

## **The Harry Potter movies – a profound subjective analysis**

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## ***Introduction***

The author of this document is fascinated by the Harry Potter movies. The fascination arose the first time I saw the first film, *Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone*, and did only increase when I saw *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Hereafter, I will refer to the movies by using the designations HP<sub>1</sub>, HP<sub>2</sub>, HP<sub>3</sub>, and HP<sub>4</sub>, respectively. This far, I have seen the four films hundreds of times. In the beginning of my fascination, I saw only the first film – every night. When I bought HP<sub>2</sub>, this captured my interest, and I almost stopped watching HP<sub>1</sub>. The same thing happened when I bought HP<sub>3</sub> – I stopped watching HP<sub>2</sub>. The cause of this phenomenon, I believe, is that it feels “unnatural” going back in time, which is exactly what one does, watching an older film in a series. Having bought HP<sub>4</sub>, however, I have continued to enjoy HP<sub>3</sub>.

Only having seen the DVD versions, I will not review any other versions. However, I will also broaden the discussions, so that I will not only deal with the cinematic production, but the entire Harry Potter universe as well. I find it quite appropriate to use the designation “universe” or “world” for a fictive environment created by an author. Because it is indeed a complete “world” that Rowling has created by writing the Harry Potter books.

In this document, I will only deal with the movies, though – not the original novels by J. K. Rowling. In fact, I must admit that I have not read any of the books. As a consequence, any possible criticism against the Harry Potter world does not completely fall on Rowling’s books, but also on the cinematic adaptations. In this document, I will assume that the reader has seen all four movies; the purpose of the document is that I am to share my comments regarding the films, and not objectively to present the plots.

## ***Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone***

Directed by Chris Columbus, HP<sub>1</sub> is the first film – the original film – to which I will compare the later films. Thus, in some way, HP<sub>1</sub> will *define* how a Harry Potter film is to be. Therefore, I will not comment HP<sub>1</sub> as thoroughly as the rest of the films.

HP<sub>1</sub> depicts a world in which magic is a natural part of the universe, parallel to (or, perhaps, “above”) the physical laws of nature that we know from our world. The HP universe is realistic in such a way that the humans and nature look like and behave exactly as in our world; the only major difference is that magic exists as a means for humans and other beings to control the world. Had the world not been realistic and (at least somewhat) rational, the films would probably never have pleased me. Watching the movies, I think of magic as a natural and (by our physical laws of nature) allowed part of the existence; in fact, I consider magic to be a natural “law” not yet discovered in our world. This allows me – as a scientist – fully to consider the movies realistic. Humans able to master magic are called – depending on their sex – wizards or witches. Not all humans are “magical”, though, but only a fraction of them. These have access to places on earth that ordinary humans cannot reach. One of those places is *Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*, the school Harry Potter and his friends attend. The “magical” world is a secret to non-magic people, *muggles*, and is governed by the *Min-*

*istry of Magic*; the leader of the ministry (in Great Britain), the *Minister of Magic*, is named Cornelius Fudge.

It is fascinating for the first time to get a view from the magical world, after Rubeus Hagrid's having picked up Harry Potter from the narrow-minded muggle family, Dursley's (his aunt's family), he has lived with ever since his parents – successful magical persons who appears to have been very good-hearted – were murdered by Lord Voldemort. Judging from the long market street *Diagon Alley*, magic people are attracted to old-fashioned and well-tried style – not unattractive and unfunctional – but traditional and elegant. Even though I find myself attracted by modern structures completely controlled by computers, I also find the style in the HP world (hereafter, I will write “the HP world” instead of “the magical part of the HP world”) appealing; computers are not needed, as magic can replace them. The *Gringotts Wizarding Bank* (run by *Goblins* – I do not know the origin of these creatures) as well as the bookstore *Flourish & Blotts* and the wand retailer *Ollivander's* can be found on the street.



**Image 1** Diagon Alley

The Hogwarts headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, I think, personifies the goodness and wisdom. He is old (some 150 years, according to the English Wikipedia) and gives the impression of being exemplary intelligent and calm. His motions are slow, and he only talks if he has something important and wise to say. Moreover, he appears to be a very broad-minded person, emphasizing what is morally right rather than what is considered “normal”. In HP<sub>1</sub> and -2, Dumbledore is portrayed by Richard Harris, an actor – I think – perfect for the role. His voice is composed, which perfectly suits Dumbledore's personality. Dumbledore also appears to be broad-minded in such a way that he never seems to become surprised, angry or distressed. Besides, Dumbledore is a master of magic, an exceptionally competent and powerful wizard, “owning” control of space, time, and consciousness, with or without his wand. In the middle of HP<sub>1</sub>, the Defence against the Dark Arts teacher, Professor Quirrel, rushes into the Hogwarts Great Hall, screaming that a troll has entered the castle. It is impressive, how calmly and composedly Dumbledore handles the situation.



