The Lathe of Heaven

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF URSULA K. LE GUIN

Ursula Kroeber was born in 1929 to Alfred Kroeber, an anthropologist, and Theodora Kroeber, a writer. She and her three older brothers grew up in Berkeley, California. Le Guin developed a love of reading at a young age, during which time she became acquainted with science fiction and fantasy writing through issues of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Astounding Science Fiction*. Le Guin earned her Bachelor's degree from Radcliff College and continued her studies at Columbia University, pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in French. While at work on her Ph.D., she received a Fulbright grant to study in France in 1953, and it was there where she met historian Charles Le Guin, whom she married in Paris later that year. Le Guin and her husband had three children together, and the family ultimately settled in Portland, Oregon after Charles Le Guin was awarded a position at Portland State University. Le Guin's writing career began in the 1950s, and she would continue to publish for nearly 60 years. Le Guin published *A Wizard of Earthsea*, a fantasy novel, in 1968, which garnered critical acclaim. Her first major work of science fiction, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, was published in 1969 and established Le Guin as an important author of Science Fiction. The novel won the Hugo and Nebula awards for best novel, and Le Guin was the first woman to win either award. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is considered "groundbreaking" for its nuanced exploration of gender. Some of Le Guin's other important works from this time include *The Word for World is Forest* (1972), which won the Hugo award, and *The Dispossessed* (1974), which won the Hugo and Nebula awards for best novel, and *Always Coming Home* (1985), which received the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize. Le Guin's work frequently engages with themes of gender, sexuality, morality, and politics. Le Guin was greatly influenced by Taoist thought, and many of her works, including *The Lathe of Heaven*, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and *The Dispossessed*, engage with Taoism. Le Guin's prolific body of work includes over 20 novels and 12 volumes of short stories, as well as numerous volumes of poetry, children's books, and essay collections. She published four translations, including the *Tao Te Ching* (1997). Many of her works have been the subject of critical and academic studies. In 2010, Le Guin, then in her 80s, started a blog, which may be accessed on her website. She published her final post in September 2017. Le Guin died in Portland, Oregon, on January 22, 2018, at age 88.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Taoist thought influences nearly every aspect of *The Lathe of Heaven*. Taoism is an ancient Chinese religious and philosophical tradition that was first recognized around the 4th century B.C.E. Its two classic texts are the *Tao Te Ching*, which is traditionally attributed to the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, and which experts estimate was written between the 8th and 3rd centuries B.C.E., and the *Zhuangzi*, which is attributed to the philosopher Zhuang Zhou, and which experts believe was written in the 4th century B.C.E. Taoist thought has influenced Chinese culture for centuries and continues to be an important influence today. At the heart of Taoism is the concept that all beings should exist in accordance with the *Tao* ("Way"), which is a metaphysical term that refers to the natural balance of the universe, as well as the path one must follow to exist in this harmonious state of balance. Some general concepts Taoism emphasizes are the interconnectedness of all beings, the importance of spontaneity and simplicity, and the natural, continuous rhythm or balance of the universe. One central Taoist concept that is particularly relevant to *The Lathe of Heaven* is *wu wei* ("effortless action"). *Wu wei* refers to the practice of engaging in spontaneous, effortless action that maintains the natural rhythm of the universe: to practice *wu wei* is to act in accordance with the Tao. Elements of human culture, such as logic, language, and government, often interfere with humanity's ability to engage effortlessly with the universe and can obscure the path one must take to live in accordance with the *Tao*. In *The Lathe of Heaven*, George Orr strives to behave spontaneously and avoid interfering with the natural rhythm of the universe, but his effective dreams and the increasingly invasive, exploitative treatment he receives from Dr. Haber are obstacles that inhibit him from doing so. *The Lathe of Heaven* tends to frame Western philosophical traditions as antithetical to Taoism and seems to suggest that adherence to such perspectives interfere with one's ability to attain personal fulfilment through living in accordance with the *Tao*.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Ursula Le Guin was a prolific American author whose body of work includes over 20 novels, over 100 short stories, and various works of poetry and literary criticism. Some of Le Guin's most notable science fiction works include *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), *The Dispossessed* (1974), and *The Word for World is Forest* (1972). *The Lathe of Fire* is heavily influenced by Taoist thought; in fact, Le Guin derived the novel's title from the *Tao Te Ching*, one of Taoism's foundational texts, and many of *The Lathe of Heaven*'s chapters begin with epigraphs taken from the same work. The *Tao Te Ching*, traditionally attributed to the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, and the *Zhuangzi*, attributed to Zhuang Zhou, are considered to be Taoism's two foundational texts, and reading them would provide the reader with a highly

useful context for understanding the spiritual and philosophical concepts at play in *The Lathe of Heaven*. Another key component of *The Lathe of Heaven* is its depiction of alternate realities, which has led *The Lathe of Heaven* to be described as Le Guin's homage to fellow science fiction writer Philip K. Dick, whose works frequently engaged with alternate universes. Some of Dick's most notable works include *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), *Ubik* (1969), and *A Scanner Darkly* (1977).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Lathe of Heaven
- **When Written:** Early 1970s
- **Where Written:** Portland, Oregon, United States
- **When Published:** 1971
- **Literary Period:** 20th-century American Literature
- **Genre:** Science Fiction, Speculative Fiction
- **Setting:** Portland, Oregon, in 2002
- **Climax:** Dr. William Haber uses the Augmentor to have his first conscious, effective dream, but he loses control and nearly destroys coherent reality.
- **Antagonist:** Dr. William Haber
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

At the Movies. *The Lathe of Heaven* has been adapted for film twice: first in a 1980 production for PBS, and later in a 2002 remake produced for the A&E Network.

An Anachronism. Le Guin derived the novel's title from the writings of the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu. The quote is a mistranslation, however, since there were no lathes in China when Chuang Tzu's writings were recorded.

PLOT SUMMARY

It's 2002 in Portland, Oregon. The planet suffers from overpopulation, food scarcity, global war, and the devastating effects of climate change. A man named George Orr has the ability to have "effective" dreams that change reality. Disturbed by the experience, he abuses drugs to stop himself from dreaming. When Orr is caught stealing Pharmacy Cards to get more drugs, he attends therapy sessions with Dr. William Haber, an ambitious psychiatrist and sleep researcher, to avoid jail time. Though Haber initially thinks Orr is crazy, he changes his mind after witnessing Orr have an effective dream during a hypnotic sleep study. After this, Haber secretly exploits Orr's condition to change the world, enhancing Orr's dreaming capabilities using an EEG machine called the Augmentor. He also feeds Orr hypnotic suggestions to make him dream into reality utopic alternate realities that reflect Haber's vision of a better world; however, the utopic changes Orr's dreams create are always accomplished through dystopic means. For instance, when Haber gives Orr the hypnosuggestion to dream of world peace, Orr creates a world where formerly warring nations band together to defeat Alien invaders' attack on the Moon. Meanwhile, each effective dream improves Haber's status until he's in charge of the entire world.

Orr consults with a lawyer named Heather Lelache to end his sessions with Haber, but Haber's elevated social status prevents Heather from interfering with Orr's treatment. Heather initially doubts Orr's ability to change the world, but she changes her mind after observing Orr dream effectively during one of his sessions with Haber; Orr's dream enables her to remember multiple realities. Orr falls in love with Heather and informs her that the real world was destroyed during nuclear war in April 1998, and their present world is just an alternate reality he dreamed of in the aftermath. In a final attempt to restore normalcy, Heather hypnotizes Orr to dream that Aliens are no longer on the Moon, but the plan backfires when Orr's dream moves the Alien invasion from the Moon to Earth. A violent battle ensues, and a bomb strikes **Mount Hood**, causing the previously dormant volcano to awaken and erupt. After this, Orr dreams that the Aliens are nonviolent, and they assimilate into Portland's human population. The Aliens are courteous citizens, though nobody can actually see them, since they're always encased in big, clunky turtle-like suits that allow them to breathe the Earth's air.

This normalcy doesn't last for long, however, and Haber resumes his "treatment" of Orr. When Haber coerces Orr to eliminate racism, Orr creates a world that eliminates race itself, which makes everyone's skin turn an identical shade of gray. In this new reality, Heather, who is biracial, ceases to exist. Orr later dreams of an alternate reality in which a gray, milder version of Heather is his wife. Speaking with an Alien helps Orr understand his condition and empowers him to confront Haber. During their final session, Haber "cures" Orr by making him dream that he can no longer dream effectively. Haber's research with Orr enables him to use the Augmentor to have his own effective dreams. Haber's first effective dream turns into a nightmare that causes the world to melt into a state of incoherent chaos. Orr detaches Haber from the Augmentor and saves the world, though elements of different realities now commingle in a single dimension.

Months later, Portland has mostly returned to normal. Haber's knowledge of unreality puts him in a catatonic state, and he's institutionalized. Orr has a job designing kitchen appliances for an Alien named Asfah. A restored Heather enters Asfah's shop one day, though she has only a vague memory of Orr. Orr invites Heather to a nearby café, optimistic about the possibility of winning back her love.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

George Orr – George Orr is the novel's protagonist. He's a 30-year-old draftsman who'd be completely ordinary, were it not for his extraordinary ability to have "effective" dreams—dreams that change reality. Orr resents his ability, however, and abuses drugs in order to stop dreaming. When Orr's drug use lands him in legal trouble, he undergoes psychiatric treatment to avoid prison time, which is how he meets the novel's antagonist, Dr. William Haber. Orr resents his effective dreams because he's the only person who retains a "double memory" of disparate realities, which alienates him from others and makes him doubt reality. Besides this, Orr is a passive man whose worldview tells him it's wrong to interfere with the natural rhythm of the universe. Orr's views put him at odds with Haber, who takes the Utilitarian stance that Orr has a moral imperative to use his effective dreams to improve humanity's quality of life. Though Orr repeatedly pleads with Haber to "cure" him of his ability, Haber covertly uses hypnosis to make Orr dream of realities that reflect Haber's image of a utopic society. Meanwhile, Haber tracks Orr's brainwaves using a machine called the Augmentor to learn how to induce effective dreams in himself. Orr struggles to control his dreams and subdue Haber, but this changes after consulting with the Aliens (a product of one of Orr's dreams), who possess a more refined understanding of dreams, consciousness, and cosmic balance, giving him the strength to glide effortlessly through his dreams and defeat Haber. Though Haber apparently "cures" Orr of his ability to dream effectively once he's done using him for research, Orr's ability to restore reality in the aftermath of Haber's failed effective dream makes it somewhat unclear whether Orr's power is completely gone, or if the Aliens' teachings simply help him control it. Early in the novel, Orr goes to a lawyer named Heather Lelache for help severing his relationship with Haber. Though Heather can't help Orr and initially refuses to believe in his effective dreams, her opinion changes after witnessing Orr alter reality gives her a double memory of her husband's death(s) in the war. Heather and Orr eventually fall in love, and Orr later dreams into reality a world where Heather is his wife, though she ceases to exist when Haber's first attempt to dream effectively nearly destroys the world. In the end, Orr restores the world to relative coherence, though elements of separate realities now coexist. Heather is restored, too, though she doesn't remember her romance with Orr. Nevertheless, Orr decides to pursue this simultaneously strange and familiar version of his former wife, optimistically leaving the future of their romance in the hands of the universe.

Dr. William Haber – Dr. William Haber is the psychiatrist assigned to treat George Orr. Haber begins as an ambitious but underrecognized sleep researcher, but this changes when he hypnotizes Orr into dreaming of realities that improve Haber's status until he becomes the most powerful person on the planet. Though Haber initially dismisses Orr's effective dreams, he changes his mind after one of Orr's dreams alters a mural on his wall during one of their sessions. Unlike Orr, who subscribes to Taoist ideals of effortless action and universal balance, Haber believes in the Utilitarian notion that people have a moral obligation to act in ways that maximize happiness and minimize suffering. Though Haber cares about the common good, his desire for power and control corrupts his altruism. As such, under the guise of administering treatment, Haber hypnotizes Orr, feeding him suggestions to make his effective dreams morph reality into Haber's vision of a perfect world. Meanwhile, Haber records Orr's brainwaves with the Augmentor so that he might one day induce conscious effective dreaming in himself and gain complete control of reality. Haber successfully uses Orr's dreams to eliminate overpopulation, racism, and global war; however, these utopic accomplishments are always achieved at an unforeseen, dystopic cost. In response to Haber's suggestion to dream away overpopulation, for example, Orr creates a plague that kills six billion people. Such setbacks never bother Haber, who uses the promise of a collectively better world to justify any suffering his hypnosuggestions create. Ultimately, Haber's changes bring about more suffering than happiness. The novel further conveys Haber and Orr's clashing worldviews through their opposite appearances: while Orr is fair, lean, and unassuming, Haber is "broad, hairy," and often described with bear imagery. Toward the end of the novel, once Haber unlocks the key to effective dreaming, he "cures" Orr by hypnotizing him to dream that his dreams no longer change reality. Haber then ignores Orr's advice to consult with the Aliens before inducing an effective dream in himself, and his effective dream becomes a nightmare that causes reality to collapse. Though Orr disconnects Haber from the Augmentor in time to restore reality to relative coherence, Haber's new knowledge of unreality leaves him institutionalized in a broken, catatonic state. The novel suggests that Haber's demise is the result of his unexamined adherence to Utilitarian ethics, his unwillingness to accept the unknowable and uncontrollable aspects of life, and his selfish quest for power.

