

Harry Gets by With a Little Help from His Friends:  
An Aristotelian Reading of Virtue and Friendship in  
*Harry Potter*

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**1. Introduction**

There is little doubt that Harry Potter is a heroic figure, but can he be considered virtuous? From an Aristotelian perspective, the answer to this question is not as obvious as the casual reader might think. While Harry displays a predisposition for virtue in the *Harry Potter* series, acting with an eye toward protecting those he cares for, he often acts on impulse without considering the potential consequences. Ultimately, friendship allows Harry to overcome this character flaw and to realize his promise for a virtuous life. J. K. Rowling, like Aristotle, reminds her readers that friendship is central to the virtue of the individual and the well-being of the city.

The argument developed here begins in Section 2 by providing an account of Aristotle's understanding of practical judgment. For Aristotle, practical judgment brings together and puts to work both the virtues of character and intellectual virtues. The second part of the argument in Section 3 illustrates that, at least initially, Harry does not satisfy the criteria of Aristotelian practical judgment. Despite this, as illustrated in Section 4, Harry does demonstrate a predisposition to virtue. According to Aristotle's philosophy, this suggests that, under the right conditions, Harry has the potential to develop virtue. Section 5 identifies the critical role of complete friendship in the cultivation of virtue. Finally, Section 6 makes the case that Harry, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger are "complete friends" in Aristotle's sense, and that this friendship is central both to the development of their virtue (and in turn their happiness) and the happiness of the city.

## 2. Aristotle's Practical Judgment

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, many of Harry's actions achieve positive outcomes. That said, he initially fails to meet Aristotle's criteria for virtue. According to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, virtue deals not simply with the end result of actions, but also the means by which one reaches the end result and the reasons for which the actions are taken (1105b6-9).<sup>1</sup> One essential factor in Aristotelian virtue is choice (1105a33). Aristotle would deny that choice comes from impulse, desire, or wishing, since choices are rational decisions that involve neither pleasure nor pain (1111b12-17). In addition, one does not choose just the end, but also the means to reach an end (1111b24-30). For Aristotle, it does not matter merely that the end is achieved, but also *how* it is achieved. Choice involves "reason and thinking things through," so in order to discover how to go about reaching the end, deliberation accompanies choice (1112a17, 1112b15-16). According to Aristotle, the "thing chosen is what is decided out of the deliberation" (1113a5). In life situations, there is always a choice, but the correct choice is sometimes not so apparent. Deliberation, for Aristotle, is set in opposition to impulse: "one ought to be quick to do what has been deliberated, but to deliberate slowly" (1142b1-2 and 4-5). In addition, one does not deliberate about unchangeable or fortuitous aspects of life, but only "about things that are up to us and are matters of action" (1112a32). Aristotle considers correct deliberation to be a virtue, which he labels practical judgment.

For deliberation to qualify as a virtue, however, it must be "skilled deliberation," which requires a "sort of rightness" of reason (1142b8). In order to achieve this skilled deliberation, practical judgment requires knowledge of both universals and particulars (1141b14-16). A person's knowledge of universals comes about from wisdom, which "involves a demonstration of things the sources of which are incapable of being otherwise" (1140a35-36). Understanding of particulars, however, "become[s] known by experience" (1142b16-17). Experience is necessary because it teaches one how to apply knowledge in particular circumstances. Wisdom and experience, then, are the bases of skilled deliberation, which in turn informs virtuous actions (1141b7-8).

Wisdom and experience demonstrate two key components of the Aristotelian soul: virtue of intellect and virtue of character. Thinking pertains to reason and is "a result of teaching," while character is developed as "a consequence of habit" (1103a14-15). Virtue of intellect is the "knowing part," corresponding to wisdom and universals, and virtue of character is the "calculating part," corresponding to experience and particulars. The two go hand in hand because "the work of a human being is accomplished as a result of [intellectual virtue] and of virtue of character, since virtue [of character] makes the end on which one sets one's sights right and practical judgment makes the things related to it right" (1144a7-9). In order for an action to be

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<sup>1</sup> Parenthetical references to Aristotle are from *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2002).

virtuous, one must focus on the end and the means by which one reaches it. Practical judgment reconciles the two parts of the soul to direct action for the good of the city. Overall, “practical judgment is a truth-disclosing active condition involving reason about human goods that governs action” (1140b21-22).