**Image 2** Albus Dumbledore

Hogwarts is perhaps even more fascinating than Diagon Alley is. It is a great, elegant castle, having an almost gigantically large-plane and especially high stairwell of stars able to relocate themselves. The walls are decorated with pictures (chiefly old-fashioned portraits). The individuals portrayed by the pictures are “alive”; “the pictures are moving”, one student said. The vast gathering hall and lunchroom, *the Great Hall*, has a bewitched ceiling. Normally, the ceiling looks like a three dimensional night sky, but it may also (possibly only by Dumbledore himself) be “reconfigured”: at the Halloween festivity, the ceiling looks like a night sky during a thunderstorm (very cosy if one asks me); at Christmas, snow fall from the ceiling (although the snow – of course – never reaches the floor). The meals served at school, particularly at feasts, are outstanding and incomparable to (almost) anything in our world. The first day at school, grandiose cakes and structures of chocolate and ice cream are served, as well an exceptional richness of food, and all this was created by Dumbledore in a handclap, literally.



**Image 3** Hogwarts

Somewhat later on in the movie, Harry finds *The Mirror of Erised*, showing whatever the viewer desire the very most. Early having lost his parents, Harry sees them standing right behind him, putting their hands on his shoulders. At one occasion, when

Harry sits in front of the mirror, dreaming about his parents, Dumbledore quietly walks towards him and says, slowly, with his soft, gentle voice, an important wisdom:

*It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.*

More than once, it has occurred to me that this is a wisdom I should learn from.



**Image 4** *Mirror of Erised*

The music is very pleasant in HP<sub>1</sub>, although not extremely emotionally captivating. The main theme, as I understand it, is written by John Williams. The “signature tune” of the theme – a short but for the Harry Potter movies very characteristic piece – occurs in the later movies as well.

At Hogwarts, seven core subjects are taught; these are *Potions*, *History of Magic*, *Transfiguration*, *Charms*, *Astronomy*, *Herbology*, and *Defence against the Dark Arts*.

Severus Snape is the Hogwarts Potions teacher. In HP<sub>1</sub>, he seems to be very strict, having his first lesson with Harry’s class. An elderly witch, Minerva McGonagall makes the impression of being very nice but also quite strict; her position at Hogwarts is vice headmaster and transfiguration teacher. Being an *animagus* (a person able to shift shape to another animal), she is the first person in the series appearing in her animagus form – a cat. The charms teacher, Filius Flitwick, who in HP<sub>1</sub> for instance teaches the art of *levitation* (i.e. the ability of making object hover (“fly”) despite being in a gravitational field), appears to be non-human. He reoccurs in HP<sub>2</sub>, but in HP<sub>3</sub> and -4, it seems like the actor (who is dwarf-sized) instead is portraying a human conductor.

*Quidditch* is introduced in HP<sub>1</sub>. Ron Weasley says

*Quidditch is great! Best game there is.*

which I almost must agree with. Unfortunately, however, lacking all abilities of performing magic, it is very difficult to play quidditch in the real world.

In one of the ending scenes, Harry is speaking to Dumbledore and one gets the impression confirmed, that Dumbledore is a highly intelligent and respected man with a good, “soft” humour, a man with a pedagogical frivolity. Perhaps above all, however, one sees that Dumbledore is strong and dares to choose his own personality and to do things his own way.

## ***Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets***

It may be interesting to note that Harry Potter is shown somewhat more respect from his foster family than in HP<sub>1</sub>; for instance, he has been given a room of his own (so he no longer has to live under the stairs).

In HP<sub>2</sub>, the subject *Herbology* is introduced together with the teacher Pomona Sprout. Interestingly, Snape, the potions teacher, appears to be somewhat less strict in this film. The first times I saw HP<sub>2</sub>, I was surprised at Snape’s facial expressions, which I found to be much more vivid than in HP<sub>1</sub>. However, in HP<sub>2</sub> Snape is not shown during a lesson; it is possible that the difference lies herein; perhaps he is stricter as a teacher in “action”.

In general, the style in HP<sub>2</sub> is very similar to the style in HP<sub>1</sub>; moreover, the structure of the film is almost identical to the one in HP<sub>1</sub>. Both movies begin at the Dursley’s, and the major part of both films deals with the seeking of the answer to what is “going on”. Furthermore, in both movies, Harry and his friends are drawn to a false model of explanation. The ends of both movies represent the climaxes of excitement (if one finds it exciting; I am most attracted to the “calm” every-day scenes of the films), and



in the final scenes Harry is speaking to Dumbledore. Something very typical to the Harry Potter movies is that, in the end of the films, “the bad person” explains “everything” to Harry. Thus, the similarities between HP1 and HP2 are striking, but this must not be something negative.