Heather Lelache – Heather Lelache is the lawyer George Orr contacts to end his sessions with Dr. William Haber. Though Haber's important status prevents Heather from interfering with Orr's treatment, she and Orr develop feelings for each other. Heather initially dismisses Orr's claims about his effective dreams, but she reconsiders after witnessing one of Orr's dreams allows her to maintain a subconscious double memory. Later, Heather meets Orr at his cabin and recalls two conflicting memories of her late husband's death in the war, which solidifies her belief in Orr's ability. During this meeting, she expresses a deep admiration for Orr's strength, centeredness, and calm, unaffected demeanor. Heather is fierce, outspoken, and wears loud clothing that reflects her

bold demeanor. She sometimes imagines herself as a "Black Widow" spider, but Heather's venomous, aggressive quality is largely superficial, and beneath this façade, she's gentle, compassionate, and adopts a stance similar to Orr's with regard to letting the universe run its natural course. Heather is biracial and struggles to decide whether she's Black, white, or neither. This might be why she relates to Orr, whose awareness of multiple, conflicting realities complicates and fragments his identity as well. During a treatment session where Haber coerces Orr to dream away racism, Orr accidentally creates a raceless world where everyone's skin is an identical gray color. Because being biracial is such a big part of Heather's identity, she ceases to exist. Orr later dreams Heather back into existence as his wife, but the only Heather that *can* exist in Haber's gray, raceless world is a milder, more submissive version of herself, and she's thrust into nonexistence yet again when Haber's first effective dream causes reality to splinter. After Orr restores the world to a state of relative coherence, Heather reenters reality. In her final form, she is biracial and bold once more, though she doesn't remember her romance with Orr. Orr's decision to restore Heather's boldness reflects his reinvigorated faith in the universe's ability to guide his life and relationships where they're meant to go. In the end, Heather and Orr's future together is uncertain, but the novel conveys this uncertainty in a positive, hopeful light.

Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe – Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe is an Aldebaranian Alien. Like all Aldebaranians, Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe is completely encased in a big, clunky, turtle-like suit that enables him to breathe the Earth's air. The turtle suits are equipped with metal rods hooked up to machines that translate words and facilitate speech. Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe works as a shopkeeper at an antiques store. When Orr drops by one day and asks Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe to explain the meaning of the Alien word iahklu', Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe tells Orr the word is incommunicable and gifts him the Beatles record "With a Little Help from My Friends" to convey the meaning to him without words. Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe's gesture deeply moves Orr. Listening to the record enables Orr to glide effortlessly and safely through his dreams and even allows him to restore Heather, who hadn't existed in the previous reality. The record instills a clarity and calmness in Orr that enables him to understand the inarticulable Alien concepts of *iahklu'* and Er' perrehnne he needs to make peace with his dreams and the universe. Thinking about the record, Ennbe Ennbe, and Heather is ultimately what gives Orr the strength to defeat Haber at the end of the novel, which underscores the novel's premise that fulfillment and strength are attained through living in collective harmony with others.

E'nememen Asfah – E'nememen Asfah is an Aldebaranian Alien who invites Orr to sleep at his apartment after Orr saves the world from Haber's effective nightmare. Just before Orr drifts off to sleep, he and Asfah exchange the Alien phrase "Er'perrehnne," which allows Orr to float safely through his dreams in an unattached, effortless manner. Orr eventually accepts a job designing appliances for Asfah's kitchen supply store, which is where he reunites with Heather. The novel's final scene depicts Asfah standing behind the glass window of his shop, watching Orr and Heather walk together to a nearby café.

Aunt Ethel – Aunt Ethel is Orr's aunt who came to live with Orr and his family when he was 17, during which time she sexually harassed him. During Orr's first session with Haber, he recalls how one of his first effective dreams caused Ethel to die in a car crash. Though Orr wanted to stop Ethel's harassment, he regrets his complicity in her death and cites this dream as an example of the "immoral" quality of his effective dreams.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Mannie Ahrens – Mannie Ahrens is the manager of George Orr's building. Orr borrows Mannie's phonograph to listen to the Beatles record he receives as a gift from Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe.

The medic – The medic resuscitates Orr after he suffers a drug overdose in the beginning of the novel.

Penny Crouch – Penny Crouch is Dr. William Haber's receptionist.

Heather's husband – Heather's husband died in the war in the Near East. Heather's realization that she has two conflicting memories of her husband's death is what leads her to accept the existence of alternate realities and believe in the power of Orr's effective dreams.

Albert M. Merdle – Albert M. Merdle is the President of the United States.

TERMS

Iahklu' – *Iahklu'* is a word in the language spoken by the Aldebaranian Aliens **Orr** creates with one of his effective dreams. *Iahklu'* has no direct English translation but seems to refer to the act of effective dreaming. Orr first encounters the word in one of his effective dreams, when an Alien gives him cryptic advice about what to do when his effective dreams become dangerous. Orr later asks an Alien named **Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe** to define *iahklu'* for him, but Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe explains that the word is "incommunicable" and offers Orr the Beatles record "With a Little Help from My Friends" in an attempt to convey the essence of *iahklu'* without language. That Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe tries to teach Orr about *iahklu'* with a song about friendship, love, and unity suggests that *iahklu'* has something to do with beliefs about interconnectedness, universal balance, and compassion, which are essential to the Aliens' philosophy of life on Earth and in the dream world.

Er' perrehnne – *Er' perrehnne* is a term that belongs to the language spoken by the Aldebaranian Aliens **Orr** creates with one of his effective dreams. Like iahklu', *Er' perrehnne* relates to dreaming and lacks a direct English translation. Orr first learns of the term in an effective dream where an Alien gives him advice about what to do when his dreams become chaotic and threatening. *Er' perrehnne* has a calming, clarifying effect on Orr and enables him to coast effortlessly through his dreams. Saying *Er' perrehnne* out loud and feeling its essence enables Orr to internalize the beliefs about effortless action, universal balance, and interconnectedness that are central to the Aliens' philosophy of life, and that are required for a balanced, fulfilled existence both in the dream world and upon waking.

Augmentor – The Augmentor is a device similar to an EEG (Electroencephalography) machine that **Dr. William Haber** uses to enhance **Orr**'s dreaming capabilities and track his brain activity.

Effective Dream – Effective Dream is the term **Orr** uses to denote the ability of his dreams to change reality. Effective Dreams don't simply confirm or predict future events—they actually *create* alternate universes. After Orr has an effective dream, he retains memories of the old reality and the new, dreamed reality, but the new reality is the only reality that exists for everyone else. The exception to this rule is if another person is around Orr while he is dreaming, and that person witnesses the exact moment the change occurs.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

THE LIMITS OF UTILITARIANISM

The Lathe of Heaven takes place in a dystopian future where climate change, overpopulation, food scarcity, and global conflict wreak havoc on the world. Meanwhile, George Orr, a man who possesses the strange ability to have "effective" dreams that change reality, finds himself increasingly at odds with Dr. William Haber, the psychiatrist Orr solicits to cure him of his peculiar condition. While Orr is a passive man who thinks it's wrong to use his effective dreams to play God and meddle in the natural order of things, Haber adopts an opposite stance, arguing that Orr has an ethical obligation to use his ability for the greater good of humanity. Haber's reasoning draws heavily on Utilitarian ethics, which argue that people should strive to act in ways that maximize well-being or happiness and minimize suffering for the greatest number of people. Motivated by an exaggerated Utilitarianism, Haber increasingly exploits Orr's powers, using hypnotic suggestion to make Orr dream into existence a utopian world—or, at least, what such a world looks like to Haber. However, Haber's attempts to maximize universal well-being often backfire, creating new, previously unimaginable forms of suffering to replace the old forms he wished to eradicate. For example, Haber's attempt to eliminate overpopulation results in Orr dreaming of a deadly plague that effectively murders six billion people. The novel uses Haber's failed attempts at altruism to criticize Utilitarianism—specifically its failure to account for the unpredictable consequences of even well-intentioned actions—and the inability of any single person to define what happiness and suffering mean for the totality of humanity.

Orr's interpretations of Haber's hypnosuggestions show that Haber's vision of a better world is oversimplified, and that happiness is relative. Orr technically follows Haber's hypnosuggestions, but he does so in roundabout ways that reveal how subjective Haber's suggestions really are. When Haber gives Orr a vague hypnosuggestion to improve the quality of life by eliminating overpopulation, Orr's unconscious responds by creating a deadly plague that kills six billion people. Orr's macabre solution to overpopulation emphasizes the suffering Haber's well-intended vision imposes on a significant portion of the population. While eliminating six billion people from the planet improves the quality of life for those who survive the Plague, the opposite is true for those who perish. In other words, the maximized happiness the Plague creates for survivors happens at the expense of victims' suffering. This consequence shows that Haber's Utilitarian ideology requires a person to make uncomfortable, highly subjective decisions about whose happiness matters most, and when the amount of happiness achieved is great enough to justify the suffering that also results. Calculating the utility of an action (in this case, eliminating overpopulation) is highly subjective and not as unambiguous as Haber would like to believe.

Haber's attempts to make the world a better place, which just so happen to disproportionately improve his social position, suggest that his supposedly objective vision of a better world is biased toward subjective self-interest. At the beginning of the novel, Haber is a mediocre, not particularly well-known sleep researcher. His relative unimportance in the medical world and society at large is reflected in the unimpressive state of his office in the Willamette East Tower: he's not even important enough to snag an office with a window. However, all this changes once Haber starts influencing Orr's effective dreams, feeding Orr hypnosuggestions that improve Haber's status. Over the course of several sessions, Haber acquires an office in the HURAD Tower, the most important building in Portland, which features an enormous window overlooking downtown Portland and distant **Mount Hood**. Haber becomes a well-respected doctor with important government connections and,

eventually, the director of HURAD (Human Utility: Research and Development), which makes him the most important man in the world. Though Haber might pretend (or really believe) he's using Orr's effective dreams to make the world a universally better place, the fact that Haber benefits most from the changes Orr's dreams bring about suggests that Haber is conflating what's best for the world with what's best for him. Haber's vision of a better world can't be objective since it's so clearly influenced by his thirst for power. Beyond this, Haber's dream of making the world a better place is itself self-serving, since it's (at least in part) motivated by Haber's desire for fame. "We've made more progress in six weeks than humanity made in six hundred thousand years!" Haber excitedly tells Orr after Orr confronts Haber about exploiting his dreams. Haber frames the role he plays in saving the world as a personal accomplishment rather than a selfless act of humanitarianism, which serves as additional proof of self-interest's influence on Haber's Utilitarian ideals.

Haber's Utilitarian aspirations rely on the impossible premise that one person can quantify happiness to determine what's best for the masses. That Haber's initial altruism ultimately becomes corrupted by greed and self-interest illuminates not only the subjectivity of happiness (Haber's idea of maximized happiness for the masses and maximized happiness for himself are mutually exclusive), but also the inability to predict that the consequences of one's actions will correspond to one's intentions. In the beginning, Haber really does strive to make the world a better place, and he sporadically succeeds in doing so. However, Haber's actions nearly culminate in the destruction of humanity, creating an irreconcilable asymmetry between Haber's intentions and the consequences of his actions.

DREAMS AND THE LIMITATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the central conflicts of *The Lathe of Heaven* is George Orr's internal struggle to know what is real and what is imagined. At first, it appears that the novel's baseline reality (from which all Orr's dreamed alternate realities diverge) is the world where Orr is apprehended for drug abuse and sent to Haber for Volunteer Therapeutic Treatment (VTT). However, it's later revealed that this reality is *itself* a dream that Orr willed into existence as he lay dying during the fallout of a global Nuclear War in 1998. This, to Orr's mind, renders *false* each subsequent reality he dreams into existence. One of the novel's central questions thus becomes: if reality exists in a state of constant flux that is beyond any one person's ability to discern, how does anyone know for certain what's real? Orr's desire to stop dreaming effectively isn't simply a passive man's discomfort with playing God, then, but a reflection of his larger discomfort with uncertainty. Orr initially seems to believe that if he can stop dreaming effectively, he will be able to exist in a more solid, stable, and knowable world. Instead, Orr eventually finds peace in the version of the world he knows least, a peace which comes only after embracing the Alien invaders' philosophy, which stresses not knowing the world with certainty, but simply coexisting with it. Through its metaphorical use of dreams, *The Lathe of Heaven* critiques efforts to transcend reality's unknowable character, arguing that human beings must embrace uncertainty instead.

