, so, once she studies up on slavery in the wizard world, she is able to compare the two. After researching in the Hogwarts library she finds that “[e]lf

enslavement goes back centuries. I can't believe no one's done anything about it before now" (*Goblet* 224). Her goals in S.P.E.W. (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare) are:

to secure house-elves fair wages and working conditions. Our long-term aims include changing the law about non-wand use, and trying to get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, because they're shockingly underrepresented. (*Goblet* 225)

These goals reflect what has already been accomplished and what the Muggles are continually working towards in their world. These same goals were set out by Muggles to gain equal rights for women, African Americans and other minorities, and children. Hermione is able to take the knowledge that she has gained from her time in the Muggle world and try to apply it, and convince others of the importance of applying it, in the Wizarding world. In her attempts to do so, she shows that she has the knowledge to be gained in the fourth stage and has a "more fundamental understanding of the world" (Wrathall 453) than the prisoners at stage one, or even those at stage two or three.

Hermione shows early on in the series her ability to cross social boundaries and understand the Other. In the seventh book, Hermione becomes in a very real way the Other. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are in need of help from a Goblin, Griphook. When Griphook questions who cares in the Wizarding world when Goblins or house-elves are killed, Hermione tells him: "'We do! . . . We protest! And I'm hunted quite as much as any goblin or elf, Griphook! I'm a Mudblood!'" (*Deathly* 489). When Ron protests at her calling herself a Mudblood, she continues on to say:

“Mudblood, and proud of it! I’ve got no higher position under this new order than you have, Griphook! It was me they chose to torture, back at the Malfoys’! . . . Did you know that it was Harry who set Dobby free? . . . Did you know that we’ve wanted elves to be freed for years? . . . You can’t want You-Know-Who defeated more than we do, Griphook!” (*Deathly* 489)

In previous books, Mudbloods were considered the Other by some, but, in the final book Mudbloods are hunted down and killed or sent to Azkaban. When the three friends are in need of help from Griphook, he tries to show them how they are different and why they cannot work together. But Hermione tells him of how she is the Other within the Wizarding world and describes to him how they are the same. She is able to move past their differences and point out to him what they have in common.

Hermione is one of the most intelligent witches or wizards at Hogwarts during her time there. Yet, throughout the series, it becomes apparent that her intelligence is far more than book smarts. She is able to use her knowledge of the Muggle world from her childhood and the knowledge she gains of the Wizarding world once she attends Hogwarts to move to the “highest form of knowledge” available at the fourth stage. She is able to return to the cave and see how all of her knowledge of the two worlds works and use it to understand the Other as well as be willing to be the Other if it means working towards a higher cause.

Professor Albus Dumbledore is another example of a wizard who has reached the fourth stage of knowledge. Unlike Hermione and Harry, Dumbledore did not begin as a prisoner chained since childhood. He was born into a Wizarding family and therefore started with knowledge of both the Muggle and Wizarding world. Unlike many wizards

who get stuck in the beginning of the third stage because they have knowledge of, but no understanding of, the Muggle world, Dumbledore was able to gain that knowledge over the course of his life.

It is in the seventh book, *The Deathly Hallows*, that the reader learns more about Dumbledore's past. Dumbledore's father was sent to Azkaban for the killing of three Muggles. His father killed them because they had tortured his young daughter, Ariana, after seeing her perform some magic at a young age. After being tortured, she did not want to use magic, but magic was still present within her and would come out uncontrollably. Dumbledore is incredibly intelligent and describes himself as also incredibly proud: "I was gifted, I was brilliant. I wanted to escape. I wanted to shine. I wanted glory" (*Deathly* 715). Dumbledore became friends with Gellert Grindelwald and they made grand plans: "Muggles forced into subservience. We wizards triumphant. Grindelwald and I, the glorious young leaders of the revolution" (*Deathly* 716). Although Dumbledore admits to "a few scruples," he convinced himself that it would be for the "greater good" (*Deathly* 716).