According to Aristotle, “happiness appears to be something complete and self-sufficient, and is, therefore, the end of actions” (1097b20). To achieve true happiness, the individual must constantly “be-at-work” in the effort to attain and maintain virtue. The foundation for the active condition is habituation, which is central to the cultivation of virtue. As he says, “we become just by doing things that are just, temperate by doing things that are temperate, and courageous by doing things that are courageous” (1103b1-3). This virtuous behavior ultimately is encouraged through the “master art” of politics. Politics “lays down the law about what one ought to do and from what one ought to refrain” (1094b4) and, as part of the education of the populace, requires

one to do the deeds of a courageous person, such as not to leave one’s assigned place or run away or throw down one’s arms, and the deeds of a temperate person, such as not to commit adultery or be wildly extravagant, and those of a gentle person, such as not to hit people or slander them, and similarly with the things that are in accord with the other virtues and vices, commanding the one sort and forbidding the other. (1129b20-27)

Aristotle’s formulation of practical judgment effectively merges the idea of happiness for the individual with that of the city. In the end, the good of the individual cannot be separated from that of the city (1142a9-10). Thus, the highest end of action is the good of the city, since the ends of these actions “appear to be greater, at least, and more complete both to achieve and preserve” (1094b8-12).

### **3. Harry and the Problem of Impulsiveness**

When difficult situations arise, instead of deliberating well, Harry tends to act impulsively, thus suggesting that, at least initially, he fails to meet Aristotle’s understanding of the highest virtue: practical judgment. One early example of Harry’s propensity to act on impulse is his acceptance of Draco Malfoy’s challenge to a wizard’s duel in *Sorcerer’s Stone*. Earlier that same day Harry had narrowly escaped expulsion and, as a result, “felt he was pushing his luck, breaking another school rule” (SS p. 155). And in fact it is not Harry, but Ron, who originally accepts the challenge on Harry’s behalf. In spite of his reservations, and Hermione’s warning of the possible consequences both to himself and Gryffindor House (SS p. 155), Harry allows Malfoy to goad him into it. Malfoy is able to do so, in part, by tapping into Harry’s insecurities. Harry is particularly sensitive to the fact that he grew up in the Muggle World and fears that, as a result, he will be the “worst in the

class” (SS p. 100). When Malfoy challenges his knowledge of the Wizarding World by asking, “What’s the matter? Never heard of a wizard’s duel before?” (SS p. 153), he hits Harry at his weakest point, undermining Harry’s ability to act on his deliberation. While contemplating the wisdom of the duel, “Malfoy’s sneering face kept looming up,” propelling Harry to action. He simply cannot pass up his “big chance to beat Malfoy face-to-face” (SS p. 155). Aristotle establishes that virtuous action must be the result of skilled deliberation (1139a31-33). In this example, Harry’s reason suggests that sneaking out of the dorm is not a good idea and, as Hermione had warned, the duel turns out to be a trap. Not only are the kids nearly caught by Argus Filch, the Hogwarts caretaker, they are nearly killed by Fluffy, the three-headed dog. In this instance, it is not that Harry’s reason fails him, but that he experiences an inability to act properly as a result of that reason.