**Image 5** *the Great Hall*

Dumbledore continues to impress. When almost everyone believed that it was Harry who had opened the Chamber of Secrets, Dumbledore trusted him, and assumed that Harry was innocent. Later on in the film, when Dumbledore enters Hagrid’s hut, one gets the impression that Dumbledore is able to see through Harry’s invisibility coat. This would fit into the picture of Dumbledore’s having extensive capabilities and control over the situation. Most impressive of all events, however, I find Dumbledore’s reaction when the “bad” Lucius Malfoy tells him that he has been dismissed from the post as headmaster, leaving no explanation and despite the fact that hardly anyone would become a better headmaster than Dumbledore. Instead of arguing, however, Dumbledore bows and says calmly, almost whispering:

*If the governors desire my removal, I will of course, step aside. However, you will find that help will always be given at Hogwarts, to those who ask for it.*

This ability of self-control is impressive, and one can only wish that there were more people as Dumbledore in the real world. I have never met anyone as calm and wise.





**Image 6** A set of pictures hanging high on the walls in Dumbledore's great room

In HP2, one is for the first time in the films allowed to enter Dumbledore's great study room, appearing to be very elegantly shaped in cylindrical protrusions from one of the towers of the castle. The walls are filled with paintings, portraying "living" persons, keeping Dumbledore company. I am very attracted to this, and considered for a while buying some hundred LCDs and letting Microsoft develop a software application showing a "living" portrait able to speak and listen via artificial intelligence. However, I gave up the idea when I realized that it would cost some million dollars. Besides, such applications would lack consciousness, which I assume that the Hogwarts pictures possess. Besides these paintings, Dumbledore's room is filled with numerous books and other, elegant objects.



**Image 7** Albus Dumbledore

The music in HP2 resembles the music from HP1. However, the music is changed to an especially beautiful piece every time Dumbledore's *phoenix* Fawkes becomes visible. Particularly the last scene in the cave, when Fawkes flies to Harry and heals the wounds caused by the Basilisk using his tears, is extraordinary.



**Image 8** Fawkes personifies the intelligent animal

If I am to mention anything negative about HP2, it must be the fact that I find the scenes with the false Defence against the Dark Arts teacher, Gilderoy Lockhart, quite immature.

### ***Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban***

HP3 is directed by Alfonso Cuarón. To be honest, I did not believe that the director did affect the result of the film very much, but after having seen HP3, I believe differently: the director *makes* the film. The style in HP3 is completely different from the previous movies; it is less realistic and more “expressionistic”. The colours are less realistic, and are often exaggerated or altered to reflect the emotions in the scenes. The humans – except for central characters such as Harry, Ron, and Hermione – are also acting less “normal”, exaggerating their feelings. Moreover, transition effects (tunnels) are used between the scenes, strengthening the “fairy tale” style.

Spontaneously disappointing, the landscape is partially redesigned in HP3, breaking the continuity to the first two movies; this may, however, be dealt with using some imagination. Nevertheless, I must admit that I find the new landscape, with its naturally wooded mountains and valleys, very appealing. Hogwarts Castle seems to have been redesigned as well; the green outdoor square from HP1 and -2 is not visible, whereas a stony square has been added. A bridge is also present, which I do not recall having seen in HP1 or -2. Furthermore, the Whomping Willow and Hagrid’s hut have been redesigned and relocated, which is a bit bothersome.



**Image 9** The landscape outside of Hogwarts

I have earlier prized as well Albus Dumbledore as the actor Richard Harris, but now I have some criticism against the latter. Although Harris splendidly portrayed Dumbledore in the first two films, after the production of the second film, he did something that I really did not like: he passed away. Therefore, in HP3 Dumbledore is portrayed by Michael Gambon. Naturally, this makes Dumbledore obtaining a different personality, and in my opinion, the change is to the worse. In contrast to HP1 and -2, in HP3 Dumbledore is less calm, much more rapid in his movements, and – worst of all – apparently a bit stressed. Indeed, these are not any *severely* negative properties, but I did appreciate the extraordinary calmness shown by Dumbledore in the earlier films.

The dementors darken HP3, which I however appreciate, as the movie becomes more realistic with them. Moreover, Cuarón has successfully achieved psychological realism when Harry observes his reflection in the train's window after having been attacked by the dementor. It rains outside, and I recognize the feeling of being in a dark, almost unreal situation, and observing my own reflection and wondering, "Who am I?".

When the students for the first time of the term enter the Great Hall, where burning candles hover in the ceiling, Dumbledore explains that Hagrid is the new teacher in *Care of Magical Creatures*. When Hagrid is to stand up from his chair and bow in front of all students, the somewhat corpulent teacher accidentally hits the table, causing many glasses to fall and students to laugh. This is an example of completely unnecessary humour, reducing the realism and – at least to some extent – ridiculing the entire Harry Potter universe. Another example of such unnecessary humour is found in the end of the movie, when Dumbledore in absence of mind pats (or rather hits) Ron's bandaged foot.



