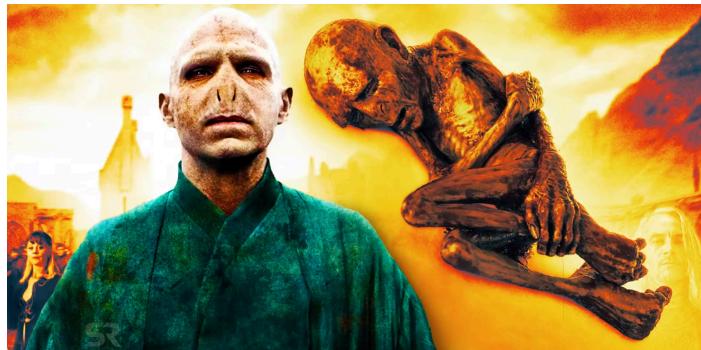


## Managing and Framing My Ego Through Voldemort in Harry Potter

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This is going to be a super nerdy piece of writing, but if you fuck with Harry Potter I think it'll make sense. Recently I've been reading a lot on Daoism, especially *Zhuangzi* by Zhuang Zhou (also known as Zhuangzi—hence the #selftitled book). Written around the 4th century BCE, *Zhuangzi* is full of short, light-hearted stories about how a person can live in harmony with nature and with themselves. In his storytelling, he talks about ego in this almost childlike, disarming way that takes away the power we usually hand over to it. I also recommend this book for sure because it's hella easy to read and makes Daoism and its concepts very digestible.

So, without further ado, in the spirit of Zhuangzi's style, here's my own allegory.

I've always been an anxious person and an overthinker. The moment I feel like I can't control a certain situation or predict an outcome, my anxiety spikes because my ego steps in. It can't fathom that I can't control / hold the reigns in every twist in turn in life.. My ego isn't necessarily "bad" or "good," it is simply natural and a part of me and a part of being human. Rather, it is how we frame and interact with our ego that determines our headspace and how we live our life.

For most of my life, my ego has been the engine behind my fears, embarrassments, and spirals (and still often is). When those feelings showed up, I'd hand them full authority. In my mind, the voice of my ego was like Voldemort at his most powerful lol. It was powerful, the loudest voice in my brain, and to be obeyed/ listened to. So I went on assuming the nasty,

self-doubting thoughts were coming from a dominant, all-knowing force I needed to obey and give my attention.

As I have read more about Daoism and read books like *Zhuangzi*, my perspective has shifted. I started seeing the ego not as an all powerful evil tyrant like Voldemort, but rather as a frightened, petulant, impulsive childlike figure. Once I changed how I framed my egotistical thoughts and anxieties from believing they were coming from a powerful voice/ place to realizing those thoughts actually stemmed from fear and I need to feel in control, my outlook on life and lifestyle has improved dramatically.

Now, when I think of my ego I think of it not as a scary, evil version of Voldemort that has immense power, but rather as Voldemort when he is in Platform 9 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  with Harry and Dumbledore in the seventh book. A scared, weak, feeble being that grasps on to anxious thoughts and worries in order to feel like it is in control and behind the wheel. (Pictured below to jog your memory)



Now, when I have anxious thoughts, feelings of embarrassment, or feel an unreasonable anger/resentment with somebody, I remember that this is not the truth or a feeling that is to be bent or catered to. It is simply coming from a small, scared, helpless part of me that will do whatever it can to feel like it has a grip on life. The reality is, we have zero control over nature and a lot of the things that occur in life on a day to day basis. The more we act like this weak version of Voldemort and try to control/force our “way” or “view” onto the world, the more miserable life becomes. It is only once we acknowledge that these desires for control are feeble, useless and come from a place of fear rather than power that we can live and appreciate our lives to the fullest.