Another example of Harry’s tendency to act on impulse occurs in *Chamber of Secrets*, when Harry decides to take the flying car with Ron to Hogwarts. After they fail to get to the train that transports them to Hogwarts, Harry accepts Ron’s argument that underage wizards are allowed to use magic in emergency situations and that surely this qualifies as an emergency (*CoS* p. 69). While flying, Harry thinks nothing of consequences, only that flying in a car “was surely the only way to travel” (*CoS* p. 71), and envisions “Fred’s and George’s jealous faces when [he and Ron] landed smoothly and spectacularly on the sweeping lawn in front of Hogwarts castle” (*CoS* pp. 71-72). With this action, Harry does not deliberate poorly, but rather fails to deliberate at all. According to Aristotle, “choice is involved with reason and thinking things through” (1112a18-19). When asked by Professor Minerva McGonagall after he arrives at Hogwarts by flying car, “Why didn’t you send us a letter by owl? I believe *you* have an owl,” Harry responds, “I—I didn’t think” (*CoS* p. 80). Harry looks back on the event and realizes, “[n]ow she said it, that seemed the obvious thing to have done” (*CoS* p. 80). Making a decision without regard for deliberation, Harry shows that, for the time being, he is unable to make an Aristotelian choice.

Harry’s lack of practical judgment reaches a climax in *Order of the Phoenix* with his decision to go to the Department of Mysteries to save his godfather, Sirius Black. Throughout the latter half of the book, Harry is instructed by Headmaster Albus Dumbledore to learn Occlumency (*OotP* p. 519), the goal of which is to block Voldemort from his mind. Those he trusts and respects repeatedly urge him to take the lessons seriously. Before fleeing from the Ministry of Magic, Dumbledore urges Harry to “study Occlumency as hard as [he] can,” asking him to “practice it particularly every night before sleeping so that [he] can close [his] mind to bad dreams” (*OotP* p. 622). Later, after a particularly bad fight with Severus Snape, Remus Lupin and Sirius both urge Harry to continue with his lessons, with Lupin saying, “there is nothing so important as you learning Occlumency! . . . Do you understand me? Nothing!” (*OotP* p. 672). The importance of blocking his mind is made clear to Harry in his lessons with Snape. While the mind connection with Voldemort has been useful in the past, the incident with Ron’s father, Arthur

Weasley, makes Voldemort aware of the connection (*OotP* p. 532). There is reason to fear that the process might work in reverse, allowing Voldemort to use it against Harry and the Order (*OotP* p. 533).

Earlier in the novel, Harry had been willing to leave his friends and the only home he had ever known in order to protect his friends and the Order (*OotP* pp. 492-96). However, in spite of the fact that he has been warned that Voldemort might use the connection between them against the Order, Harry seems unwilling to learn Occlumency. In one of their lessons, Snape accuses Harry of not practicing, saying that the connection makes Harry feel important (*OotP* p. 591). While the criticism seems harsh, it is true that Harry fails to practice (*OotP* p. 638) and that he is consumed with curiosity about his dreams (*OotP* p. 577). Ultimately, the fear of the connection is justified. Voldemort plants an image in Harry's mind of Sirius being tortured in the Ministry (*OotP* pp. 726-28). Harry's first impulse is to warn a member of the Order, but he quickly comes to the conclusion that there is no one left at Hogwarts from the Order, since Dumbledore, Rubeus Hagrid, and McGonagall have all been run out of the school by Dolores Umbridge and Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge (*OotP* p. 730). His next impulse is to rescue Sirius himself, completely overlooking the fact that Snape is both a member of the Order and still present at Hogwarts.

Hermione initially pulls Harry back from this impulsive act, arguing that Harry's vision is unlikely and urging him to verify it before he acts (*OotP* pp. 732-34). Harry is able to contact the Blacks' house-elf, Kreacher, through Umbridge's fire, who claims that Sirius is gone and will not return from the Ministry (*OotP* p. 741). While on the surface this might be considered solid evidence, Harry's previous experience with house-elves more generally, and Kreacher specifically, should have made him realize that Kreacher is not a reliable source. Harry's experience with Dobby, who was able to leave the Malfoys' house to warn Harry about the Chamber of Secrets, makes him wary about Kreacher's disappearance over the Christmas holidays (*OotP* p. 504) as well as his improved attitude when he reappears (*OotP* p. 516). Ignoring all that he had learned from lessons and personal experience, Harry takes Kreacher at his word, and with the aid of five classmates, rushes off to the Ministry to save Sirius.