**Image 10** The “new” Albus Dumbledore

In his opening speech, Dumbledore warns the students against the dementors, and doing so, however, he looks exceptionally sharp and intelligent. Furthermore, his wisdom light up the presence when he – accompanied by a wrist movement first extinguishing and then relighting a candle – speaks out the sentences

*But you know... Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.*

This wisdom is also very valuable in real life, and a thought each and everyone should remember when times become dark.

The fact that the film uses effects to strengthen emotions is clearly exemplified in one of the earlier scenes, when one first is shown Harry and other students cheerfully playing in their dormitory, and then the dementors hovering in the rainy night outside the castle – the contrast is sharp as a knife.

In HP<sub>3</sub>, Snape again appears to be very strict; during his temporary employment as the Defence against the Dark Arts teacher, he shows his properties of firm strictness, and his facial expressions are once again limited. McGonagall, moreover, impresses when she pats Harry on his shoulder after having told him that he could not follow his classmates to Hogsmeade. The new Defence against the Dark Arts teacher, Remus Lupin, is a werewolf, i.e. a person who unwillingly is turned to an animal form if shown moonlight. Lupin shows to be an amazingly nice and understanding human and a highly competent but unpretentious teacher.

Chiefly, I remember HP<sub>3</sub> as the extremely beautiful film, with the wonderful scenes when Harry and Lupin – on the bridge and in the light forest – speaks to each other about love, dementors, and wisdom. The music in these scenes is incredibly and spell-bindingly pleasurable. I imagine that the ancient sirens must have produced a sound like this.





**Image 11** Harry and Lupin on the bridge

Amazingly pleasurable, I also remember the scenes and music when Harry flies on the hippogriff Buckbeak over Hogwarts and the near-by lake. Vibrating, the music is powerful and emotive.



**Image 12** Harry and Lupin, shortly after Harry's having learned the *patronus* charm

It is also incredible to witness Lupin teaching Harry the *patronus* charm. Unsuccessful at his first attempt, at his second attempt Harry successfully manages to establish a patronus, protecting him against the dementorish boggart. Initially dimly coloured by a magical light in an evening's shade of wisdom, the glow from Harry's wand powerfully lights up the room. The end of the movie is powerful as well, when Harry uses the patronus charm to save both himself and Sirius Black from the dementors. In addition, this shows that Harry is a very able wizard himself. Moreover, it has occurred to me, that the wisdom in Dumbledore's initial speech actually may be interpreted literally, because, indeed, Harry "turned on the light".



**Image 13** Harry uses the patronus charm to take away the dementors

Beauty is also found in the last conversation between Harry and Sirius, talking about Harry's parents, who Sirius was allowed to know for a longer time than Harry himself, and in the scenes when Harry, Hermione – and later also Sirius – fly on Buckbeak to/from the prison tower: the great, vibrating music is played, and the night sky is dramatically coloured by thick clouds.

In HP<sub>3</sub>, it is interesting to note Hermione's resistance against divination, quite similar to my own. Being a scientist, in the real world, I do not take any form of supernaturalism or divination seriously, and I guess that this is Hermione's position as well: she accepts the established magical sciences, but not the apparently "supernatural" (or, perhaps, "supermagical") art of divination.

As in HP<sub>1</sub> and -2, quidditch is played in HP<sub>3</sub>; consistent with the general style of the movie, however, the rain falls heavily during the match. High up in the sky, Harry is attacked by a dementor, after which he violently falls towards the ground. Now, Dumbledore again shows his ability as a wizard, by saving Harry, using the formula *Aresto momentum* ("slow down the speed /of a moving object/").

HP<sub>3</sub> differs from its predecessors concerning its end credit sequence as well. Instead of the traditional design with scrolling white text on a black background, the text follows the *Marauder's Map*. It is a true pleasure watching the texts; it is exciting to follow the map, and listen to all the wonderful music from the film: the music from the Buckbeak flying scenes, from the conversations between Harry and Lupin and from the choir from the first day at school make the end credit sequence a masterpiece.

In my opinion, HP<sub>3</sub> is a differently styled HP film: less realistic but even more beautiful. Moreover, it contains "extra everything"; special effects, transitions, exuberance, war, and profoundness are combined to an appealing snapshot from the Harry Potter world.