Orr initially fears his effective dreams because he can't control them. He thinks being "cured" of his ability will make him feel better. Because Orr's dreams exist only in his unconscious, he can't consciously experience them. This is his main complaint with his curious ability: that it's beyond his ability to control and comprehend. When explaining his concerns to Haber in their initial session, he cites an instance from his youth in which he dreamed his abusive Aunt Ethel died in a car crash as evidence of the "incoherent, selfish, irrational, [and] immoral" quality of his unconscious. Orr's dreams (aided by Haber's hypnosuggestions) create additional "immoral" circumstances over the course of the novel, including a massive plague and an alien invasion. Orr repeatedly attempts to suppress his dreams—abusing drugs, avoiding sleep, and avoiding his sessions with Haber—but these methods are all short-lived. Orr's failure to control his dreams—and the suffering he incurs in trying and failing to control them—suggests that repressing one's anxieties about uncertainty is an inadequate method of coping with a fear of the unknown.

Haber adopts an opposite stance, striving to eliminate uncertainty through logic and reason. Haber describes Orr's condition positively, referring to it as a "wellspring of health, imagination, creativity," which, once adequately understood, can be used to benefit mankind. Haber thinks the most effective way to conquer the unknown is to leave no mystery unsolved: "to bring up what's unconscious into the light of rational consciousness [and] examine it objectively." To Haber, Orr's effective dreams (and by extension, the unknown) are only existential threats so long as they remain unexamined and uncontrolled. Haber tries to understand Orr's dreams with the intention of inducing effective, *conscious* (and therefore controllable) dreams in himself to create a new reality where everything is controlled, and nothing is left to chance. But Haber's efforts backfire when his first attempt to induce a consciously effective dream turns into an uncontrollable nightmare that nearly destroys the planet. The horrors Haber witnesses during his nightmare leave him permanently insane and confined to an institution. When Orr visits him, he observes a blank-eyed Haber "looking at the world as misunderstood by the mind: the bad dream." Orr's remarks affirm what Haber failed to recognize: that it's impossible to rationalize away the mind's capacity to misunderstand the world, and the world's capacity to confound the mind. Haber's

tragic end shows that there's a limit to what humanity can rationalize.

In place of Orr's and Haber's equally insufficient methods to cope with uncertainty, the novel offers a third method, espoused by the Aldebaranian Aliens, which is simply to embrace uncertainty. Toward the end of the novel, Orr has an effective dream where an Alien teaches him two Alien words: iahklu', which refers to effective dreaming, and Er' perrehnne. The Alien tells Orr that if he utters this latter word "before following directions leading in wrong directions," it will guide him through troubling effective dreams. The Alien's advice works. After exchanging "*Er' perrehnne*'s" with the Alien in his dream, Orr feels calm and reassured. When he awakens in Haber's office, a confused Haber notes that the EEG screen registers unusually powerful activity in Orr's cortex. Orr later tries to explain *Er' perrehnne* to Haber, though the concept remains mostly inarticulable. To Orr, the concept behind *Er' perrehnne* is that navigating the unknown depths of dreams requires one to "learn the skills, the art, the limits. A conscious mind must be part of the whole, intentionally and carefully." Orr's understanding of *Er' perrehnne* dictates that "a conscious mind," or a *knowing* mind, must reimagine its relationship to the unknown: it "must be part of the whole unconsciously," accepting the validity of the things it can't change or know rather than fearing or trying to conquer them. After accepting *Er' perrehnne*, Orr's dreams no longer plague him. When Orr finds shelter with an Alien named E'nememen Asfah the evening after Haber's effective dream nearly destroys the world, Orr and Asfah exchange *Er'perrehnne*'s before Orr falls asleep, and Orr's dreams wash over him "like waves of the deep **sea**." Embracing the unknown metaphorically transforms Orr into the **jellyfish** featured in the novel's opening scene—strengthened rather than threatened by the vast, mysterious waters that surround him.

COSMIC BALANCE

Taoism, a Chinese philosophical and religious tradition, influences *The Lathe of Heaven* in several ways. One Taoist idea that figures prominently in the novel is the idea that the universe exists in a state of cosmic balance, wherein every force has a corresponding, balancing counterforce. Many of the novel's characters struggle with the misconception that their actions have the power to disrupt this balance and force irrevocable changes onto the world. George Orr, the novel's protagonist, wants to stop his power to change the world through his dreams because he thinks it's morally wrong to disrupt the natural state of people's lives this way. Dr. William Haber, Orr's psychiatrist, disagrees and exploits Orr, manipulating the content of Orr's dreams to create a new reality that coheres to his vision of a perfect world. Though Haber and Orr represent opposite stances on the ethics of altering the natural state of the universe, what they *both* fail to recognize is that Orr's effective dreams can't actually disrupt the universe's cosmic balance, since, according to the book's Taoist philosophy, the universe will respond to each change they enact with a counteracting force of its own. Through the Taoist idea of cosmic balance, then, the novel suggests an alternate path of making peace with the world by reimagining one's place within the larger universe. Rather than trying to alter (or trying not to alter) the universe to conform to some hypothetical ideal, a person needs to accept their position *within* that larger universe, avoid engaging in deliberate action or inaction, and instead find reassurance in the restorative power of the universe's natural balance.

The novel demonstrates the Taoist concept of *yin and yang* through the opposing personalities and ethical positions of Orr and Haber. The concept of *yin and yang* dictates that the universe's opposite forces complement each other to maintain universal balance. Yin symbolizes the earth, the female sex, dark, and passivity. Yang symbolizes heaven, the male sex, light, and activity. In the novel, Orr represents yin, evidenced by Haber's description of him as "passive" and "feminine." Haber, boasting typically masculine, strong qualities, represents yang: he's "broad, hairy," and repeatedly described as bear-like, which underscores the wild, aggressive, active elements central to his character. The novel establishes Orr and Haber as opposing forces, and for much of the novel they, too, regard each other as foes: Orr criticizes Haber's *action*, believing (correctly) that Haber is abusing his medical privileges to exploit Orr's effective dreams and meddle with the way the universe ought to be. In turn, Haber attacks Orr's *inaction*, citing Orr's refusal to use his effective dreams to improve society as evidence of his moral inferiority.

Though Haber and Orr repeatedly challenge each other's opposing ethical stances, neither character conquers the other. This reflects the Taoist concept that opposing forces *complement* rather than overpower each other. Every time Haber manipulates the content of Orr's dreams to change the world, Orr's unconscious includes caveats that undermine whatever progress Haber's changes sought to achieve. For example, in one of their sessions, Haber gives Orr a hypnosuggestion to eliminate racism. Orr's unconscious responds by eliminating race entirely, giving all of humanity identical, gray skin. Though Orr's response technically fulfills Haber's suggestion, it doesn't actually do anything to *change* the nature of prejudicial behavior: if everyone's skin is the same, identical shade of gray, people no longer have a *reason* to be racist, but that's not the same thing as eliminating racism altogether. Further, eliminating race eliminates the cultural diversity that accompanies racial difference, and this loss undercuts social progress in Haber's post-racial world. Orr's unconscious repeatedly thwarts Haber's attempts to change the world: Haber's extreme action gives way to Orr's extreme passivity, and the world remains basically as good (or as bad) as

it was at the start.

In place of adopting extreme moral positions about one's relationship to the universe, the novel suggests one ought to find a balanced, middle path where one sees oneself as part of, rather than outside, the universe. Orr discovers this path in a dream, when an Alien teaches him about Er' perrehnne, an Alien concept of cosmic balance. The Alien explains to Orr that "a conscious mind must be part of the whole, intentionally and carefully—as the rock is part of the whole unconsciously." Whereas unconscious beings like the rock settle into a natural state of harmony within the larger universe, humanity's consciousness compels it to (incorrectly) conceive of itself as separate from—and therefore able to influence—the universe. This belief only creates dissatisfaction and suffering in confused humans like Orr and Haber, who mistakenly believe that the secret to a fulfilled existence is extreme passivity or extreme action. Orr finds peace after heeding the Aliens' advice. In his final dream, he sees "great, green sea turtles [...] swimming with heavy, inexhaustible grace through the depths, their element." This image parallels the novel's opening scene, where a **jellyfish** swims effortlessly through the **ocean**, protected by its existence within the larger ocean despite an otherwise fragile physique. In the end, Orr glides through his dreams and waking life as effortlessly as the turtles and jellyfish. The animals, Orr, and his Alien teachers live a satisfying existence because they don't regard the universe as separate from themselves and as needing to be either challenged or left alone. In the words of Orr's Alien teacher: "Self is universe." Orr learns to see his dreams as part of himself, and himself as part of the world: he no longer conceives of his dreams as a harmful, unethical force he needs to control or defeat, nor the universe as a helpless victim from which he must defend those dreams: they are all one, effortlessly ebbing and flowing through time.

POWER AND SELFISHNESS

In *The Lathe of Heaven*, any attempt to exert power over others eventually has corrupting results. When Haber tries to manipulate Orr's effective dreams to uplift humanity, his initially altruistic intentions are stymied by his selfish thirst for power. While each reality that Haber indirectly creates comes with a multitude of unanticipated conflicts and challenges for the people of the world, his own position of power and status in those worlds predictably increases. In an ultimate act of power-hungry selfishness, Haber finds a way to effect reality without Orr's involvement, and in so doing he nearly brings about the end of the world, leaving him psychologically broken. Orr's salvation in the novel, on the other hand, is exemplified by his ultimate relinquishing of control over others. In his final reunion with Heather, for example, his former wife is no longer the gray, submissive version of herself that Haber's hypercontrolled, raceless world forced her to become. In a final act of selflessness, Orr uses his power to restore Heather to her formerly bold, powerful self. While their future together is uncertain, they now have the power to shape each other's lives in a mutually selfless relationship uncorrupted by selfishness. Through Haber's and Orr's contrasting fates, *The Lathe of Heaven* critiques selfish, ego-driven exertions of power, instead advocating for a reserved, ethical application of power that allows for a harmonious co-existence rooted in mutual empowerment.

Haber's powerful status enables him to make the world a better place, but selfishness corrupts that power and ultimately destroys him. Haber initially uses his medical privileges as Orr's psychiatrist to achieve noble ends, manipulating Orr's dreams to fix many of the world's problems. For example, he eliminates famine, nearly eradicates cancer, and improves Earth's ecological health. However, Haber becomes corrupted when he uses his power to fulfill egotistical rather than altruistic goals. The humanitarian accomplishments Haber brings about through Orr's dreams are always accompanied by changes that improve Haber's position. Though Haber begins as a middling psychiatrist, he eventually becomes the director of the Human Utility: Research and Development (HURAD) department of the World Planning Center, which makes him the most powerful person in the world. When Haber "effectivize[s]" the world to exist within his own dream, he's too self-absorbed to heed Orr's advice about consulting with the Aliens beforehand. Once reality is "effectivized," Haber tells Orr, "this world will be like heaven, and men will be like gods!" Though Haber claims his new world will make people "like gods," his design renders Haber most God-like of all, positioning him as the sole creator and controller of this new, heavenly world. Ultimately, Haber loses control of his dream, sends the world into chaos, and goes insane, which leads to his institutionalization. Thus, Haber's selfish pursuit of power is his downfall.

Orr succeeds where Haber fails because he adopts a more ethical, selfless relationship to power. Unlike Haber, Orr has no desire to play God. Orr's relationship to his effective dreams emphasizes the potential *harm* his dreams might inflict on others rather than the potential *benefit* they might bring himself. Orr recognizes his "obligation" to use his power to coexist with rather than to dominate others. Near the end of the novel, for example, Orr jumps inside a black hole that Haber's uncontrolled dream creates and, "by the power of will, which is indeed great when exercised in the right way at the right time," Orr teleports himself to the HURAD Tower. Once he's outside Haber's office, Orr gathers strength through thoughts of Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe (an Alien shopkeeper he befriends), and Heather, which allows him "to cross nothingness," rip Haber from the Augmentor, and restore relative order to the world. Unlike Haber, whose egotistical

relationship to power motivates him to reject the help of others and leads him down a path of complete destruction, Orr's selfless relationship to power allows him to access his abilities responsibly, remain receptive to others' help, and save the day.