As could be predicted, when he arrives, it turns out to be a trap. As Bellatrix Lestrange and Lucius Malfoy taunt him, Harry realizes his mistake (*OotP* pp. 781-82). By failing to deliberate, he potentially "le[ads] his friends to their deaths for no reason at all" (*OotP* p. 782). Perhaps more damning by Aristotle's understanding of virtue, Harry also puts the city at risk. Harry's presence in the Department of Mysteries makes it possible for Voldemort to acquire the prophecy, the dreaded weapon he has been after the entire novel. In fact, had it not been for the arrival of the Order, Harry would have given the prophecy to Lucius Malfoy on the slight chance that it would spare his friends' lives (*OotP* p. 801). Harry's willingness to hand the prophecy over to save the lives of his friends is in itself problematic, when it comes to Aristotle's definition of practical judgment. Not only is it likely that he and

his friends would be killed once he handed over the prophecy, he also does not yet seem to understand that sometimes sacrifice is necessary for the good of the city, a lesson Sirius tries to impart earlier in the novel, when he tells Harry that “some things are worth dying for” (*OotP* p. 477). Ultimately, unlike in earlier examples, Harry’s inability to deliberate in this circumstance has disastrous consequences. Not only does Harry compromise the safety of the city, his actions culminate in Sirius’s death at the hands of Bellatrix (*OotP* p. 806).

#### 4. Harry’s Predisposition to Virtue

Although Harry does not demonstrate Aristotelian virtue in the early books of the series, this does not necessarily mean that he lacks the potential to develop it. Aristotle claims that some individuals are predisposed to virtue from birth (1144b6-9). Early in the *Harry Potter* series, given his age and recent introduction to the magical world, Harry lacks experience and impulse control, as the young often do (1095a4-6). For Aristotle, in order to obtain full virtue, experience is necessary. He argues that deliberation “has to do with particulars, which become well known by experience” and that “the young are not experienced, since it is length of time that produces experience” (1142a15-18). One can be predisposed to virtue, but without experience one is incapable of good deliberation and, consequently, of choice. In addition, a human being must be at work in order to develop virtue; he or she cannot become virtuous without action (1099a3-9). As stated above in Section 2, repetition of correct action leads one to possess virtue (1103b1-3).

With this in mind, Harry’s actions suggest a natural predisposition to virtue. The first instance when Harry displays this predisposition is in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, when Ron and Harry save Hermione from a troll. Earlier that same day, Ron had made a rude comment about Hermione, which she overhears (*SS* p. 172). Ron and Harry learn from Parvati Patil that Hermione spends the rest of the day crying in the girl’s bathroom, but after an awkward moment, the boys put Hermione out of their minds (*SS* p. 172). After learning about the troll, Harry and Ron pause on their way up to the Gryffindor Common Room and decide to find Hermione (*SS* p. 173). After mistakenly locking Hermione in the bathroom with the troll and hearing her scream, Ron and Harry rush to her rescue: “It was the last thing they wanted to do, but what choice did they have?” (*SS* p. 175). The fact is, they had many other choices. The two could have gone to find a teacher or a prefect. Professor McGonagall rightly asks them, “What on earth were you thinking of?” (*SS* p. 177). They are only first-year students, after all, with very little magical education to prepare them to fight a “full-grown mountain troll” (*SS* p. 178). Harry and Ron lack proper deliberation in this action, but their rash decision does save Hermione’s life, forming a friendship between the three characters that lasts throughout the book series.