**Image 14** the Hogwarts main stairway; there is no risk feeling lonely.

## ***Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire***

I almost forgot seeing HP4, directed by the Englishman Mike Newell, because, when I had entered the language selection menu, I heard a piece of music so wonderful and captivating, that I found myself lying on my bed, listening to the music, and forgetting about everything else... Joking apart, the music in HP4 is marvellous. Generally speaking, HP4 is an excellent compromise between HP1 and -2 and HP3. The style has been changed back to the more realistic one from the two first films, and so have the design and colour of the castle. The green square from HP1 and -2 is back, and the bridge from HP3 is still there. Dumbledore's room from HP2 is left, and so is the ghost Moaning Myrtle. In addition, several expressions such as "the boy who lived" and "it was love" from HP1 are used. Naturally, however, Dumbledore is still played by Gambon, but in this film, which I really appreciate, he is bit sharper, although he is not as calm as in HP1 and -2. On the contrary, he surprises me by occasionally acting fairly aggressively, for instance, when he virtually "attacks" Harry after his name has risen from the Goblet of Fire. Another example of a more aggressive Dumbledore is found in the end of the movie, when he quite violently sits down in his study room and complaining to Harry about his not having been able to figure out why all terrible events have taken place. Something that has occurred to me, though, about Gambon's portraying Dumbledore, is that his voice possesses a quite nice ability rapidly to alter frequency, which is quite suitable for a person as "powerful" as Dumbledore.

Concerning "unnecessary humour", there is an early scene with Hagrid exemplifying this – just as in HP3; this time, he sticks his fork into the hand of the person sitting next to him, the conductor. Fortunately, however, this is the only example of "unnecessary humour" in this film.

Slightly later, when the two external school teams enter the great hall, one realizes that this scene is exceedingly stereotypical. Even so, I must admit that it is a pure pleasure to whiteness their entrances: pleasing motions together with nice music.

Something I find hard to understand in HP4, however, is *the Triwizard Tournament* itself. This competition appears to be instituted at a rather high level (the ministry).

Therefore, one would believe that the event would be serious and carefully thought-out, but is it? The three “tasks” appear to be perilous – at least the first one. Is this something the ministry should support and be in charge of? The purpose of the competition, however, is admirable: to support international magical cooperation (as Hermione puts it). Another issue is that the tournament may create “heroes”, and also based on quite irrational and unimportant grounds (merely a competition, a “game”); this may decrease the equality and respect between the individuals of the magical world. Thus, the tournament appears – at least in the beginning of the film, before the “terrible events” occur – to be quite unethical. Perhaps, however, the impression of slight “viciousness” is due to Harry’s in fact being too young to participate? Perhaps the competition would not appear as inhumane, if only older (and thus more magically capable) students had participated?

Hermione acts very morally satisfying in the beginning of HP4, when she – as the only student – screams out in the class, and “orders” the new Defence against the Dark Arts teacher, Alastor “Mad-Eye” Moody (or, rather, Barty Crouch Jr. under the influence of *Polyjuice Potion*), to stop performing the *Cruciatius* curse against the arachnid and Neville Longbottom. I find it quite difficult to watch this scene, as one really is able to “understand” the pain the animal feels; it “screams” and turns and twists its body as violently as possible, trying to avoid the torture. Later, after the lesson, she complains, arguing that “unforgivable curses” (per definition) not should be performed in a classroom. It is impressive, that she alone dares to stand up against “Moody”.



**Image 15** “Moody” teaching about *unforgivable curses*

McGonagall makes a good impression, too. In the beginning of the film, she appears to be the only teacher really caring about Harry, and *showing* it, by patting him on his shoulder after his name has risen from the Goblet of Fire, and by declaring to Dumbledore, that Harry should not be allowed to participate in the competition. As she said,

*Potter is a boy, not a piece of meat.*

Ronald does not impress, however: believing that Harry voluntarily has entered the tournament, he stops talking to him. I really think that Ron should have understood that Harry did not want to participate, and that Harry anyhow really could have used a

friend at that time. Still, everyone can change; the relationship between Harry and Ron is corrected after the dragon task.

I really appreciate the humour in HP4. The first example, it is a humoristic pleasure to observe McGonagall telling “Moody” that the Hogwarts staff never uses transfiguration as a method of punishment.

In HP4, we observe a great deal of immoral behaviour among students at Hogwarts. If this makes the film more or less realistic, I do not know, never having visited a British school; of course, nevertheless, I hope that it makes the film *less* realistic. Firstly, it looks like peer pressure when Cedric Diggory becomes pushed to the Goblet of Fire, and almost egged on to put his name in it. Furthermore, when the brothers Fred and George Weasley begin to fight after having discovered that their *ageing potion* did not work, the other students begin to incite the situation by using the mantra “Fight, fight, fight...”. Possibly harmless at this time, but what if the fight would have been “real”? Hermione, however, acted admirably, “as usual”: seemingly, she was the only student not participating in the incitement. How did she feel at that moment? Being alone, the only “normal” student at school? Worst of all, however, is the almost unreal bullying Harry had to endure after having become a champion. Indeed, Diggory acted admirably by explaining to Harry, that he in fact had asked his friends not to wear the badge against him, but this does not excuse Diggory’s still being a friend of these people. It is sad to see the high number of people participating in the bullying of Harry, and that Dumbledore did not intervene. But perhaps he *did* intervene, making the bullying stop as quickly as it nonetheless did?