After disconnecting Haber from the Augmentor, Orr restores a reality that gives Heather the power to act of her own accord, which further affirms Orr's commitment to a selfless relationship to power. The Heather that Orr first dreams into existence as his wife is a gray, submissive shadow of her former self. She's the only version of Heather that can exist in this reality, which Haber has engineered (through Orr's effective dreams) to rob people of individuality, agency, and racial difference. Because being biracial was so central to Heather's identity, she ceases to exist in this world until Orr dreams this lacking version of herself into existence. After Orr defeats Haber, he restores race, individuality, and personal freedom to the world, which allows Heather to become the person she was *before* Haber began his quest for world domination—and before she knew Orr. This final iteration of Heather has only a vague memory of Orr—she doesn't remember they were ever married or in love—yet this fact doesn't crush Orr; on the contrary, he looks at Heather, whom he describes as a "fierce, recalcitrant, and fragile stranger," and optimistically welcomes the challenge of winning back her love. Though Heather and Orr's future together is uncertain, the shared, equal power they hold in developing that future has its own beauty. Unlike Haber, whose egotistical need for control corrupted his power, Orr recognizes that the highest power of all is the collective empowerment that exists within a harmonious co-existence among mutually empowered people.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

JELLYFISH

The jellyfish symbolizes the Taoist concepts central to the novel. Specifically, the jellyfish evokes the idea of *Tao* ("Way"), which refers to the universe's natural balance, as well as the behavior needed to obtain that balance, and *wu wei* ("effortless action"), which refers to an unconscious, spontaneous action that is unburdened by human efforts and in line with the *Tao*. The jellyfish first appears in the novel's opening scene, where it's depicted gliding effortlessly and contentedly through a wide, open **sea**. The jellyfish's effortless movements evoke the concept of *wu wei*, and its harmonious existence within the larger ocean represents living in accordance with the *Tao*. Though the jellyfish is a "vulnerable and insubstantial creature," its existence within the larger sea keeps it safe from harm. The jellyfish achieves its safety and reassurance not through physical strength or force of will, but through its natural participation in a larger, coherent whole: through living in accordance with the *Tao*. The novel depicts the jellyfish's passivity and inaction in a positive light, insinuating that all beings should aspire to exist in this manner. Things take a dark turn, however, when continents emerge from the water, sever the coherence of the ocean-universe, and threaten the jellyfish's harmonious existence within the larger universe. The emerging continents represent the chaos and suffering that occur when one engages in disruptive, decisive actions (the opposite of *wu wei*) that prevent one from living in accordance with the *Tao*.

This opening scene with the jellyfish also serves as a rough encapsulation of the novel's plot. The jellyfish represents Orr and the ideal, balanced existence he longs to achieve, and the emerging continents represent the disruptive, outside forces—such as Orr's preoccupation with controlling his effective dreams, and Haber's meddling presence—that stand between Orr and a harmonious existence within the larger universe. The jellyfish appears one other time, during an argument between Haber and Orr that occurs much later in the novel. In the midst of attacking Orr's passivity and unwillingness to use his effective dreams to alter the universe, Haber refers to Orr as a "moral jellyfish," insinuating that Orr is spineless and lacks moral integrity. That Haber repurposes a positive symbol of harmony and balance to insult Orr shows how much Haber's views are at odds with the Taoist ideals the novel espouses.

MOUNT HOOD

Mount Hood symbolizes the current state of reality, as well as the Taoist concept of *wu wei*, or effortless action. Mount Hood is a constant presence throughout the novel, and the way it appears at any point in time is indicative of the condition of reality. For example, Mount Hood first appears as a mural that hangs on the wall in Haber's office. At this point in the novel, Haber is a relatively unknown psychiatrist who isn't important enough to have an office with a nice view, which is something he desperately wants—for the view itself, as well as the importance having an office with a view would convey to the world. During Orr's first session with Haber, he has an effective dream that changes the mural to depict a horse instead of Mount Hood. In its absence, Mount Hood reflects the changed condition of reality, conveying the literal change that Orr's dream imposes on the world; it also reflects Haber's transformed attitude toward his patient Orr, whom he no longer regards as crazy, but as someone whose remarkable power he can exploit for personal and professional gain. When Haber later uses Orr's effective dreams to improve his status, he gets a new office that boasts a massive window through which he can see the *literal* Mount Hood. Here, Mount Hood's presence reflects Haber's corruption. It also shows how

Haber's exploitation of Orr's dreams is altering reality in increasingly visible, significant ways. Later still, when Orr dreams into existence an Alien invasion, Mount Hood is struck by a bomb, which transforms the formerly dormant mountain into an active, erupting volcano. Mount Hood's eruption parallels the rising action of the novel, illustrating how damaged and fragmented reality has become. It also reflects the chaos that ensues when humans meddle with the universe's natural balance.

Mount Hood also symbolizes the Taoist concept of *wu wei*, or effortless action. When Mount Hood is dormant—when it is sleeping, or *unconscious*—it exists harmoniously within the larger, balanced universe: it and the universe are one entity, or "self is universe," as an Aldebaranian Alien would say. The symbolically asleep Mount Hood operates in a way that enables it to exist effortlessly and peacefully within the universe. When the stray bomb awakens Mount Hood, however, the balance and effortlessness it experienced in "unconsciousness" gives way to the disruptive action of "consciousness." The destruction the active volcano brings about thus symbolizes the chaos and suffering that ensue when a person's conscious thoughts and actions inhibit them from existing in unconscious harmony with the universe. Mount Hood continues to erupt until the end of the novel, when Orr defeats Haber and restores the universe to a state of coherent balance.

WATER

Water symbolizes the Taoist concepts central to the novel, specifically the idea of *Tao* ("Way"), and *wu wei* ("effortless action"). *Tao* is a metaphysical concept that refers to the natural balance of the universe, as well as the path all living beings must take to act in accordance with that natural balance. In *The Lathe of Heaven*, water represents this collective balance. In the novel's opening scene, for example, the **jellyfish** swims through "the moon-driven sea," which alludes to the way the moon exerts a force on the ocean that results in the rise and fall of the tide. Just as the *Tao* compels the universe to exist in a state of balance, the rising and falling motion of the sea exerts a natural rhythm on itself and everything that exists within it. The rising and falling motion of the sea also embodies the concept of *wu wei*, or effortless action. The sea doesn't think consciously about its movement or anguish over which direction it will go next: "moon-driven," it merely follows the rhythmic movement the gravitational pull of the moon compels it to follow.

The absence of water is significant, too. If the presence and movement of water symbolizes the natural balance of the universe and the unconscious, effortless actions one must practice to act in accordance with this natural balance, then the absence of water symbolizes a disruption of this natural balance, as well as the conscious, deliberate actions that create this disruption. Near the end of the novel, Heather and Orr are on their way to dinner when the world around them begins to collapse in on itself, which is an indicator that Haber's first effective dream has begun to go horribly wrong. One of the first signs of impending doom is the dire state of the river, which has suddenly and inexplicably run dry. Drained of its water, the riverbed is now "cracked and oozing," and "full of grease and bones and lost tools and dying fish." Vessels lay shipwrecked against the docks. Where water, vessels, and fish once flowed as one, there now exists only the filth, death, and suffering of disparate objects. Haber's effective dream thus represents his final (and most dramatic) attempt to exert complete control over reality through *deliberate* action. Haber's attempt to exert power over the collective world disrupts the universe's natural balance and causes a domino effect of chaos. Here, the absence of water reflects the suffering and disorder that arises when the practice of deliberate action throws the universe out of balance.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *The Lathe of Heaven* published in 2008.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Current-borne, wave-flung, tugged hugely by the whole might of ocean, the jellyfish drifts in the tidal abyss. The light shines through it, and the dark enters it. Borne, flung, tugged from anywhere to anywhere, for in the deep sea there is no compass but nearer and farther, higher and lower, the jellyfish hangs and sways; pulses move slight and quick within it, as the vast diurnal pulses beat in the moon-driven sea. Hanging, swaying, pulsing, the most vulnerable and insubstantial creature, it has for its defense the violence and power of the whole ocean, to which it has entrusted its being, its going, and its will. But here rise the stubborn continents. The shelves of gravel and the cliffs of rock break from water baldly into air, that dry, terrible outer space of radiance and instability, where there is no support for life. And now, now the currents mislead and the waves betray, breaking their endless circle, to leap up in loud foam against rock and air, breaking... What will the creature made all of sea-drift do on the dry sand of daylight; what will the mind do, each morning, waking?

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1-2

Explanation and Analysis

This is the novel's opening passage. It serves as a prelude to the primary narrative, symbolically introducing the novel's main theme and providing a preview of the narrative arc.

The passage depicts a jellyfish swimming peacefully and effortlessly through an open sea, enforcing this effortlessness by emphasizing the sea's role in propelling the jellyfish according to its own motion. The jellyfish doesn't dictate its own path; rather, it is "current-borne, wave-flung, [and] tugged hugely by the whole might of the ocean," with the larger ecosystem of the ocean providing a natural rhythm for the jellyfish to follow.

This passage also introduces some of the Taoist ideas relevant to the rest of the novel. For instance, the ocean's natural rhythm symbolizes the natural rhythm of the universe—the *Tao*, or "Way," of Taoist tradition. The way the jellyfish allows itself to move according to the ocean's natural rhythm symbolizes the Taoist idea of *wu wei*, or effortless action. Practicing *wu wei* allows a person to live in accordance with the *Tao* while also providing them with an inner sense of reassurance and centeredness, which this passage illustrates through the power and protection the jellyfish internalizes by allowing itself to move along with the rest of the ocean: "hanging, swaying, pulsing, the most vulnerable and insubstantial creature, it has for its defense the violence and power of the whole ocean, to which it has entrusted its being, its going, and its will." The jellyfish is physically a "most vulnerable and insubstantial creature," but "entrust[ing] its being" to the ocean allows it to internalize the strength of the collective, interconnected ocean.

But this harmonious existence is threatened when "stubborn continents" emerge from the depths of the ocean and fragment the ocean ecosystem's coherent harmony. This symbolizes the chaos and suffering that can emerge when people engage in *deliberate* (as opposed to effortless) practices and behaviors that disrupt the universe's natural balance. In the novel, Dr. William Haber repeatedly and deliberately manipulates George Orr's effective dreams in an effort to improve the world, but his efforts are often accompanied by unintended, negative consequences, which symbolize the potential for chaos and suffering to occur when a person disturbs the universe's natural balance. This passage thus foreshadows the novel's narrative arc, with the peaceful jellyfish symbolizing George Orr as he wishes to exist, and the emerging continents symbolizing the devastating consequences of Haber's actions as he repeatedly alters the natural course of reality.

The passage's final line poses the question at the novel's core, which is: what will humans, whose conscious mind gives them the power to act deliberately—to make choices that either comply with or disrupt the universe's natural balance—do with that responsibility? Will they live in accordance with the *Tao* and be discerning and respectful with their actions, as Orr longs to do, or will they fall prey to Haber's poor choices, abuse the freedom consciousness affords them, and disrupt the natural workings of the universe? The final question posed in this passage, "what will the mind do, each morning, waking?" is the issue at the heart of the novel.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ "And the events of the mind, believe me, to me are facts. When you *see* another man's dream as he dreams it recorded in black and white on the electroencephalograph, as I've done ten thousand times, you don't speak of dreams as 'unreal.' They exist; they are events; they leave a mark behind them."

Related Characters: Dr. William Haber (speaker), George Orr

Related Themes:

Page Number: 13-14

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs during Orr's first therapy session with Haber. Haber is under the impression that Orr is suffering from a normal fear of dreaming (as opposed to the rather unusual situation involving effective dreams—dreams that change reality—that Orr is actually *involved in*), so Haber, a dream specialist, outlines his personal philosophy of dreams and the unconscious to Orr while discussing his plans for treating Orr's phobia.

Haber's philosophy opposes the idea that a person's unconsciousness is somehow less "real" because it occurs psychologically rather than in the exterior world. Haber's belief in the reality of the unconscious life is in line with the Taoist notion of the unconscious explored throughout the novel, which advocates for people to be more in touch with their unconscious, and to strive to act in ways that are in rhythmic consonance with the larger universe.

Where Haber's philosophy diverges from this Taoist position is in his treatment of the unconsciousness as something that ought to be raised from unconsciousness to consciousness—the idea that knowing something *consciously* makes it *more* real. This reflects Haber's rather Western, rational approach to knowledge and morality,

believing that humanity has a moral imperative to know all it can about the world, and for people to use this knowledge to *actively* improve the quality of life for humanity.

While Haber accepts the reality of the unconscious, regarding "the events of the mind" as "facts," he believes such facts are only true so long as they can be understood consciously. This is where Haber diverges from the views espoused by Orr and the novel as a whole, which argue that it's unwise and disruptive to the world's natural balance to try to bring such mysteries to the conscious surface. The Taoist views espoused by Orr and the novel also maintain that it's *consciousness* that muddles things and gives a person the ability to act in ways that disrupt the universe's natural balance, and Haber's attempts to "record in black and white" the mysterious activity of a person's unconscious mind contradict this view.

"Who am I to meddle with the way things go? And it's my unconscious mind that changes things, without any intelligent control. I tried autohypnosis but it didn't do any good. Dreams are incoherent, selfish, irrational—immoral, you said a minute ago. They come from the unsocialized part of us, don't they, at least partly?"

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs during Orr's first therapy session with Dr. Haber. Orr has just confided in Haber about his dreams' ability to change reality and begs Haber to cure him of this affliction.

Orr's desire not to dream effectively stems from his moral claim that it's not right for him "to meddle with the way things go." Orr's stance, which implies that the universe exists in a state of natural balance—that there is a "way things [naturally] go"—evokes a Taoist worldview, which dictates that the universe exists in a natural state of balance. This state can be disrupted by unnatural, deliberate actions, such as Orr's dreams, which make selective, unnatural alterations to reality.

Orr's view that he has no right to disrupt this natural state of balance implies that the universe's balance is achieved and maintained by the interconnected existence of all living beings within the universe, and that it's wrong for one person to exert power over those other things and alter the course of their existence: this is why he asks, rhetorically, "Who am I to meddle with the way things go?" Orr's views on the immorality of interfering with the universe's natural rhythm directly contradict those espoused by Haber, who believes humanity has a moral imperative to interfere with "the way things go" to improve the quality of life on Earth.