Another early example of Harry’s predisposition to virtue can be drawn from Harry’s decision to pursue the Sorcerer’s Stone. Throughout the course of the novel, Harry gathers much information about the Stone’s

powers, origins, and whereabouts. Somewhat by chance, Harry, Ron, and Hermione learn that the Sorcerer's Stone was made by Nicolas Flamel and that it has the power to give immortality to its owner (*SS* pp. 219-20). They learn from Hagrid that the stone is being kept in the school and guarded by the three-headed dog, Fluffy, who, if one "jus' play[s] him a bit o' music" will "go straight off ter sleep" (*SS* pp. 192-93 and 266). While serving detention in the Forbidden Forest, Harry encounters someone whom he learns to be Voldemort, and Firenze, a centaur, guides Harry to the conclusion that Voldemort is after the Sorcerer's Stone (*SS* pp. 258-59). Learning this piece of information gives Harry the greatest motivation for protecting the Stone. Although Harry acquires important information, he fails to use it properly on account of his lack of deliberation. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione learn that Dumbledore has left the school, they first try to consult McGonagall. After Harry's feeble attempt to persuade McGonagall to help him, he settles into a game plan, saying to Ron and Hermione, "Right, here's what we've got to do" (*SS* p. 269). Not once does he stop to think of any alternatives or the danger he would be putting Ron and Hermione in by entering the third-floor corridor. Furthermore, although Harry knows about Fluffy, he is not sure what other enchantments or creatures protect the Stone. Harry pursues the Stone with good intent and information, but his lack of deliberation still renders his action non-virtuous.

A later example of Harry's predisposition to virtue is illustrated through his use, at Hermione's suggestion, of Polyjuice Potion in *Chamber of Secrets*. Harry is motivated by a desire to benefit others. Harry, Ron, and Hermione have cause to suspect Malfoy of wanting to harm muggle-borns (*CoS* p. 139) and reason to believe that the Malfoy family "could easily be Slytherin's descendants" (*CoS* p. 158). In taking the Polyjuice Potion, the trio hopes to get Malfoy to confirm that he is the heir of Slytherin (*CoS* p. 158). Harry and the others hope that, with this information, they can stop Malfoy from hurting others. Unfortunately, Harry, along with Ron and Hermione, fail to deliberate about the bigger picture (a rare example of Hermione's falling short when it comes to deliberation). Although it takes a month to make the potion (*CoS* p. 166), they never think of searching for the location of the Slytherin Common Room before the night they need to go there (*CoS* pp. 217-18), nor do they know the password (*CoS* p. 221). This is particularly problematic given that they are limited to one hour, after which the effects of the potion wear off (*CoS* p. 224). That said, while their deliberation ultimately proves faulty, their goal is to work for the advantage of the city.

Harry similarly illustrates a failure to deliberate, combined with a natural desire to help others, in his decision to enter the Chamber of Secrets. Over the course of the novel, Harry gathers useful information regarding the Chamber, including the location of the entrance as well as the fact that the monster is a basilisk (*CoS* p. 292). Once he and Ron, with the help of Hermione, gather this information, they know that they need to tell a teacher (*CoS* p. 292). However, when they overhear that Gilderoy Lockhart is going into the Chamber, instead of telling McGonagall, they tell Lockhart (*CoS* pp.

295-96). This illustrates a lack of deliberation. If Harry or Ron had thought about it, they would have realized that Lockhart is unreliable. After all, they had witnessed his lack of ability before (*CoS* pp. 102-3 and 163). Moreover, acting on impulse, they end up entering the Chamber with Lockhart in spite of Lockhart's reluctance to go (*CoS* p. 301), his admission that he has not performed any of the spectacular tasks recounted in his books (*CoS* p. 297), Ron's broken wand (*CoS* p. 74), and the fact that Harry and Ron are only in their second year of schooling. Despite his failure to deliberate, Harry enters the Chamber, motivated by "the faintest, slimmest, wildest chance that Ginny might be alive" (*CoS* p. 301), once again suggesting a predisposition to virtue.