In all social aloofness, however, there is warmth to be found. Just before Harry is to meet his dragon, Hermione throws her arms around his neck, embracing him, which I only find natural, due to the dangerous nature of the task Harry is doomed to participate in. I find it quite strange that Dumbledore and all other teachers actually did allow Harry to participate: did they not have any responsibility, or at least a sense of humanity? Sometimes, it feels like McGonagall is the only teacher really “caring”.

After the first task, it is time for *the Yule Ball*. This part of the film is indeed the very best I have ever seen from the HP world; it is full of warm humour, beautiful scenes and fantastic music. It all begins with Harry, sitting in the Great Hall eating dinner. Suddenly, he observes Cho Chang, a female student, to whom Harry apparently feels an attraction. She happens to turn around and make eye contact with Harry, who becomes so surprised that he spits out the juice he had in his mouth. A bit later, the plot continues with Ron, who receives a dress robe from his mother, in preparation for the ball. He does not understand this, though, and assumes the robe is for Ginny. Soon thereafter, it is time for dance practicing with McGonagall, who, wanting to demonstrate the dance, asks Ronald to dance with her. The latter person finds it a bit embarrassing, and Harry asks Ron’s brothers, Fred and George, if they ever will let him “forget” the situation. The answer, of course, is “No!”. The entire situation is full of warm humour and magnificent music.



**Image 16** McGonagall dancing with Ronald Weasley

And it will only become even more humoristic, when Ron and Harry, apparently during a written examination for Snape, complain about the fact that they, at their current “rate”, will be the only students at the ball without partners. Suddenly, Ron gets a “bright” idea, realizing that *Hermione* actually is a female, and says:

*Hermione, you’re a girl ... Come with one of us?*

Hermione answers by saying “very well spotted”, and explains, that someone, “believe it or not”, already had ask her, and that she said “yes”. Ron’s natural reply to this, to Harry after Hermione has left, is:

*She’s lying, right?*

Already having told Ron and Harry to sit silently during the exam, by gently having hit them on their heads, Snape roll up his sleeves, strolls towards the two about partners seriously arguing students, and pushes their heads towards the table, in an atmosphere of warm humour; it is almost as if Snape accepts their behaviour, by answering using humour.



**Image 17** Snape rolls up his sleeves.

And it can be *even more* delightful, when the enchanting music from the language selection screen returns, and Harry is on his way to the Owlery. Being a freezing winter day, Harry hurries wearing nothing but his sweater. In the narrow entrance to the Owlery, Harry runs into Cho Chang, being on her way out. After some quick attempts to get through each other, Cho grabs Harry's waist and makes them change position. Harry continues in, and Cho walks away. Suddenly, Harry turns around and almost screams to Cho:

*I wondered... if maybe you wanted to go to the ball with me.*

Naturally, Cho did not succeed in interpreting Harry's message, but asks him to repeat it:

*I-was-just-wondering-if-maybe-you-wanted-to-go-to-the-ball-with-me?*

To Harry's disappointment, she answers that it would not be possible, as she already has told another male student, she was to go with him. Harry answers:

*Okay. Yeah. Great. Fine. No problem. Okay. Good...*

Ron has run into trouble, too. With support from a number of other, female students from the same house, he tottering enters his dormitory the same evening. Ginny and another student hold his arms, so he will not fall over. Harry asking what has happened, Ginny says:

*He just asked Fleur Delacour out.*



**Image 18** Ronald Weasley and her sister, Ginny Weasley to his left

The climax of warm humour is reached when Ron watches the champions and their partners enter the dance floor at the ball. Previously that night, Ron had said that he felt sorry for Hermione, who, not having found a partner, probably was “alone in her room crying her eyes out”. Now, however, he sees her entering the dance floor together with... Let me quote Ron's partner:

*Is that Hermione Granger? With Viktor Krum?*



Ron's answer is immediate:

*No. Absolutely not.*



**Image 19** *The Yule Ball*

After the Black Lake task, Dumbledore once again proves his moral and ability to choose his own way, the way of moral values rather than the way of the formal rules, by awarding Harry second place for his “outstanding moral fibre”. Furthermore, after the assassination of Barty Crouch Senior, Dumbledore wants to cancel the tournament. Cornelius Fudge refusing, Dumbledore says:

*A true leader does what is right, no matter what others think.*

Dumbledore withstood the narrow-mindedness of the ministry in favour for the infinitely moral content of wise consideration.

In contrast to the previous films, HP4 does not solely end happily. Lord Voldemort “returns” and Cedric Diggory is murdered. In Diggory’s memorial ceremony, held by Dumbledore, the enchantment of the ceiling is gone, making reality visible right to the woody planks. The Great Hall is quiet and solemn and despite the attempts of the ministry to hide the truth, with a loud and powerful voice Dumbledore articulated to the gathering, consisting of students, teachers and champions, white, fainting, and dizzy due to the situation’s dreadful presence, that

*Cedric Diggory was murdered by Lord Voldemort! The Ministry of Magic does not wish me to tell you this, but not to do so, I think, would be an insult to his memory.*

In the end of the film, as in HP1 and -2, Harry talks to Dumbledore, the latter verbalizing the words advertising the entire movie:

*Dark and difficult times lie ahead; soon, we must all face the choice between what is right and what is easy.*

Applying in the real world as well, at least the part following the semicolon is a wisdom everyone should consider.