Orr's argument also establishes a sharp contrast between the moral standards and capacity for rationalization of the unconscious versus the conscious mind. Orr sees his dreams as being particularly problematic because all the changes they bring about are decided by his unconscious mind, which lacks the "intelligent control" of the conscious mind, and which is therefore "incoherent, selfish, irrational, [and] immoral." To Orr, the conscious mind's ability to determine the difference knowingly and deliberately between good and evil make it morally superior to the unconscious mind, which, in contrast, lacks such a capacity for reflection. The unconscious mind doesn't do anything deliberately—it simply reacts to stimuli and goes where it wants to go.

For people whose dreams have no impact on the real world, the "irrational," reactive unconscious presents no real problems, but Orr's unconscious becomes problematic when the dreams it produces lead to morally dubious consequences, such as when Orr's dislike of his Aunt Ethel caused him to dream that she perished in a car crash.

Goddamn but he wished he could afford an office with a window with a view!

Related Characters: Dr. William Haber, George Orr

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs immediately after Orr and Haber conclude Orr's first therapy session. Haber has just witnessed one of Orr's effective dreams transform the mural on his office wall from a photograph of Mount Hood to a photograph of a horse (that happens to look remarkably like Haber), and he's beginning to see the potential for transformation and power Orr's dreams could offer Haber's professional life, and the world at large.

The mural Orr transforms is significant because it symbolizes Haber's dissatisfaction with his professional status and economic position. He implicitly views the mural as an inadequate substitute for the "window with a view" he *would* have, should ever he become more important and better compensated for his work. Thus, the mural comes to represent everything Haber lacks and desires.

When Haber gives Orr hypnotic instructions to transform the mural on his wall, it shows that he wants to change the things in his life that he's unsatisfied with—in this situation, his lacking office, lacking paycheck, and lack of professional recognition. When Orr successfully changes the mural from depicting a photo of Mount Hood to a photo of a horse, it shows Haber the power Orr's dreams have to transform aspects of Haber's professional life. This possibility for transformation is made abundantly clear by the fact that the horse in the new mural resembles Haber: the mural literally depicts a transformed Haber.

When Haber kicks back in his office after Orr leaves that day and remarks on his desire to "afford an office with a window with a view," he implicitly remarks on his desire to use Orr's powers to make these desires a reality. Haber's comment foreshadows the way he will abuse Orr's power to make improvements to his own life in their future sessions.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ That geniality was not faked, but it was exaggerated. There was a warmth to the man, an outgoingness, which was real; but it had got plasticoated with professional mannerisms, distorted by the doctor's unspontaneous use of himself. Orr felt in him a wish to be liked and a desire to be helpful; the doctor was not, he thought, really sure that anyone else existed, and wanted to prove they did by helping them.

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

George Orr returns to Haber's office for his second Voluntary Therapeutic Treatment session (VTT). Haber greets him enthusiastically, and Orr reflects on the doctor's "exaggerated" personality. As is eventually revealed to be characteristic of the mild, centered George Orr, Orr gives Haber the benefit of the doubt, allowing that Haber's kindness isn't necessarily "faked," but purposefully "exaggerated" by Haber's "professional mannerisms." Still, there's deceptiveness to Haber's calculated use of "professional mannerisms," which show how deliberate Haber is about the image he presents to the world.

One important binary at play in the novel is the difference between deliberate action and effortless action, or *wu wei*, which is a Taoist concept that describes how the practice of effortless action allows a person to act in accordance with the *Tao*, or "Way," and uphold the natural balance of the universe. In contrast, deliberate, calculated actions, such as Haber's "unspontaneous use of himself," have the potential to offset this natural balance. In emphasizing Haber's calculated, deliberate way of holding himself and engaging with the world, Orr implicitly establishes Haber's worldviews as incompatible with the Taoist worldviews the novel espouses.

Before Haber emerged from his office to greet Orr, Orr observed a "plasticoated" desk in Haber's office, and Orr reuses the word now in his description of Haber, implying that Haber's office may be seen as a reflection of Haber himself. This idea holds true for the remainder of the novel: as Haber uses Orr's dreams to improve his professional and social status, for example, his office undergoes its own series of corresponding improvements, growing in size, location, and luxuriousness to reflect Haber's increasingly powerful—and increasingly corrupted—position in the world.

Lastly, Orr's observation that Haber seems to help people in order to "prove" their existence construes Haber as a selfish character. Haber might present himself as being a dedicated researcher with humanitarian aims, but beneath this exterior is a self-centeredness that threatens to corrupt his otherwise well-intentioned goals. Haber's self-centeredness provides another example of how his worldviews are incompatible with Taoism, which emphasizes an equal, interconnected relationship between all living beings. In contrast, Haber's self-interest causes him to view himself as the center of the universe, rather than a single, indistinguishable part of an interconnected whole.

❝ "I am sure now that your therapy lies in this direction, to use your dreams, not to evade and avoid them. To face your fear and, with my help, see it through. You're afraid of your own mind, George."

Related Characters: Dr. William Haber (speaker), George Orr

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

In Orr's second session with Dr. Haber, Orr has an effective dream in which his unconscious affirmatively responds to Haber's hypnotic suggestions to return the appearance of the mural on Haber's office wall to depict Mount Hood once more. Haber is aware of the power of Orr's dreams but hides his awareness from Orr in order to continue using Orr's dreams without raising Orr's suspicions.

To keep Orr's suspicions at bay, Haber uses vague, often metaphorical language to describe his plans for Orr's treatment, which is what he's doing here when he claims that Orr's "therapy lies in this direction, to use [his] dreams, not to evade and avoid them." Haber's words are ambiguous, which allows him to be simultaneously candid and deceptive about how, exactly, he plans to "use" Orr's dreams. Interpreted literally, Haber's words reveal his intentions "to use [Orr's] dreams" to improve his own standing and accomplish certain humanitarian feats, all of which could not be accomplished if Orr insists that he "evade and avoid [his dreams]" by making Haber cure him of his ability to dream effectively. Such an interpretation can only be possible, however, if Orr assumes that Haber *knows* about his ability: Haber couldn't have plans to literally "use" Orr's dreams if he doesn't know what the dreams are capable of being used for.

Interpreted figuratively, though, Haber's words don't necessarily betray his awareness of Orr's power, since "us[ing]" the dreams can have looser, more psychological implications, such as Orr "us[ing]" the dreams to understand himself more fully, and to use that understanding to become more in touch with his emotions, thereby improving his mental health. In this latter interpretation, Haber's plans for the trajectory of Orr's "therapy" is exactly the sort of thing a psychiatrist would say to a patient who *doesn't* have Orr's ability, but who is simply afraid of their dreams because of some underlying neurosis.

Haber is purposefully ambiguous in his wording in order to confuse and deny Orr the confirmation he so desperately desires: to know that he's not crazy—that his dreams really do change reality, and that others can see these changes, too. Denying Orr the confirmation he longs for is cruel, but it also strategically maintains and heightens the unequal power dynamic that exists between Orr and Haber, since Haber is a reputable sleep researcher and Orr is a mental patient whose drug addiction requires him to see Haber or else face incarceration.

Chapter 4 Quotes

"I know he means well. It's just that I want to be cured, not used."

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Heather Lelache, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

Orr meets with a lawyer named Heather Lelache for the first time, in search of help terminating his sessions with Haber. He explains to Heather that Haber is exploiting his effective dreams to change reality, though he gives Haber the benefit of the doubt, allowing that Haber likely "means well," since his reasons for manipulating Orr's dreams seem to stem from a desire to change the world for the better. Still, Orr's main complaint is that he doesn't want to be the means Haber engages to meet a particular end: he doesn't want to be involved at all.

This passage emphasizes Orr's function as something to be "used" by Haber: as a means for Haber to accomplish an end. In referring to himself as a tool to be "used" by Haber, Orr implicitly builds a case against the Utilitarian worldview that Haber uses to justify many of his actions throughout the novel. Utilitarianism is a philosophy which argues that a person should practice actions that produce the greatest amount of happiness, or well-being, while minimizing the greatest amount of suffering. Utilitarianism is commonly criticized for the uneven emphasis it places on consequence above action. Orr's critique of Haber's treatment conveys this criticism, drawing attention to the exploitative means by which Haber brings about positive ends: Haber might "mean[] well" when he tries to use Orr's effective dreams to create social improvements, but such improvements are only possible if Haber exploits his patient, which, to Orr's mind, undercuts whatever good intentions fueled Haber's actions in the first place.

Chapter 5 Quotes

A person is defined solely by the extent of his influence over other people, by the sphere of his interrelationships; and morality is an utterly meaningless term unless defined as the good one does to others, the fulfilling of one's function in the sociopolitical whole.

Related Characters: Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 53

Explanation and Analysis

Haber arrives at his office at the Oregon Oneirological Institute (which now exists, and of which he is now the director, because Haber used Orr's effective dreams to enact both of these changes) and contemplates the significance of his role as a psychiatrist. He explains how, despite having many new responsibilities in his role as director of the Institute, he keeps one patient (Orr) to remind himself of the way his research and medical treatment affect others.

Haber means for the observation he makes in this passage to convey his commitment to using his research and expertise to improve the psychological conditions of "the sociopolitical whole," as well as his altruistic aspirations more broadly. This passage very clearly outlines the Utilitarian ethics at the core of Haber's worldview, and the set of personal and professional ethical guidelines to which he answers. To Haber, a person's "function in the sociopolitical whole," essentially their life's purpose, is measured in terms of "the good one does to others," and, by extension, the bad they take away from others as well. This is very much in line with Utilitarianism's basic premise, which is that a person should calibrate their actions to result in the maximization of happiness and the minimization of suffering.

However, there are a few details that betray a selfishness in Haber's mostly well-intentioned desire to help humanity. Firstly, Haber speaks of doing good "to others" rather than "for others." There's a unidirectional, aggressive connotation to Haber's desire to be helpful, which suggests that he helps people for self-serving reasons, or perhaps only to *appear* to be good. Haber's repeated references to other people support this latter claim: he seems obsessed with other people witnessing his helpfulness. In fact, he seems unable to conceive of himself outside of his relationships to others, going so far as to claim that a person hardly exists outside of "his influence over other people," or "by the sphere of his interrelationships." It's possible, then, that Haber's outward acts of "good[ness]" are in fact self-serving, since he uses them to "define[]" and see himself rather than to do good for its own sake.

Secondly, Haber's claim that "a person is defined solely by the extent of his influence over other people" proposes an asymmetrical distribution of power, wherein a person's power is measured in terms of the power they have "over other people." Haber's concept of power and worth is based on having power over others. It pits people against each other, insinuating that any power a person gains is gained at the expense of someone else. Haber's observation about power and "influence" foreshadows the way selfishness and a thirst for power will eventually corrupt his otherwise well-intentioned desire to make the world a better place. It also shows how his worldview contradicts the ideas espoused by the novel's protagonist, George Orr, who eventually reaches an understanding that people have more fulfilling, meaningful lives when they relinquish control and live among others in an environment that fosters equality, mutual empowerment, and free will.

> "To a better world!" Dr. Haber said, raising his glass to his creation, and finished his whisky in a lingering, savoring swallow.

Related Characters: Dr. William Haber (speaker), George Orr, Heather Lelache

Related Themes:

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

Haber sits alone in his office after Heather Lelache and Orr have left. He's just given the hypnotized Orr suggestions to have an effective dream that solves the world's overpopulation problem, and Orr's unconscious responded by dreaming into reality a plague that kills six billion people. Haber sits in his office and gives a personal toast to all the good "his creation" has accomplished for humanity.

That Haber toasts the Plague shows that he regards it as a cause for celebration rather than mourning. Haber makes his position clear when he toasts to "a better world!" Further, his interpretation of the destruction of six billion lives as a "creation," rather than a loss, implies that he values the improved quality of life a controlled population will create more than the loss of six billion people. In Utilitarian terms, Haber believes that solving the overpopulation problem maximizes happiness and minimizes suffering. Such a perspective, of course, is subjective, since it's told from the view of someone who survived the Plague rather than someone who suffered from and succumbed to illness as a result of it.

Besides this, the fact that Haber refers to the Plague as "his creation" shows his willingness to claim ownership of it. While he "savor[s]" his whiskey, he also savors the

accomplished feeling of being personally responsible for solving Earth's pressing overpopulation problem. Haber might want to believe that his altruism is motivated by a desire to do good, but the obvious pride he conveys in this passage as he "savor[s]" his whiskey shows that he's also happy to bask in the glory of his successes. The self-satisfaction Haber conveys in this celebratory scene shows that Haber's humanitarian efforts are motivated by selfishness, undercutting his accomplishments.

will draws attention to the incompatibility of these competing ideas and emphasizes the gravity of Orr's decision to compromise his personally held convictions (in this instance, a strict adherence to inaction). Though Orr doesn't immediately or directly act on the impulse he expresses here, this scene lays the foundation for the single, big action Orr undertakes at the very end of the novel, which is to press the Augmentor's "OFF" button, stop Haber's effective dream, and save the world.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ He must act, he had to *act*. He must refuse to let Haber use him any longer as a tool. He must take his destiny into his own hands.

