

Draco malfoy: the losing side?

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Though one of literature's objectives is to provide entertainment for a willing audience, there can be deep underlying themes in the works. Characters, specifically, provide an interesting platform to raise questions and debate about. One such character, Draco Malfoy, is an interesting case of the villain-turned-hero variety. In each of the Harry Potter novels, Draco Malfoy embodies Aurelius's notion that persisting in one's own ignorance poses harm to oneself and to others.

The ignorance of which Aurelius speaks was ingrained into Draco's mind from a very young age because of the way he was raised. Through reading the Harry Potter series, we learn that Draco Malfoy is the only son of Lucius (a Death Eater, one of Lord Voldemort's loyal followers) and Narcissa Malfoy. Due to Lucius's Death Eater status, he raised Draco to believe strongly in the importance of blood purity among the wizard race. That is, magical folk should only marry other magical folk instead of "fraternizing" with Muggles (non-magical beings). Because he is a descendent of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black – a traditionally pureblood wizard family – he was also placed into Slytherin House at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, a House most known for its founder's dislike of Muggles and Muggle-born students.

This, coupled with his father's biased teachings at home, exposed Draco to very prejudiced ideas regarding Muggles and the like. Since his father was a Death Eater he never had a chance to truly get to know any Muggles firsthand and so he was ignorant of their true potential for most of his life. This ignorance grew over the years. Several times during the course of the series, Draco goes against Aurelius's personal notion that "if someone can prove me wrong and show me my mistake in any thought or action, I shall

gladly change” (50). It does not matter how much of an opinion pureblood supremacy is; the torture and murder of Muggles, Muggle-borns, half breeds, and blood traitors is still wrong.

No matter how many times Harry Potter and his friends try to tell Draco, he still believes resiliently in his father’s teachings because those resonate stronger over the years. He does not wish to be corrected or to learn from his mistakes, he only wants to be right. Draco also starts out as a poor example for Aurelius’s second opinion: “ I seek the truth, which never harmed anyone” (50). Not once has Draco sought the truth about anything, especially about pureblood versus non-pureblood ideals. He has, thus far, blindly followed the rules and guidelines set down by Voldemort and his Death Eaters out of fear of being murdered.

This changes much later in the series. In Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Headmaster Albus Dumbledore offers to help Draco during a confusing part of his life when he does begin to question Voldemort’s actions and morals. Although Draco would very much like to have someone protecting him, he responds with, “ I don’t want your help! Don’t you understand? I have to do this...

or he’s gonna kill me.” At this point, Draco knows that what he was led to believe in about pureblood supremacy is wrong and that Voldemort truly is an evil person, but he’s stuck in a difficult spot because his life is on the line. Still too confused to act righteously, he lets Professor Severus Snape kill Dumbledore in the hopes that later in life, he wouldn’t feel as guilty as he would have if he had personally done the deed. In the end, however, Draco

comes through and embodies Aurelius's final say on ignorance: "the harm is to persist in one's own self-deception and ignorance" (50). Even though, up to this point, Draco has given in to his ignorance, he still has a chance to make everything right again.

The first sign of this occurrence happens when Harry and his friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, are caught camping out in the forest and brought to Malfoy Manor where they will be identified and promptly killed by Voldemort. Draco's aunt, Bellatrix Lestrange, asks him to identify the three friends since he went to school with them. He avoids looking at them directly and shows great reluctance in giving away their identity: "Wait," said Narcissa sharply. "Yes – yes, she was in Madam Malkin's with Potter! I saw her picture in the Prophet! Look, Draco, isn't it the Granger girl?" "I... maybe...yeah." "But then, that's the Weasley boy!" shouted Lucius, striding around the bound prisoners to face Ron.

"It's them, Potter's friends – Draco, look at him, isn't it Arthur Weasley's son, what's his name?" "Yeah," said Draco again, his back to the prisoners. "It could be." (J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, 459) Draco's sudden lack of enthusiasm is a clear example of his change of character. Years ago he would've been gleefully giving away their identities by this point but because he had the time to think things through for himself, he has finally developed his own beliefs and values.

He has finished arbitrarily listening to what his father and Voldemort had to tell him. There is one more scene near the conclusion of the seventh installment that furthers Draco's development: when Draco saves Harry's

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life. Draco's lackey, Vincent Crabbe, is very gung-ho about pureblood supremacy and subsequently is a servant of Voldemort's; thus, he is very anti-Potter. When Crabbe and Draco run into Harry in the Hogwarts castle, Crabbe begins shooting deadly curses at him, including the Killing Curse. At first, Draco's excuse to stop Crabbe was that Voldemort wanted Harry alive. The more Crabbe tried to hurt Harry, though, the less control Draco had over what he was saying, and so eventually his pleas turned into, " Don't kill him! DON'T KILL HIM!" (630) It is at this point that Draco has learned the error of his ways and, when he knocks Crabbe and his wand out of the way, saves Harry's life, thus going against everything his parents has taught him.

The " self-harm" he had been inflicting on himself due to his ignorance is over because now he has fully developed his own ideals. Though Draco Malfoy starts out as a poor example of Aurelius's thoughts on truth and ignorance, he eventually develops into a very complex character that realizes his unawareness and personally sets out to correct it.