The wonderful music having captivated me even since before the film had begun, returns in the very last scene. Like an old friend, it feels melancholy to leave it. The ending credits sequence is a compromise between HP1 and -2 and HP3, as is the rest of the film: the first part shows an animation of notes rising from the Goblet of Fire, whereas the second part only shows scrolling white text on a solid, black background. Something brand new (except for the choir from HP3), however, is that some music is accompanied by singing; the song *Magic Works*, together with all other music, makes watching the credit sequence a truly wonderful experience. After having seen the entire movie, one realises that the title *The Goblet of Fire* merely is some kind of “humour”; the film deals with far more profound issues than the goblet and the tournament. It deals with moral, strength, and friendship.



**Image 20** McGonagall and Dumbledore entering the dance floor

## ***General reflections about the HP world***

### **Physics and Mathematics compared to Magic**

Although it may appear to be a contradiction, being a scientist I find the study of magic quite familiar. As a scientist I study how nature and the universe are built up and functions, and this is exactly what one is doing at Hogwarts; the only difference appears to be that the HP universe offers an additional opportunity to control matter, space and time, and as their additional method is more powerful and efficient than ours (using engines, technological tools, computers, robots etc), they do not (have to) study our methods. Thus, wizards and witches may virtually be thought of as *scientists*. I believe that it partly is this fact that makes me appealed by HP.

Perhaps it is also even more stimulating and rewarding to study magic than “our” sciences, because magic often gives immediate and obvious results. If one uses a spell, for instance, one may immediately make an object hover, a human freeze to ice, a door unlock, the time stop, a candle begin to light, a dementor disappear etc. Studying science, on the other hand, and, for instance, realizing that

$$\frac{1}{2}mv^2 = mgh$$

this knowledge is not instantly applicable and useful. Furthermore, it may be more difficult to prove this fact (compared to a magical formula, instantly giving the desired, useful effect).

The magic shown in the HP world must be realistic if one – particularly a scientist like me – is to find it worthy to see. As for me (not scientifically, but “Harry Potter philosophically”), I think of magic as *the fifth fundamental type of interaction*, besides gravitation, electromagnetism and the strong and weak interaction. Moreover, this interaction must be involved in (human) consciousness (which is an elegant solution, because science not yet offers an explanation to consciousness), as magic may be performed only using thought. In addition, the fact that *boggarts* look like one’s worst fear, also suggests a connection between magic and consciousness. The uttering of *formulas* is likely (only?) performed to *strengthen the inner will (thought)*, which performs the magic. Furthermore, the wand is likely a simplifying tool as well.

Additionally, the hypothesis that magic is not anything *instead* of our physics, but rather an *expansion* of it, is suggested when Sirius Black disrespecting says to Professor Severus Snape (the potions teacher):

*Why don’t you go and play with your chemistry set?*

### Social moral utopia



**Image 21** The Weasley father’s and brothers’, Harry’s and Hermione’s tent during the Quidditch World Cup

If I were to make a film, the humans in it would behave the way I find to depict the greatest social moral utopia (unless I want to show what happen otherwise). Does the HP world depict such a utopia? Lord Voldemort existing, clearly not, but let us put him and his followers aside. It is visibly not a utopia, when Harry is bullied in HP4, but generally, I find the humans to be quite nice and kind to each other. Particularly in HP4, this is exemplified by the way Ron is taken care of after having asked Fleur Delacour to dance with him. Furthermore, in the beginning of the film, I find it exceptionally cosy and pleasant when the Weasley family, Harry, and Hermione visit the Quidditch World Cup. Sleeping in the same room, Harry and Ron are wakened by a hurrying Hermione, depicting a quite appealing closeness to friends. After that, it is interest-

ing to witness what a good time they all are having together at the World Cup – at least before *The Death Eaters* arrive. Furthermore, I find the closeness between students at Hogwarts very appealing. Quoting McGonagall from the beginning of HP1:

*While you are here, your house<sup>1</sup> will be like your family.*

I find it pleasant that all students and teachers live together in the great, “secure” castle, where they also receive the intellectual pleasure they need from the education (and, for the teachers, research?); the students sleep together (only divided into the four houses and the two sexes) and gather and eat together in the Great Hall.