The question then remains whether Harry is ever able to develop that predisposition into something more. Aristotle clearly states that a person is not praised or blamed for his predisposition, but his active conditions (1105b29-1106a2). Moreover, a predisposition, no matter how noble, can lead to harm if it does not get proper direction (1144b9). To be virtuous in an Aristotelian sense, Harry needs to gain the wisdom and experience necessary to develop intellectual virtue and be habituated to virtue of character. It will not develop naturally. In order to argue that Harry is truly virtuous, an intervening factor has to enter into the equation. For Harry, in accordance with Aristotle, that intervening factor is friendship.

##### **5. Aristotelian Friendship and the Cultivation of Virtue**

The benefit of Harry, Ron, and Hermione's friendship is most clearly demonstrated in *Deathly Hallows*. In this novel, Harry, Ron, and Hermione venture on a treacherous journey, which tests their personal strength as well as the strength of their friendship. According to Aristotle, friendship "is a certain kind of virtue" (1155a1) and, as with all virtues, the people involved must continually work at it. For Aristotle, there are three types of friendship: use, pleasure, and complete. In each there is "a reciprocal loving," but the object of that love changes for each case. For the case of those in a friendship of use or pleasure,

those who love for what is useful have a liking based on what is good for themselves, and those who love for pleasure have a liking based on what is pleasant to themselves, and the other person is loved not for what he is, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. (1156a15-18)

Someone who engages in a friendship of use does so because he requires a particular service from the other person and is not particular when choosing that person. On the other hand, a person seeking a friendship of pleasure will only desire someone whom he finds attractive or pleasant (1156a15). The friendships of use and pleasure are easily dissolved once one person no longer derives use or pleasure from the other person (1156a20-22). A complete friendship, however, incorporates good will, since such friends "wish for good things for one another in the same way insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves" (1156b8-10). So a true friend desires good things for



others because of the benefit it yields them, and not for himself. In addition, complete friendships are rare, because they require much development, while friendships of use or pleasure are more common, because they are easily developed, easily broken, and there are many people who can satisfy some use or pleasure (1158a16-18).

Aristotle adds further detail to the development of a complete friendship. He states that “there is an additional need of time and intimate acquaintance” (1156b26), and the best way to acquaint each other is through living together: “for those who live together take pleasure in one another and provide good things for one another” (1157b7-8). It is not enough to occupy the same living space; interaction and experiences are also needed for friendship to blossom. This does not simply mean taking action together, but “one also ought to share in a friend’s awareness that he *is*, and this would come about through living together and sharing conversation and thinking; for this would seem to be what living together means in the case of human beings, not feeding in the same place like fatted cattle” (1170b11-15). Discussion adds to an awareness of self and each other. Also, defining moments of friendship can often come in times of conflict, for when friends stick together and work through the conflict, that is a sign of their commitment to each other. In addition, “the friendship of decent people is decent, and grows along with their association, and they seem to become even better people by putting the friendship to work and by straightening one another out” (1172a10-13). The goal of friendship is improvement of virtue and acquaintance. Friends are able to do this because “[they] are better able to contemplate those around [them] than [them]selves, and [the] actions [of friends] better than [their] own” (1169b34-36). Since friends are able to view each other’s situations from a different angle, they can give each other the best advice on the proper course of action. Friends have the ability to improve each other through living together and assist each other in reaching a broader perspective on life. Harry, Ron, and Hermione demonstrate a complete friendship, which is most clearly illustrated through their use of practical judgment; as a result, their friendship improves their virtue.

## **6. The Complete Friendship of Harry, Ron, and Hermione**

In *Deathly Hallows*, more than any of the other books, Harry, Ron, and Hermione experience what it really means to live together. In the past, the three have lived together in safety and comfort, but now they must suffer together as they attempt to feed themselves and to find and destroy Horcruxes. Ron struggles the most with the change. Ron’s “hunger made him both unreasonable and irascible” and “[w]henever lack of food coincided with Ron’s turn to wear the Horcrux, he became downright unpleasant” (*DH* p. 288). However, hunger is not the only thing upsetting Ron. His frustration with Dumbledore and Harry comes to a boiling point when he yells at Harry: “We thought Dumbledore had told you what to do, we thought you had a real plan!” (*DH* p. 307). When Ron storms out, Harry and Hermione hit a standstill. For Harry, Ron’s empty bed “was like a dead body in the way it