It was the death of his sister Ariana, caused in a fight between Grindelwald, Aberforth (Dumbledore's brother) and Dumbledore, that pulled him from his prideful arrogance. Grindelwald fled and became a very dark wizard, while Dumbledore was left to "bury my sister, and learn to live with my guilt and my terrible grief, the price of my shame" (*Deathly* 717). Dumbledore learned that he "was not to be trusted with power . . . that power was my weakness and temptation" (*Deathly* 717-18). It was the death of Ariana that helped Dumbledore to refocus his life. He learned not to seek power. He went from a wizard who was planning to dominate Muggles in his youth to one whom

Elphias Doge, a close friend, describes as an avid Muggle supporter: “Indeed, his determined support for Muggle rights gained him many enemies in subsequent years” (*Deathly* 17). Although Dumbledore did not begin with stage one knowledge, he forced himself to go back and learn the lessons to be gained from the earlier stages. Over the course of his life he moved into the fourth stage of knowledge where he had a great respect for and understanding of the Other.

Like Hermione, one key example of Dumbledore’s acceptance of the Other and his metaphorical return to the cave is seen through his interactions with house-elves. After Dobby, the Malfoy’s family house-elf, is set free, he is in search of a job where he does not have to be enslaved. He comes to Hogwarts with another freed friend, and Professor Dumbledore gives the two of them jobs. Winky is ashamed of being free and wants no compensation, but Dobby “gets a Galleon a week and one day off a month,” an amount much less than the 10 Galleons a week and weekends off offered by Dumbledore, but the prospect of that much money and time off was too much for Dobby to accept after years of enslavement.

Dumbledore’s understanding of house-elves becomes even clearer when he discusses Kreacher with Harry. Kreacher was Sirius Black’s house-elf and was loyal to him only because he had no choice. Sirius was the only member of his family who was not part of the dark arts, and Kreacher remained loyal to the dark wizards. It was Kreacher who helped deliver Sirius to his ultimate death. Dumbledore explains his thoughts on the situation to Harry:

I warned Sirius when we adopted twelve Grimmauld Place as our headquarters that Kreacher must be treated with kindness and respect. I also told him that

Kreacher could be dangerous to us. I do not think that Sirius took me very seriously, or that he ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human's . . . . Kreacher is what he has been made by wizards, Harry. . . . Yes he is to be pitied. His existence has been as miserable as your friend Dobby's. . . . Sirius did not hate Kreacher. He regarded him as a servant unworthy of much interest or notice. Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike. . . . We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward. (*Order* 832-34)

Dumbledore is very explicit and straightforward in regards to Kreacher and the way he has been treated. Although Kreacher has just betrayed Sirius, and Sirius is now dead, Dumbledore takes the time to point out to Harry the situation he was in as an enslaved house-elf. Steven W. Patterson writes about this passage in his article "Kreacher's Lament":

One important thing to see in this passage is Dumbledore's equation of indifference and neglect with mistreatment and abuse themselves. Another is Dumbledore's recognition that wizard-kind is paying the price of its mistreatment of house-elves and the other magical races in the course of their struggle against Voldemort. (115)

Dumbledore's acceptance of the Other is clear. He states that Sirius, like most wizards, did not realize, or care, that Kreacher has feelings and that wizards have mistreated house-elves for far too long. At the time Dumbledore tells Harry this, Harry does not care or particularly appreciate this information. But Dumbledore feels that it is important

to share the information nonetheless because he knows how important it is to regard the Other with respect.

Another example of Dumbledore trusting the Other is his relationship, and trust in, Severus Snape. Severus Snape is considered to be the Other by many. Snape worked for Lord Voldemort and was a Death Eater who returned from the Dark side after Voldemort's power fell the first time. Many question Snape's loyalties, but time after time Dumbledore states that "I trust Severus Snape completely" (*Half-Blood* 549). Harry especially believes that Snape is still connected with Lord Voldemort and his followers, but, when he talks to Mr. Weasley and Lupin about it, Mr. Weasley says: "It comes down to whether or not you trust Dumbledore's judgment. I do; therefore, I trust Severus" (*Half-Blood* 332). Even those who choose to trust Snape only do so on account of Dumbledore.

After Snape kills Dumbledore at the end of *The Half-Blood Prince*, those who trusted Dumbledore's trust in the Other are left to question him. Minerva McGonagall expresses this sentiment:

He always hinted that he had an ironclad reason for trusting Snape [. . .] I mean . . . with Snape's history . . . of course people were bound to wonder . . . but Dumbledore told me explicitly that Snape's repentance was absolutely genuine . . . . Wouldn't hear a word against him! (*Half-Blood* 616)

The characters, as well as the readers, are left to question Dumbledore's judgment in accepting the Other at the end of book six. It is not until the end of book seven that Dumbledore's trust in Snape, the Other, proves to be well placed. Snape was willing to be the Other, in both circles of evil and good, so that he could help protect Lily Potter's

son. Dumbledore was willing to place his trust in Snape very early on, despite his being a Death Eater.