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

Orr returns to his apartment after participating in a therapy session with Haber that resulted in Orr's dreaming of a plague that killed six billion people. The Plague seems to be the last straw for Orr, who vows to "refuse to let Haber use him any longer as a tool."

Orr is fully committed to remaining passive, so this is a big moment for the development of his character (though not much comes of Orr's outcry, since he returns to Haber's office the next day and continues to be used as "a tool"). Here, Orr decides to forgo his commitment to inaction, choosing to "act" deliberately to offset the actions of Haber, whose continued meddling in Orr's dreams, Orr believes, is immoral, an abuse of power, and interfering gravely with the natural balance of the universe. Haber's action of coercing Orr into dreaming of solving the world's overpopulation problem has led to the deaths of billions of people, and Orr believes that if he continues to allow Haber to use him "as a tool" for much longer, future tragedies are likely to occur. Thus, Orr justifies his rare use of deliberate action on the grounds that it's the lesser of two evils.

Orr's statement that "he must take his destiny into his own hands" is rather paradoxical. By definition, a person's destiny is what is predestined to happen to them: it's not something a person can "take [...] into his own hands" and mold according to their specifications. The juxtaposition of "destiny" with the opposing idea of personal agency or free

❝ "You speak as if that were some kind of general moral imperative." He looked at Orr with his genial, reflective smile, stroking his beard. "But in fact, isn't that man's very purpose on earth—to do things, change things, run things, make a better world?"

Related Characters: Dr. William Haber (speaker), George Orr

Related Themes:

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs during Orr's VTT session with Haber in which Orr responds to Haber's prompt to dream of world peace by dreaming of an Alien invasion that forces all of Earth's nations to join together to defeat a common, unearthly foe. Orr and Haber engage in an argument in which Orr defends his commitment to inaction against Haber's call for action. Here, Haber condemns Orr's commitment to inaction, arguing "that man's very purpose on earth [is] to do things, change things, run things, [and] make a better world." Haber's argument justifies his own meddling in Orr's dreams. In claiming that it's "man's very purpose" to practice actions aimed at "mak[ing] a better world," Haber justifies his actions of coercing Orr into dreaming of circumstances that absolve the world of the problems that plague it most, like overpopulation and global conflict.

The position Haber takes here advocates for a commitment to Utilitarian ethics, wherein a person has an obligation to act in ways that maximize happiness and minimize suffering. Haber's position is also a rebuttal to the position Orr establishes just before this passage, in which Orr claims that it's unethical of Haber to use his effective dreams to change the world, since doing so interferes with the universe's natural balance.

One issue with Haber's stance is that it assumes an individual is even capable of knowing, with any degree of certainty, which "things" must be done to "make a better world" in the first place. Haber believes that humans are rational creatures whose capacity for understanding is limitless—and that this capacity gives them an obligation not only to understand, but then to use that understanding to make choices and employ actions that will improve the world. The problem with Haber's position is that it relies on humans understanding *objectively* things that are in fact subjective—such as what actions will create a universally better world. The flaw in Haber's logic illustrates a common critique of Utilitarianism, which is that the subjectivity of happiness makes it difficult, if not impossible, to quantify.

"I don't know. Things don't have purposes, as if the universe were a machine, where every part has a useful function. What's the function of a galaxy? I don't know if our life has a purpose and I don't see that it matters. What does matter is that we're a part. Like a thread in a cloth or a grass-blade in a field. It is and we are. What we do is like wind blowing on the grass."

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

During one of Orr's VTT sessions, he and Haber argue back and forth about their opposing positions on interfering with fate. Here, Orr rejects Haber's position that people have a clear purpose to make the world a better place, taking issue with the premise that people have "purposes" in the first place.

Orr believes that Haber's view inaccurately portrays the universe as "a machine, where every part has a useful function." To Orr, thinking about human beings in terms of their usefulness ignores the bigger picture of how the universe is composed in the first place. Orr's conception of the universe is that humans—and every other living creature—are "a part" of a larger whole, "like a thread in a cloth or a grass-blade in a field." It's not the idea that any individual "thread" or "grass-blade" has a particular purpose that's important, but that each "thread" fulfills part of a collective purpose by its mere existence as part of that larger whole. "It is and we are," says Orr, alluding to the interconnected relationship of parts to the universal whole.

Orr implicitly evokes Taoist ideas to make his claim, arguing that all creatures exist in order to create and maintain the universe's natural balance. He suggests that thinking of people in terms of having individual purposes is incompatible with a view of the universe as a collective whole, since the former view values the individual over the collective and fragments the universe into separate, different creatures made and kept different by their disparate responsibilities. Orr values interconnectedness and effortless existence over deliberately and consciously practicing actions aimed at fulfilling a purpose.

The end justifies the means. But what if there never is an end? All we have is means.

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

During one of Orr's VTT sessions, Orr and Haber debate whether a person has an obligation to act to improve the world, or a responsibility not to act, but simply to leave things to chance. This passage occurs after Haber brings the debate to an immediate halt by injecting Orr with a drug to lower his resistance to hypnosis. As Orr loses consciousness, he considers inwardly the difficulty of identifying the consequential "end" a person might invoke to justify carrying out a prescribed "means." Because the "end" exists only in the future, it's uncertain and perpetually subject to debate. In contrast, a person possesses full control over which "means" they enact, and which logic—which end—they will use to justify those means. In effect, a person may continuously employ a "means" to justify some yet unreachable "end," which is exactly the sort of logic that Orr believes Haber is using to justify his unceasing exploitation of Orr's effective dreams.

Haber claims to be using Orr's dreams to make the world a better place and improve humanity's quality of life, but the improvements he manages to make are never enough to satisfy him, and he consistently finds new areas for improvement. It's not enough for Haber to eliminate overpopulation, for example, so he redirects his attention toward improving the *immunity* of the population that remains after the Plague by enacting changes aimed at eliminating hereditary diseases. The supposed "end" Haber

wishes to achieve—a better world—remains perpetually just out of reach, which allows him to justify his continued exploitation of Orr.

Orr's perspective also underscores the way unpredictability complicates Haber's position. In order for a person to carry out a "means" ethically, they would need to know, with certainty, that those means will achieve a particular end. The observations Orr makes in this passage highlight the impossibility of acting with such certainty "But what if there never is an end" refers to the limitations of human knowledge. If "an end" is the predictable consequence of an action, a person won't ever have "an end," because they can't predict the future. "All we have is means" implies that all humanity has to work with is immediate action. The consequence, or "end," that Haber claims to use to justify his "means" is unknowable, unqualifiable, and speculative at best.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ The infinite possibility, the unlimited and unqualified wholeness of being of the uncommitted, the nonacting, the uncarved: the being who, being nothing but himself, is everything. Briefly she saw him thus, and what struck her most, of that insight, was his strength. He was the strongest person she had ever known, because he could not be moved away from the center. And that was why she liked him.

Related Characters: Heather Lelache, Dr. William Haber, George Orr

Related Themes:

Page Number: 96

Explanation and Analysis

Heather arrives at Orr's leased cabin in the Siuslaw National Forest, where Orr is currently hiding out to prevent Haber from exploiting his effective dreams. Heather is suddenly struck by the strength required of Orr to defend himself and his morals against Haber. Orr's rejection of Haber is rooted in his belief that humanity shouldn't interfere with fate. In contrast to Haber, Orr assumes a fierce commitment to inaction, and it's this inaction—and Orr's commitment to it—that Heather commends here.

Heather describes Orr's commitment to his personal morals as a reflection of his "wholeness," admiring his refusal to allow influences such as Haber, greed, ambition, and broader society to corrupt his morals and fragment his personal identity. In place of a corrupted, fragmented sense of self, Heather sees a whole, untouched quality to Orr: "the uncommitted, the nonacting, the uncarved: the being who, being nothing but himself, is everything," she observes. Heather's description paints Orr's "nonacting" quality in a positive light, acknowledging the strength that's required not to act or stray from one's moral center in a world full of corrupting influences. Heather's opinion directly opposes Haber's assessment of Orr, which construes Orr's inaction as a sign of moral inferiority or cowardice. To Heather, Orr's inaction isn't a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength: of Orr's ability to use his power sparingly and responsibly.

Another important feature of Heather's description of Orr is its use of paradox. Heather claims that, by "being nothing but himself," Orr becomes "everything." Heather's assessment draws on the Taoist idea that all living creatures are part of the interconnected universe and that, by extension, these creatures *are* the universe. When Heather states that Orr is "nothing but himself," she means that Orr's understanding of himself—his identity—is determined by nothing else besides his mere existence.

Lastly, Heather's comment about Orr "not being moved away from the center" evokes the Taoist principle of the *Tao*, or "Way," which can refer to the center or middle path that a person must take to live in accordance with the *Tao* and maintain the universe's natural balance. Heather's belief that Orr "could not be moved away from the center" draws on his unwavering commitment to his personal ethics, his continued attempts to subdue Haber, and the calm, centered quality of his demeanor.

❝ "Things are more complicated than he's willing to realize. He thinks you can make things come out right. And he tries to use me to make things come out right, but he won't admit it; he lies because he won't look straight, he's not interested in what's true, in what is, he can't see anything except his mind—his ideas of what ought to be."

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Dr. William Haber, Heather Lelache

Related Themes:

Page Number: 100-101

Explanation and Analysis

Orr and Heather are at Orr's leased cabin in the Siuslaw

National Forest, where Orr is hiding from Haber to prevent him from using his effective dreams. Orr informs Heather about some of his reasons for disapproving of Haber's meddling with his effective dreams. Orr addresses the way Haber's personal ambition and subjective "ideas of what ought to be" blind him to the truth and cause him to behave deceptively: the way Haber's unwavering commitment to Utilitarian ethics—and an overinflated ego—convince him that he "can make things come out right" by undertaking the actions he believes will improve humanity's quality of life. But the truth is that Haber's actions often create just as much harm as good. So fixated is Haber on "his ideas of what ought to be" that he fails to see the negative consequences of his actions—or refuses to take responsibility for them.

For example, when Haber attempts to use Orr's effective dreams to create world peace, the unconscious Orr successfully dreams away the war in the Near East, but he replaces this earthly conflict with an Alien invasion of the moon. Haber responds to this unintended consequence by pretending it never happened—or at least, that neither his hypnotic instructions, nor Orr's effective dreams, were responsible for its creation. In fact, at this point in the novel, Haber has yet to acknowledge to Orr that he even *knows* Orr's power exists. Every time Orr mentions his affliction in passing or attempts to confront Haber about the way he exploits Orr's dreams, Haber pretends not to know what Orr's talking about and launches into a psychobabble-laden spiel to maintain the illusion that the "therapy" Orr is undergoing is a perfectly legitimate process for someone suffering from a simple fear of dreaming. This is what Orr is describing when he states that Haber "tries to use [him] to make things come out right, but he won't admit it."

Haber's reasons for lying are complex and not completely knowable. The explanation Orr offers Heather is that "Haber lies because he won't look straight," that "he's not interested in what's true, in what is," and that "he can't see anything except his mind—his ideas of what ought to be." What Orr is saying here is that Haber's lies are not quite lies, but a sort of willful ignorance: an attempt on Haber's part to distance himself from his failure to make Orr's dreams produce the exact changes he wants them to produce. Haber chooses not to acknowledge his failures because such failures are incompatible with "his ideas of what ought to be," which might refer to the vision of the world Haber thinks "ought to" exist," *or* to Haber's vision of himself as a brilliant, infallible scientist.

Orr's claim that Haber "can't see anything except his mind—his ideas of what ought to be" shows how Haber disregards all ideas that do not confirm his own, which suggests that Haber sees his own mind as objectively superior to anyone else's. It follows, then, that Haber's egotism might make it difficult for him to admit to his failure: to entertain the possibility that the reason Orr's dreams continue to produce bad, unintentional results is Haber is giving Orr inadequate instructions for his dreams. In this light, Haber's consistent denial both of Orr's power and his own role in manipulating that power could be his attempt to distance himself from less-than-satisfactory work for which he doesn't want to take credit. Orr's depiction of Haber construes the doctor as too wrapped up in his own ambition to look beyond himself and recognize the way that ambition affects the outside world.

> She believed him, and denied her belief with fury. "So what? Maybe that's all it's ever been! Whatever it is, it's all right. You don't suppose you'd be allowed to do anything you weren't supposed to do, do you? Who the hell do you think you are! There is nothing that doesn't fit, nothing happens that isn't supposed to happen. Ever! What does it matter whether you call it real or dreams? It's all one—isn't it?"

Related Characters: Heather Lelache (speaker), George Orr

Related Themes:

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

Heather and Orr are at Orr's leased cabin in the Siuslaw National Forest, where Orr is hiding from Haber to prevent Haber from meddling with his effective dreams. Orr has just confided in Heather his dark, shameful secret that he dreamed the world back into existence after it was destroyed by nuclear war in April 1998. Orr believes that it was wrong to do so, since everyone was already dead, and the world they live in now can't possibly exist in light of this fact.