seemed to draw his eyes” (*DH* p. 311), and for Hermione, “Harry knew why she wanted to spin out their time on the riverbank; several times he saw her look up eagerly, and he was sure she had deluded herself into thinking that she heard footsteps through the heavy rain” (*DH* p. 312). Eventually, Harry reaches a point where “[h]opelessness threatened to engulf him” (*DH* p. 313). Emotional distress converges into an inability to strategize. Plans with Ron, such as breaking into the Ministry, although flawed, were nevertheless successful (*DH* pp. 235-67). When Harry and Hermione attempt a trip to Godric’s Hollow, they achieve very little and nearly die (*DH* pp. 322-45). Harry regrets their failed trip, saying, “We shouldn’t have gone to Godric’s Hollow” (*DH* p. 347). Ron returns, however, and restores balance to their relationship. Ron experiences a realization and comes back with a renewed optimism. He explains to Harry upon his homecoming that “[s]ometimes I’ve thought, when I’ve been a bit hacked off, [Dumbledore] was having a laugh or—or he just wanted to make it more difficult. But I don’t think so, not anymore. He knew what he was doing when he gave me the Deluminator, didn’t he?” (*DH* p. 391). Ron’s speech begins to renew Harry’s faith in Dumbledore and he assures Ron that “He must’ve known you’d always want to come back” (*DH* p. 391). Ron appreciates that Dumbledore has a purpose for everything and that he himself has a purpose for Harry and Hermione. Ron demonstrates his commitment to his friends by coming back. The open communication that they all share also helps them to overcome the obstacle of losing faith in their purpose, and this reinforces their friendship.

In the friendship between Harry, Ron, and Hermione, Hermione accepts the role of the planner. She uses her wisdom to deliberate, but action seems to terrify her, as shown in her response to Harry’s natural inclination to action. When the three begin making plans for breaking into the Ministry of Magic, Harry decides, “It’s time to act” (*DH* p. 231). Hermione’s response is anything but encouraging: “Hermione stopped dead, her jaw hanging,” and she replies to Harry, “I don’t know. . . . There are an awful lot of things that could go wrong, so much relies on chance” (*DH* p. 230). She grudgingly agrees to go and the product of their action is successful. They triumphantly retrieve the locket-Horcrux from Umbridge. If practical judgment is useless without action, then Hermione would be completely useless. She tends to be ineffective on her own, because she spends too much time planning and deliberating, and too little time acting. This hesitancy to act changes as she experiences the success that comes from action and, to Harry’s surprise, Hermione eventually suggests action on her own. After their failed journey to Godric’s Hollow, Hermione decides that she “want[s] to go and see Xenophilius Lovegood” (*DH* p. 393). Hermione’s decision is “completely unexpected” and even Harry is reluctant to go (*DH* pp. 393-95). In this case, Hermione has to convince Harry of the importance of action, instead of the other way around (*DH* pp. 394-95). This trip also results in some successes. They learn of the Deathly Hallows, which become extremely important to their journey, and of Luna Lovegood’s capture. By the end of the series,

Harry and Ron help Hermione to learn the value of action, and this adds to her virtue of practical judgment.