Dumbledore is a character who is depicted as one of the most intelligent, most well-respected, and best headmasters to ever be at Hogwarts. Although book seven shows that Dumbledore is indeed human and not a perfect wizard, Dumbledore is still left as a great leader and wizard to emulate. It is his ability to overcome his prideful youth and use his intelligence and compassion to cross social boundaries and understand, as well as advocate for, the Other that makes him such a great wizard.

Harry Potter is the third main character who has reached the fourth stage level of knowledge. As discussed earlier, the reader sees Harry go through the four stages in the first novel, *The Sorcerer's Stone*. However, his physical return to the Muggle world is not enough for true fourth stage novel. But, throughout the series, it is clear that he has indeed gained the "highest form of knowledge" (Plato 246) to be found in stage four.

In *The Half-Blood Prince*, Professor Slughorn is talking to Harry about his mother:

"Your mother was Muggle-born, of course. Couldn't believe it when I found out. Thought she must have been pure-blood, she was so good.'

'One of my best friends is Muggle-born,' said Harry, 'and she's the best in our year.'

'Funny how that sometimes happens, isn't it?' said Slughorn.

'Not really,' said Harry coldly." (*Half-Blood* 70-1)

Through this interaction, it is evident that Harry is disgusted by those who place themselves above those who are Muggle-born. His mother and best friend are Muggle-

born, and he loves his mother who sacrificed herself for him and knows Hermione is far greater than most wizards, not less, simply because of her birth status.

Harry, like Hermione and Dumbledore, has interactions with house-elves that demonstrate his acceptance of the Other. Kreacher, the house-elf who belonged to Sirius and helped tip off those who killed him, now belongs to Harry. When Hermione, Ron, and Harry first go to stay at 12 Grimmauld Place, Kreacher is not pleased to see them and says, ““Master . . . back in my Mistress’s old house with the blood-traitor Weasley and the Mudblood—”” (*Deathly* 191). Harry does not treat him well and orders him around, showing a lack of understanding for this house-elf, the Other.

After talking with Kreacher about one of the seven horcruxes, Hermione reminds Harry why Kreacher remained loyal to the Black family—because of the gift from Regulus. He remained loyal to the Black family even though Sirius treated him poorly and the dark wizards were kind to him and treated him well. Harry then has a moment where he remembers what Dumbledore told him in regards to treating house-elves and those who are the Other:

As he watched Kreacher sobbing on the floor, he remembered what Dumbledore had said to him, mere hours after Sirius’s death: *I do not think Sirius ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human’s. . . .*

“Kreacher,” said Harry after a while, “when you feel up to it, er . . . please sit up.” (*Deathly* 198-9)

Once Harry begins to treat Kreacher as “a being with feelings as acute as human’s,” their relationship changes (*Deathly* 199). Harry gives Kreacher the locket from his old master, Regulus Black, and this gift changes everything. One day when they came back from

lurking around the Ministry of Magic, the entire house had been cleaned, Kreacher was happy to see Harry and had made them soup:

The quality of Kreacher's cooking had improved dramatically ever since he had been given Regulus' locket: Today's French onion was as good as Harry had ever tasted. (*Deathly* 227)

When Harry chooses to treat Kreacher with respect, Kreacher in turn treats him with respect. Kreacher's loyalty to Harry is seen at the end of the novel when everyone is fighting:

The house-elves of Hogwarts swarmed into the entrance hall, screaming and waving carving knives and cleavers, and at their head, the locket of Regulus Black bouncing on his chest, was Kreacher, his bullfrog's voice audible even above this din: 'Fight! Fight! Fight for my Master, defender of house-elves! Fight the Dark Lord, in the name of brave Regulus! Fight!' (*Deathly* 734)

Although Kreacher is still Harry's servant, Harry's choice to give him more freedoms and respect shows the improvement in his ability to respect the Other.

Harry's relationship with the Other is even more apparent in his relationship with Dobby the house-elf. Dobby was originally enslaved to the Malfoy family, but Harry helped to free Dobby by giving Lucius Malfoy a dirty sock. Malfoy threw the sock to the ground, but Dobby caught it first and was therefore free because it was seen as Malfoy giving his elf a gift, thereby rendering him free. Dobby and Harry remained friends and Dobby helped out Harry on many different occasions.