**Image 22** Common dinner

One gets the impression that the teachers are very bright and nice people, although Snape occasionally may be a bit more strict than necessary. Dumbledore’s being a master of magic is also confirmed by the English Wikipedia, stating he has abilities in the fields of *Occlumency* (the art of prohibiting one’s memories from being read by others) and *Legilimency* (the art of reading emotions and memories from the consciousnesses of another person). These very complex arts, requiring advanced mental capabilities and – by the way – confirming the hypothesis of a connection between magic and consciousness, are also mastered by Severus Snape.

In addition, Dumbledore is a legendary alchemist, having discovered the twelve applications of dragon blood and a means of communication using patronus charms. Furthermore, he has also said that he is able to become invisible without using an invisibility coat, although the statement may have been a metaphor.

It is also interesting to study who dares to mention the name “Voldemort”; most people refer to him using *you-know-who* or *he-who-must-not-be-named*. However, some teachers, such as Dumbledore and Lupin, speak freely about Voldemort, as if he was an ordinary person, discussing with Harry. I get the distinct impression that these teachers – and Harry – live in a “higher reality”, morally speaking.

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<sup>1</sup> House: Hogwarts students are divided into four houses: Gryffindor (including Harry, Ron, and Hermione), Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and the somewhat morally questionable Slytherin.

Concerning the moral messages of the films, I am struck by the primitive conduct of dividing humanity into “good” and “bad” people, though I can agree with the fact that people like Voldemort are far worse than most people committing crimes (juridical and moral) in our world. Mainly, however, I find the HP films proclaiming tolerance, friendship, and strength, which is admirable.

### Why watch Harry Potter movies?

As I have said earlier in this document, I am fascinated by the Harry Potter movies and almost addicted to watching them every other night between ten and one (approximately). Perhaps because I in the HP world find a pleasant closeness between students, teachers, and *friends* at Hogwarts, which I lack in the real world? Perhaps because I find it fascinating to study “the fifth fundamental type of interaction”, and particularly to do so in an environment such beautiful as Hogwarts? Perhaps because I find the music and the pictures exceptionally pleasing? Surely, the true reason is a combination of all these and other reasons, but is it rational? As Dumbledore said, when Harry had become too dependent by Erised, it does not do to dwell on dreams /about a more beautiful world in front of a LCD every night/ and forget to live.

On the other hand, perhaps it does? Perhaps films may give mental strength? Perhaps films may inspire humans, to avoid the bad in the movies in the real world, and to further the good in the movies in the real world? Perhaps films can inspire humans to assimilate the best personal traits from the films into one’s own personality? Perhaps one is able to create a world of one’s own *in* the real world, sharing the moral utopia shown in a film? Perhaps the movie *is* the reality?<sup>2</sup>



**Image 23** Albus Dumbledore in the Great Hall under a ceiling of galaxies

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<sup>2</sup> It is the task of the reader to interpret this question (which is not meant to be interpreted literally).



## ***The Author's Final Words***

This document is a rather brief analysis, which may sound odd as the document consists of 26 pages, but when one has watched the films every other night for more than a year, the reflections become quite profound indeed. Except for having sorted out many items I wanted to discuss, I have completely removed a section comparing the HP world with the Star Trek universe (the similarities between these worlds are extensive).



**Image 24** Dumbledore's *Pensieve*

Extremely many articles are written about the HP world in the English Wikipedia. Below, only *very* few of them are listed.

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Philosopher%27s\\_Stone\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Philosopher%27s_Stone_%28film%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Chamber\\_of\\_Secrets\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Chamber_of_Secrets_%28film%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Prisoner\\_of\\_Azkaban\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Prisoner_of_Azkaban_%28film%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Goblet\\_of\\_Fire\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Goblet_of_Fire_%28film%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Order\\_of\\_the\\_Phoenix\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Order_of_the_Phoenix_%28film%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_and\\_the\\_Half-Blood\\_Prince\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_and_the_Half-Blood_Prince_%28film%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_cast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_cast)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_%28character%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_%28character%29)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron\\_Weasley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Weasley)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermione\\_Granger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermione_Granger)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albus\\_Dumbledore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albus_Dumbledore)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubeus\\_Hagrid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubeus_Hagrid)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severus\\_Snape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severus_Snape)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minerva\\_McGonagall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minerva_McGonagall)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirius\\_Black](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirius_Black)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginny\\_Weasley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginny_Weasley)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remus\\_Lupin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remus_Lupin)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord\\_Voldemort](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Voldemort)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_%28Harry\\_Potter%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_%28Harry_Potter%29)
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animagus>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_spells](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_spells)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-canonical\\_spells\\_in\\_Harry\\_Potter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-canonical_spells_in_Harry_Potter)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry\\_of\\_Magic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Magic)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diagon\\_Alley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diagon_Alley)

This document is an English translation of the original Swedish version. Should you find any linguistic errors, I would appreciate if you did send a notification about them to me via e-mail: [andreas@rejbrand.se](mailto:andreas@rejbrand.se). Thank you. English translation completed on 11 September 2006. Minor updates on 2 July 2007.