But Heather justifies Orr's choice to restore the world, arguing that his effective dreams are themselves part of the larger universe, and therefore incapable of throwing the universe entirely off balance: "you don't suppose you'd be allowed to do anything you weren't supposed to do, do you?" she asks Orr. Heather's decision to comfort Orr critiques his belief that he ought to be able to control his dreams and limit the impact they have on the world. In fact, she thinks such a view actually undermines Orr's claim not to want to interfere with fate, since deliberate, stubborn *inaction* can be just as obstructive to the universe as

deliberate action: "who the hell do you think you are!" she asks Orr, implying that his belief that he has the power to choose whether or not his dreams restore the world imbues him with the very Godlike quality he wants *not* to have. "There is nothing that doesn't fit, nothing happens that isn't supposed to happen," Heather assures Orr.

Heather's claims are intended to comfort Orr. They also show that she shares some of his worldviews, as she, too, seems to believe in a natural balance that regulates their collective universe, ensuring that "nothing happens that isn't supposed to happen" in the world. To Heather's mind, Orr's reality-changing dreams are valid and justified since the universe wouldn't allow for them to happen in the first place if they weren't "supposed" to exist.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ "I don't choose," Orr said. "Don't you see that yet? I follow."

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Dr. William Haber, Heather Lelache

Related Themes:

Page Number: 125

Explanation and Analysis

Orr and Haber are in Haber's office. Earlier that day, in an attempt to remove the Aliens from the moon, Orr had an effective dream while at his cabin with Heather, but the dream backfires when it moves the Alien invasion from the moon to the Earth. Haber asks Orr why he wouldn't simply choose to get rid of the Aliens altogether, and Orr responds simply that he doesn't "choose" what his dreams create; he simply "follow[s]." Haber mistakenly believes that Orr is referring to "follow[ing]" the hypnosuggestions Haber gives him to influence the content of Orr's effective dreams. Orr begins to explain what it is that he "follow[s]" but is cut off before he can finish.

What Orr is referring to here is the broader idea that he doesn't act on behalf of any personally held convictions—nor does he act on behalf of the convictions of Haber, who offers hypnotic input to influence Orr's actions. Rather, Orr "follow[s]," or reacts to a prompt. Orr's Taoist worldviews make him adamantly committed to inaction: to refusing to practice deliberate action and limiting his direct influence on the world as much as possible. Because Orr believes himself to be part of the larger, interconnected universe, every action he does commit must be a reaction to something else.

Orr's commitment to reaction over action assumes that the universe is inherently interconnected, and that this interconnectedness is what maintains the universe's natural balance. In limiting his actions to reactions—to an almost instinctual response to being acted upon—Orr ensures that every action he undertakes is the effortless, unconscious sort that allows a person, according to Taoist thought, to maintain universal balance. In contrast, Orr believes that choosing to act independently of some other stimulus—which is what Haber does when he messes with Orr's dreams unprovoked—offsets the universe's natural balance. This is what Orr means when he says he "follow[s]" rather than "choose[s]." To "choose" is to act deliberately, but to "follow" is to react unconsciously.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ During that terrifying day's journey from the cabin to embattled Portland, when they were bumping over a country road in the wheezing Hertz Steamer, Heather had told him that she had tried to suggest that he dream an improved Haber, as they had agreed. And since then Haber had at least been candid with Orr about his manipulations. Though candid was not the right word; Haber was much too complex a person for candor. Layer after layer might peel off the onion and yet nothing be revealed but more onion. That peeling off of one layer was the only real change in him, and it might not be due to an effective dream, but only to changed circumstances. He was so sure of himself now that he had no need to try to hide his purposes, or deceive Orr; he could simply coerce him.

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber, Heather Lelache

Related Themes:

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

Orr reflects on whether Heather's hypnotic instruction for him to "dream an improved Haber" has actually changed Haber's personality. Heather intended for Orr's dream to create a kinder, more well-intentioned Haber, but this doesn't seem to be the case. The main difference is that Haber is now "candid with Orr about his manipulations." Prior to the Haber-altering dream, Haber had been deceptive about his exploitation of Orr's dreams, discussing his plans for Orr's treatment in intentionally ambiguous language to conceal his plans to use Orr's dreams to change the world. Now, though, Haber is upfront with Orr about

using his effective dreams. Still, Haber's new "candor" is mostly symbolic, since the "changed circumstances" he's created for himself throughout the sessions he's spent manipulating Orr's dreams have made him powerful enough to "simply coerce Orr" into treatment.

Orr compares Haber to an onion that consists only of "layer after layer" of superficiality, and that lacks an interior life and a moral core. To Orr, Haber's candor is just another one of his public performances—another layer he dons or sheds with calculated precision in order to rise to whatever the occasion requires of him.

"You are afraid of *losing your balance*. But change need not unbalance you; life's not a static object, after all. It's a process. There's no holding still. Intellectually you know that, but emotionally you refuse it. Nothing remains the same from one moment to the next, you can't step into the same river twice. Life—evolution—the whole universe of space/time, matter/energy—existence itself—is essentially change."

"That is one aspect of it," Orr said. "The other is stillness."

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 139

Explanation and Analysis

Haber and Orr argue over whether Orr has a moral imperative to use his dreams to change society for the better, as Haber argues, or to do everything in his power to keep his dreams from interfering with the natural state of the universe, as Orr argues. Haber accuses Orr of not wanting to use his dreams or interrogate his unconscious mind out of a fear of "losing [his] balance." He thinks that Orr's passive stance reflects an underlying fear of "change" rather than an ingrained respect for the collective universe's ability to maintain itself without Orr's interference.

Haber and Orr's disagreement is rooted in their fundamentally different ideas about the nature of the universe. Haber believes that "the whole universe of space/time, matter/energy—existence itself—is essentially change," justifying the changes Orr enacts through his dreams. Orr maintains the view that "stillness" is just as essential a part of the universe as "change," and that both exist in a complementary and balanced opposition, like the Taoist concept of *yin* and *yang*. Orr's belief that "stillness" is an essential part of the universe doesn't so much contradict Haber's description of what the universe is, but instead challenges the additional assertion that Haber can dictate what the universe *should* be.

Haber believes that the universe exists in a state of perpetual change and, as a result, he believes that the way to maintain this balance is to participate actively in this state of change, taking steps to propel the world forward by deliberately trying to improve it. Haber's worldview is bolstered by the Utilitarian idea that people should act in ways aimed at improving humanity's quality of life by maximizing happiness and minimizing suffering. His worldview is also bolstered by the Western notion that progressive change and rationalism are the best path forward.

In contrast, Orr believes that the universe does not exist in a perpetual state of change; rather, he believes that the forces of change and stillness both act upon the universe, and that balance is therefore achieved through a combination of both. To Orr, action and inaction are necessary to maintain universal balance, and the unceasingly forward motion of progress Haber wishes to impose on the earth with Orr's dreams will disrupt the universe's balance rather than maintain it.

"Volcanoes emit fire."

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

"Volcanoes emit fire" are Orr's parting words to Haber before excusing himself from Haber's office at the conclusion of one of their final VTT sessions together. During this session, Haber hooks up Orr to the Augmentor while he's awake for the first time, which results in Orr having a dream in which he speaks to an Alien who advises him on how to navigate the dream world, telling him a word he can use to travel safely through troubled dreams, as well as other cryptic and symbolic words of wisdom that pertain to the dream world. One of these is the warning that "volcanoes emit fire."

Orr feels comforted and recentered following his experiences with the dream Alien and is emboldened enough to tell Haber more forcefully that he's tired of being used and exploited. Orr and Haber eventually segue into an intense moral argument in which Haber advocates for his usual stance—that he has an obligation to society to use Orr's special power to make the world a better place. Orr rejects Haber's premise on the grounds that people are entitled to control the direction of their lives. This goes back and forth until Haber informs Orr of his plans to induce an effective dream in himself—without the use of Orr's brain as an intermediary. Haber's plan alarms Orr, who recognizes the risk of this undertaking and is disturbed by Haber's increasingly grandiose declarations casting himself as God-like. In response, Orr offers a final word of advice, which he borrows from the Alien he spoke to earlier that session: "volcanoes emit fire."

Orr's advice alludes to the potential danger of consciousness. A volcano is a mountain that has woken from its dormant, slumbering state of unconsciousness. The explosiveness and chaos of a volcano, especially when compared to the calm of the dormant mountain, suggests that there is a violence and unpredictability inherent to consciousness.

Haber, for example, repeatedly engages in conscious actions, exploiting Orr's dreams to forcibly change the world to reflect his perfect image of it. Haber's deliberate actions aren't natural or effortless: they're calculated attempts to improve his social status, wealth, and power, often at the expense of others. In this way, Haber's conscious actions "emit fire," since they enact chaotic and unpredictable consequences that harm the world and interfere with the universe's natural balance.

The image of the volcano also refers to the volcanic Mount Hood, which erupts after being bombed by the U.S. during the Alien invasion, and which is used throughout the novel as a symbol to gauge the condition of reality at any given moment. The first time Orr has an effective dream in Haber's office, he changes the mural of Mount Hood on the wall to depict an image of a horse that resembles Haber. This bizarre and unnatural occurrence symbolically marks the beginning of Haber's quest to destructively shape the world in his own image.

Orr's advice to Haber that "volcanoes emit fire" is his implicit reminder that Haber's actions have the ability to "emit fire" on the world—to result in destruction, chaos, and the disruption of natural balance. When Orr tells Haber that volcanoes emit fire, he is implicitly warning Haber to moderate his use of deliberate or conscious action.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ "They are of the dream time. I don't understand it, I can't say it in words. Everything dreams. The play of form, of being, is the dreaming of substance. Rocks have their dreams, and the earth changes … But when the mind becomes conscious, when the rate of evolution speeds up, then you have to be careful. Careful of the world. You must learn the way. You must learn the skills, the art, the limits. A conscious mind must be part of the whole, intentionally and carefully—as the rock is part of the whole unconsciously. Do you see? Does it mean anything to you?"

Related Characters: George Orr (speaker), Dr. William Haber, Heather Lelache, Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 167-168

Explanation and Analysis

Orr, Heather, and Haber sit in Haber's office at the HURAD Tower. Haber has just used the Augmentor to cure Orr of his ability to dream effectively. As Orr prepares to leave Haber's office for the last time, he offers Haber some final words of advice, much of which he's gleaned from his handful of talks with Aliens in the dream world, as well as through his interactions with waking Aliens, such as Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe.

The Aliens are able to dispense advice about how to navigate dreams because "they are of the dream time." It's not entirely clear what this means, but the details that Orr includes paint a picture of "the dream time" as similar to an interconnected, balanced universe. When Orr explains that "everything dreams," he depicts the dream world as a collection of seemingly disparate creatures who are interconnected in their shared experience of dreaming.

Orr implicitly draws a parallel between "the dream time" and the Taoist idea that the collective universe exists in accordance with a natural balance or rhythm, which carries the universe forward in time naturally, unconsciously, and effortlessly. "Dream time" evokes the unconscious and effortless state of dreaming, wherein one simply exists in the sway of the universe's natural rhythm. Orr expands on this claim when he cautions Haber that, "when the mind becomes conscious […] you have to be careful." Orr has learned from the Aliens that the unconscious mind causes "the rate of evolution" to "speed[] up," which interferes with the natural rhythm of the "dream time."

When Orr cautions Haber that he "must learn the way," he's explicitly referring to "the way" of the dream world, but "way" is also a common translation of the Taoist term "*Tao*." *Tao* is a complicated concept with many different interpretations, but it is broadly understood to refer to both the "way," or path a person walks if they are living a balanced, interconnected existence within the larger universe, as well as to that balance itself. Orr's advice to Haber, to "learn the way," suggests that Haber should reject the ego, ambition, and power that all motivate him to actively impose his will on reality.

❝ Destruction was not his line; and a machine is more blameless, more sinless even than any animal. It has no intentions whatsoever but our own.

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 174

Explanation and Analysis

Orr has just shut down and disconnected Haber from the Augmentor, effectively saving the world after Haber's failed attempt to induce an effective dream in himself morphs into an uncontrollable effective nightmare that causes reality to fragment and collapse into a state of incoherent chaos. The world would have ended, had Orr not managed to make it back to the HURAD Tower in time to disconnect Haber from the Augmentor, unleash Haber's dream's grip on reality, and restore the world to some semblance of normalcy.

It goes without saying that it's been a rough day for Orr, and in his wary, frustrated state, he entertains the notion of destroying the Augmentor, which has wreaked such havoc on him, Haber, and the billions of people whose lives were affected by all the changes Haber forced Orr to impart on the world with his effective dreams.

But Orr's desire to destroy the Augmentor is short-lived, as he acknowledges that "destruction [is] not his line." This reflects what is perhaps the most recognizable element of Orr's character, which is his adherence to passivity. Orr engages in deliberate action as infrequently as possible, and most often he only acts in response—that is, he reacts. In fact, Orr's action of pressing the button that turned off the Augmentor and ended Haber's dream is nearly the only forcible action he undertakes in the entire novel. This passage reaffirms Orr's commitment to living as passive an existence as possible.