In *The Deathly Hallows*, Harry, along with many others, is trapped in the Malfoy's dungeon. There is no way for them to escape until Dobby Disapparates into the

cellar. Dobby is able to Disapparate out of the cellar with humans and begins to take the prisoners to safety. Dobby comes back for Harry, but, just as they are Dissapparating, Bellatrix throws a knife that kills Dobby. Harry is devastated by the loss of Dobby and insists on digging a grave for Dobby by hand, using no magic:

He dug with a kind of fury, relishing the manual work, glorying in the non-magic of it, for every drop of his sweat and every blister felt like a gift to the elf who had saved their lives (*Deathly* 478).

Harry is so grateful for Dobby's sacrifice and friendship that he wants to give him something in return. Yet he can't help feeling that this small funeral for Dobby is not nearly as grand as he deserves:

Harry placed the elf into the grave, arranged his tiny limbs so that he might have been resting, then climbed out and gazed for the last time upon the little body. He forced himself not to break down as he remembered Dumbledore's funeral, and the rows and rows of golden chairs, and the Minister of magic in the front row, the recitation of Dumbledore's achievements, the stateliness of the white marble tomb. He felt that Dobby deserved just as grand a funeral, and yet here the elf lay between bushes in a roughly dug hole. (*Deathly* 480)

Harry finishes his tribute to Dobby by placing white stones on his grave in which he engraves: "HERE LIES DOBBY, A FREE ELF" (*Deathly* 481). This scene shows Harry exhibiting great tenderness to a house-elf, to his friend Dobby. The fact that Harry believes Dobby deserves a funeral as great as one of the greatest wizards to ever live—Dumbledore—shows that Harry not only understands the Other, but that Dobby has ceased to be the Other in his mind. Dobby is his friend, a friend who has sacrificed his

life for Harry, and Harry does not distinguish between friends. Whether his friend is Dumbledore, one of the greatest wizards; Hermione, Muggle born; or Dobby, a house-elf, Harry treats them with equal respect and love.

Griphook, a goblin, is at the house when Harry is outside digging Dobby's grave and comments to Harry about his unusual behavior: "“You are an unusual wizard, Harry Potter. . . . You dug the grave. . . . You also rescued a goblin. . . . You brought me here. Saved me”" (*Deathly* 486). Harry is not sure whether Griphook is praising him or being critical of his actions. We learn that Harry has gained Griphook's respect when Harry asks Griphook if he can believe that he wants to break into Gringotts, but not for personal gain, and Griphook responds:

“If there was a wizard of whom I would believe that they did not seek personal gain . . . it would be you, Harry Potter. Goblins and elves are not used to the protection or the respect that you have shown this night. Not from wand-carriers.” (*Deathly* 488)

Harry's actions are indeed unusual. Harry's decision to grab Griphook to Dissapparate with him from the Malfoy's, when his own life is in danger, as well as to show Dobby the respect he did, are actions that most wizards do not demonstrate.

On many occasions Dumbledore tells Harry that the main difference that separates Harry from Voldemort is his ability to love. Dumbledore tells Harry in *The Half-Blood Prince* that he is a wizard with “uncommon skill and power” (509) and that skill and power is his ability to love:

“Yes, Harry, you can love . . . Which, given everything that has happened to you, is a great and remarkable thing. You are still too young to understand how unusual you are, Harry.” (*Half-Blood* 509)

Harry’s parents were killed by Lord Voldemort when he was only one year old. Their death forced him to live an unhappy childhood with the Dursleys, yet he has never been seduced by the dark arts and is still able to love. Dumbledore tells Harry that love gives him great power, but Harry is not able to understand this idea. In book seven as he is burying Dobby, Harry gains a greater understanding of the power of love:

His scar burned, but he was master of the pain; he felt it, yet was apart from it. He had learned control at last, learned to shut his mind to Voldemort, the very thing Dumbledore had wanted him to learn from Snape. Just as Voldemort had not been able to possess Harry while Harry was consumed with grief for Sirius, so his thoughts could not penetrate Harry now while he mourned for Dobby. Grief, it seemed, drove Voldemort out . . . though Dumbledore, of course, would have said that it was love. (*Deathly* 478)

Harry is unable to master Occulemency to keep Voldemort out of his head, but when Harry is consumed with love he is able to master Voldemort. Voldemort cannot enter his mind when it is filled with love.