Ron, who has typically ignored the rights of house-elves, also improves as a result of his friendship with Harry and Hermione. Like the rest of the Wizarding World, he disregards house-elves' feelings and sees them as servants. When the goblin Griphook discusses the terrible racism occurring in the Wizarding World, Hermione responds, "Did you know that we've wanted elves to be freed for years?" In response to Hermione's question, "Ron fidget[s] uncomfortably on the arm of Hermione's chair" (*DH* p. 489). When Harry, Ron, and Hermione spend time at Twelve Grimmauld Place, Ron slowly becomes accustomed to Kreacher's presence. When Kreacher acts out of kindness toward the three of them, Ron responds, "Bless him . . . and when you think I used to fantasize about cutting off his head and sticking it on the wall" (*DH* p. 236). As his experiences with house-elves change, and nagging by Hermione continues, Ron slowly begins to learn the value of a house-elf's life. Moreover, Harry sets a great example of a beautiful relationship with freed house-elf Dobby, who sacrifices his life to "save Harry Potter and his friends" (*DH* p. 474). After Dobby's death, Harry's grief is touching. Before the final battle at Hogwarts, Ron tells Harry and Hermione, "[W]e should tell them to get out. We don't want any more Dobbies, do we? We can't order them to die for us" (*DH* p. 625). Here, Ron recognizes the unjust state of house-elf affairs and comes to an understanding of the value of these creatures. This can be attributed to Hermione's persistence for house-elf equality, the examples set by his friends, and his experience gained through living with house-elves. As a result of his friendship with Harry and Hermione, there is an improvement in Ron's virtue and reason that ultimately eliminates his racism.

In *Deathly Hallows*, Ron and Hermione help Harry to make the correct choice in one of the toughest decisions of his life. The three have set out on a journey to find and destroy one thing: Horcruxes. Through a string of events, however, the trio also discovers the menacing and powerful history of the Deathly Hallows. For some reason, the Hallows' mysterious power mesmerizes Harry. Soon after their discovery, "Harry's belief in and longing for the Hallows consumed him so much that he felt quite isolated from the other two and their obsession with the Horcruxes" (*DH* p. 435). Hermione yells at Harry when he will not help Ron and her in hunting for the Horcruxes and tells him that their mission is not about conquering death; it is about destroying Horcruxes and, therefore, destroying Voldemort (*DH* pp. 435-36). The turning point in Harry's decision, however, comes after Dobby's death when he must make this pivotal choice: Hallows or Horcruxes? He ultimately chooses Horcruxes, and explains that "Hermione's right. Dumbledore didn't want me to have [the Elder Wand/Hallows]. He didn't want me to take it. He wanted me to get the Horcruxes" (*DH* p. 500). Throughout most of the *Harry Potter* series, Harry is characterized by his impulsive behavior. Harry contemplates his decision, and Rowling describes how "[t]he enormity of his decision not to race Voldemort to the wand still scared Harry. He could not

remember, ever before, choosing *not* to act” (*DH* p. 502). Harry’s decision not to act is a sure sign of his deliberation. The choice shows that he has thought enough about his situation to deem action undesirable and resist acting in order to pursue a greater goal. Hermione leads Harry to make a decision aimed toward “the greater good” (*DH* p. 568). In this instance, Harry learns the value of deliberation versus action, aided in part by his friendship with Hermione.

### 7. Conclusion

Friends are constantly involved in action together, working toward fulfilling each other’s virtues. As complete virtue, practical judgment involves deliberation based on universals and particulars, concerns the good of the city, and has the end result of right action. A friend can possess practical judgment and assist another friend in attaining it by helping him to realize the error of his ways or by setting good examples. When friends share in practical judgment, they begin acting rightly and beautifully. The ultimate characteristic of complete friendship is that it helps each to develop virtue. Since practical judgment directs action, friendship must also include this virtue. Friends wish to cultivate practical judgment in each other in order to develop virtue. By the conclusion of the *Harry Potter* series, Harry, Ron, and Hermione develop an Aristotelian friendship and demonstrate how they each become better by engaging in complete friendship. At the beginning of *Deathly Hallows*, the trio is a complete unit, each bringing something to the table. By the end, however, they share and cultivate in each other something new and add to each individual’s virtue; all three have more of an ability to stand on their own. Between *Sorcerer’s Stone* and *Deathly Hallows*, Harry develops practical judgment through the intervening course of friendship. It probably could not be said that Harry reaches perfect practical judgment by the end of the series, but being-at-work, one can assume that he will continue to develop virtue with the help of his friends.<sup>2</sup>

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