In many respects, it is Harry’s ability to love that helps him to love, or at least to respect, the Other. Sometimes, as in the case of Kreacher, it takes time for Harry to decide to look for the value in the Other, but, once he does, he is able to show his understanding of the world around him from the view of the fourth stage. Harry crosses the social boundaries that society has set up for him. By the end of the series he and his

Muggle cousin, Dudley Dursley, have moved towards a semblance of friendship; he has gained the respect of house-elves and goblins; and he has witches and wizards from the various houses fighting at his side. His ability to see past the Otherness that everyone possesses is what helps him to have such a large crowd fighting against Voldemort and his followers in the end.

Those who have reached the fourth stage of knowledge, and have returned to the cave to be able to understand how the four stages work together, have a greater understanding than those in the previous stages. Heidegger explains the new understanding that the returned prisoner has gained:

He is now able, for the first time, to comprehend the *situation* of the prisoners, to understand why they do not recognize the shadows *as* shadows, and why they take them instead for the beings to which they must comport themselves. (64-65)

Because the returned prisoner—or Kingsley, Hermione, Dumbledore, and Harry—is able to comprehend the situation of the prisoner, or the Other, he is able to look past the Otherness and begin to help the prisoner to better understand the world around them as well. When these characters show their respect for the Other, they are, in turn, being liberators from the darkness. They are showing others that it is acceptable to accept the Other and cross social boundaries. Although this can often create a situation in which the liberator becomes the Other, the *Harry Potter* series shows some situations in which those who accept the Other become the leaders of the community. Heidegger explains how this understanding of the four stages together and the prisoner's new role as liberator allows the returned prisoner to have genuine freedom from the chains:

It is clear from this that liberation does not achieve its final goal merely by ascent to the sun. Freedom is not *just* a matter of being *unshackled*, nor just a matter of being free *for* the light. Rather, genuine freedom means *to be a liberator* from the dark. The descent back into the cave is not some subsequent diversion on the part of those who have become free, perhaps undertaken from curiosity about how cave life looks from above, but is the only manner through which freedom is genuinely *realized*. (66)

Likewise, the ability to understand the Other and cross social boundaries is not “some subsequent diversion” but the only way in which the returned prisoner can gain genuine freedom.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion  
The *Harry Potter* Series: Both Popular and Good Literature

In Plato's allegory of the cave, each stage builds upon the subsequent stage. As Plato's prisoners, or Rowling's characters, progress through the stages, the reader is able to see the new knowledge gained and compare it with that of the previous stage. It is through these comparisons that the reader is able to see the differences between Dumbledore and the Dursleys and realize the importance of Dumbledore's acceptance of the Other. It is that acceptance that sets him so far apart from those found in the earlier stages.

The critics of children's literature are constantly calling for texts that open up the minds of children and require readers to expand their view and acceptance of the world. Rowling's text does just that. Yet many critics criticize her works as homogenous, sexist and racist—a close-minded text that *is* fun, but places the same middle-class, white values at the forefront. Rowling's text does not explore the idea of Otherness through an exploration of the social issues and agendas that are at the core of discussions related to the Other today. Rather, she requires the reader to engage herself in the text in order to find the Otherness. But once the reader delves into the text and compares the characters, she will come away with a much deeper understanding of the importance of the Other than if the text told the reader didactically.

Although Plato wrote *The Republic* and the allegory of the cave at the start of Western civilization, the lessons found within are still very relevant today. Plato shows how a leader should lead rather than tell. After seeing the prisoner move from the shadows to the sun, the reader sees the importance of the now freed prisoner

understanding not only the sun but the shadows as well. Without his understanding of the shadows, his knowledge of the sun is not complete. Similarly, without the Muggles and the Dursleys, the reader's knowledge of Harry's understanding of the Other is not complete. Rowling uses fantasy and magical worlds set apart from each other to show how one must learn to accept the Other in order to truly lead. And once Rowling's text is read with Plato's allegory of the cave in mind, the reader is able to see how the stages play out within the text and the relation between the sun and the shadows, the wizards and Muggles, and Harry and Dudley.

Although Zipes claims that "difference and otherness are obliterated" (175) in the *Harry Potter* series, I believe that when one reads the text in connection with Plato's allegory of the cave, one can argue that her books have quite the opposite effect. Underneath the fun fantastical world of Hogwarts there is much depth to be gained for readers of all ages. It is this depth that allows the *Harry Potter* series to transcend the distinct categories set out by critics and become a book that is both popular and good literature.

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