This passage also explores the moral distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness. When Orr remarks that "a machine is more blameless, more sinless even than any animal" because "it has no intentions," he is reiterating the moral dangers inherent in active conscious choice and the superiority of a life lived in accordance with the *Tao*. In a way, Orr is not so different from the Augmentor itself, as both are passive tools manipulated by Haber as he imposes his intentions on the world.

❝ After a while the big body moved, and presently sat up. It was all slack and loose. The massive, handsome head hung between the shoulders. The mouth was loose. The eyes looked straight forward into the dark, into the void, into the unbeing at the center of William Haber; they were no longer opaque, they were empty.

Related Characters: George Orr, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Page Number: 174

Explanation and Analysis

As Haber's effective-dream-turned-nightmare causes coherent reality to splinter, Orr arrives at Haber's office just in time to disconnect him from the Augmentor, which creates a force that transports the two of them out of the HURAD Tower to a much junkier, nondescript office building.

Orr observes Haber's body, which lies slumped and motionless on a couch. Eventually, "the big body move[s], and presently [sits] up," though "it" remains "all slack and loose." The passage intentionally construes the figure that's lying on the couch as a body rather than a self, using the pronoun "it" rather than "he," and referring to "the massive, handsome head," "the shoulders," and "the mouth" as inert objects disconnected from any conscious self.

Another important detail in this passage is the description of Haber's eyes, which "look[] straight forward into the dark, into the void, into the unbeing at the center of William Haber; they were no longer opaque, they were empty." Orr often remarks on the "opaque" quality of Haber's eyes, a feature that frequently indicates that Haber is behaving deceptively or manipulatively toward him. The opacity of Haber's eyes is connected to one of his primary characteristics—his superficiality. Haber's ambitions are

driven primarily by a desire to maintain a particular appearance, whether that appearance be one of power, intellect, or magnanimity. But while one might be inclined to believe that the opacity of Haber's eyes conceals some interior life that he keeps hidden from the world, what this passage reveals is that Haber's opaque eyes aren't hiding *anything*—behind them exists only a dark, deep emptiness, which Orr describes as "the unbeing at the center of William Haber."

The failure of Haber's effective dream robs him of everything he'd relied on to give his life meaning: after Orr restores the world to the way it was before, Haber loses his luxurious office in the HURAD Tower, his job, and his status. Haber's failed effective dream causes him to lose his ideological grounding as well, since the unreality of the world he witnessed in his dream challenges everything he once believed about humanity's ability to rationally make sense of and control the world around it. Witnessing the world melt into incoherence shows Haber that there's a side of the world that cannot be calculated, quantified, and understood.

With the loss of his ideological grounding, job, status, and power, Haber is finally forced to come to terms with the fact that he has no center beneath his performed, exterior self, and the depths of "the unbeing" to which he has been reduced. The reason that Haber's eyes appear empty is because Haber *is* empty: devoid of the things he relied on to create a self without a center, he becomes nothing but an empty shell of a man.

Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ Orr slept. He dreamed. There was no rub. His dreams, like waves of the deep sea far from any shore, came and went, rose and fell, profound and harmless, breaking nowhere, changing nothing. They danced the dance among all the other waves in the sea of being. Through his sleep the great, green sea turtles dived, swimming with heavy, inexhaustible grace through the depths, in their element.

Related Characters: George Orr, E'nememen Asfah, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 178-179

Explanation and Analysis

E'nememen Asfah, an Alien Orr meets on the street the same night he saves reality from Dr. Haber's effective nightmare, invites Orr to his apartment. Orr and Asfah say "*Er' perrehnne*" to each other before Orr drifts off to sleep, and his ensuing dreams are calm, ineffective, and harmonious: "breaking nowhere, changing nothing." Orr's dreams now reflect the novel's opening scene, in which a jellyfish glides effortlessly through an open sea. In the earlier scene, the sea symbolizes the universe as it exists in a state of natural balance, and the movement of the jellyfish embodies the spontaneous, peaceful movement of *wu wei*, or "effortless action." The "profound and harmless" quality of Orr's present dream shows that he has regained the balance he'd lost in the struggle of trying to control his effective dreams, and trying to protect himself and the universe against Dr. Haber. The rhythmic sway of Orr's dream, "like waves," illustrates how Orr's dreams no longer have power over him since he's learned to let them wash over him effortlessly and unconsciously, in a motion that mimics the careless sway of the ocean tide.

The "great, green sea turtles" in Orr's dream represent the Aliens, who look exactly like sea turtles in the protective suits they must wear to breathe the Earth's air. The Aliens are "in their element" as they glide through the waves of Orr's dream, which symbolizes their vast knowledge of the dream world and of the unconscious. Orr's presence within this ocean of unconsciousness suggests that finally, he has regained the inner balance and peace he needs to "dance[] the dance among all the other waves in the sea of being," to participate effortlessly in the interconnected embrace of the balanced universe.

❝ "Take evening," the Alien said. "There is time. There are returns. To go is to return."

"Thank you very much," Orr said, and shook hand with his boss. The big green flipper was cool on his human hand. He went out with Heather into the warm, rainy afternoon of summer. The Alien watched them from within the glass-fronted shop, as a sea creature might watch from an aquarium, seeing them pass and disappear into the mist.

Related Characters: George Orr, E'nememen Asfah (speaker), Heather Lelache, Dr. William Haber

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 184

Explanation and Analysis

These are the last lines of the novel. E'nememen Asfah, Orr's employer at the Kitchen Sink, where he works as a designer, watches Orr and Heather leave the shop "and disappear into the mist" of the warm summer day. While the novel leaves Heather and Orr's future together unresolved, the passage's subtle water imagery provides the novel with thematic and formal closure.

The water imagery contained in this final passage evokes the watery setting of the novel's opening scene, in which a jellyfish glides effortlessly through the open sea. In the final scene, the mist and rain that dampen the air of the summer day symbolize the ocean, and Orr and Heather symbolize the jellyfish. The novel injects additional water imagery into the scene by comparing the glass storefront of Asfah's shop to an "aquarium," and Asfah, who, like all Aldebaranian Aliens, wears a protective suit of armor that resembles a sea turtle's shell, to a "sea creature."

The ocean of the novel's opening scene symbolizes the universe as it exists in its naturally balanced state, which in Taoism is called the *Tao*, or "Way." Everything that exists within the ocean ecosystem, including the jellyfish, lives in a state of interconnected harmony that is made possible and maintained by the collective ecosystem's natural evocation of the effortless, natural type of action (*wu wei*, or "effortless action") that supports this balanced state. The jellyfish of this opening scene finds strength and fulfillment through its participation in the larger system, though this doesn't last long, as continents emerge from the ocean's depths, fracturing the ocean's unity and transforming the formerly peaceful space into a land of chaos and confusion. The continents symbolize the devastating consequences of Dr. Haber's use of deliberate, calculated actions to exploit Orr's dreams to fundamentally alter the universe, and the scene ends on this discordant note, foreshadowing the chaos that will plague Orr's world for much of the novel.

The function of this final passage is to pick up where the opening scene left off, providing the closure and restoration of balance that's made possible by Haber's defeat and Orr's enlightenment. In the final moments of the novel, Heather and Orr become jellyfish, their easy, casual stroll through the mist of the summer's day reflecting the effortless action of the jellyfish gliding through the ocean's waves in Chapter 1. They're on their way to a coffee date, but neither has any set expectations about what will come of it; in fact, in this final iteration of the universe, Heather isn't even aware that her romance with Orr ever existed. Regardless, both characters are happy to go where life takes them and enjoy each other's company regardless of their future together.

The novel's narrative arc follows a path from balance to chaos and back to balance once more, and this symmetrical journey is underscored by the symmetry of the opening and closing scenes. After Orr successfully subdues Haber, learns to accept his dreams, and embraces a more effortless, centered existence, the universe regains the balance it lost when continents emerged from its waters. The metaphorical sea creatures of this closing scene—Heather, Orr, and Asfah—are free to roam the ocean's depths in an effortless fashion once more.

The restored "ocean" is reflected in the balance and interconnectedness that permeate every aspect of this new world. There are no disparate, separate spaces: Orr and Heather exit Asfah's watery "aquarium" of a shop and enter a similarly watery atmosphere of mist and rain. There is no separation of species: the image of Asfah's "big green flipper" against Orr's "human hand" reflects the harmonious coexistence of the Alien and human species. Finally, Asfah's parting words to Orr evoke the natural, balanced rhythm of the ocean. "There is time," says Asfah, "there are returns. To go is to return." The oscillating motion Asfah evokes in his message that "to go is to return" mimics the sway of the ocean's waves.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

An omniscient narrator describes a **jellyfish** swimming through the **sea**. The vulnerable creature gathers strength from the vast ocean that surrounds it. But land masses impede the ocean, interrupting the "endless cycle" of its tides. The narrator asks what the jellyfish will do when it is thrust onto land, and "what will the mind do, each morning, waking?"

The sea and the jellyfish symbolize the Taoist concepts of Tao *("Way") and* wu wei *("effortless action"), respectively. The water symbolizes the* Tao*—the balanced universe—and the jellyfish symbolizes the harmonious existence of a creature practicing effortless action* (wu wei) *to maintain that universal balance. The rhythmic, instinctual motion of the ocean's tides mimics the natural, unceasing rhythm by which the universe achieves and maintains a state of natural balance. The emerging continents symbolize the destructive and disruptive effect that deliberate, conscious action (the opposite of effortless action) has on the universe. Just as the continents cut through and disrupt the natural "endless cycle" of the ocean's tides, so too does the practice of deliberate, conscious action disrupt the natural rhythm established through effortless, unconscious action. Here, the continents disrupt the jellyfish's effortless, peaceful journey through the water when they thrust it onto land. When the novel compares the act of waking to the jellyfish being thrust onto land (and presumably left for dead), it positions the waking, conscious mind as dangerous and unpredictable in comparison to the sleeping, unconscious mind of watery effortless action.*

The narrative shifts to a man with burned eyelids. He's restrained by fallen blocks of concrete. Once the blocks are gone, he can move again, and he sits up. He's sitting on some cement steps, and there's a dandelion near his hand. Eventually, the man stands up, though he's very ill from radiation sickness. The man walks toward the door of a small, cramped room and staggers down a long hallway.

It's unclear if the man's burned eyelids are symbolic or literal. This scene is rather odd and fantastical: the man seems to be in a chaotic, apocalyptic setting, yet when he physically rises, he's in the comparatively normal setting of a room situated at the end of a hallway. Since the narrative referenced waking from a dream in the earlier scene, one can speculate that the apocalyptic setting in which this scene begins is the man's dream, and the subsequent bedroom setting is where the man is when he wakes up from that dream.

Mannie, the elevator guard, asks the man if he's drunk or on drugs. The man denies being intoxicated and talks about being sick and unable to find the key to unlock the door to his dreams. The man struggles to breathe, and Mannie tells him the medic is coming, though the "**roaring seas**" drown out his voice.

The man's odd response to Mannie might suggest that the man actually is on drugs. This would also explain the burned eyelids and cement block imagery present in the preceding scene: they could either be drug-induced hallucinations, or drug-induced nightmares. Throughout the novel, water symbolizes the Taoist concepts of Tao *and* wu wei *("effortless action"). The novel also explores the ways in which the content and development of dreams mimic the natural, spontaneous movement of effortless action, so the fact that the narrator can't hear Mannie over the "roaring seas" symbolically suggests that the man can't hear Mannie because he's slipping into unconsciousness—the place where dreams occur.*

The medic arrives and gives the man an injection to stop him from overdosing. The man says he's been using drugs for a couple months now. The medic knows that the man must've borrowed other people's Pharmacy Cards to get the pills and urges him to identify the people whose cards he used—it's just a formality, nobody will get in trouble, and the worst that will happen to the man is he'll have to undergo Voluntary Therapeutic Treatment (VTT).

VTT is hardly "voluntary," since the man seems to have no other option but to participate in this course of treatment. The social or legal acceptability of coercive treatment says something about the kind of society this man lives in: it seems rather dystopian, bleak, and authoritarian.

The man refuses to give any names, and the medic warns him that he'll be jailed or sent away to undergo Obligatory Therapy if he doesn't cooperate. Mannie lies and tells the medic that he loaned his card to the man, whom he calls George.

Whether or not he's telling the truth about loaning George his Pharmacy Card, Mannie's decision to cover for George presents compassion toward others as an antidote to authoritarian power.

The medic and Mannie advise George to take it easy and stay inside, though there's not much reason to go outside, anyway: the GPRT drivers are striking, hundreds of kids from "Basic Support" families have kwashiorkor, and the government can't seem to do anything about any of it.

The dystopian world in which the novel takes place is characterized by workers' unrest, systemic poverty, extreme starvation (kwashiorkor is a severe form of malnutrition), and government ineptitude. It's clear that all is not well in this society and there's much room for improvement.

CHAPTER 2

Dr. William Haber's windowless office is located in the Efficiency Suite of the Willamette East Tower. Haber doesn't have a real view of **Mount Hood**, but there's a photographic mural of the mountain on one of the walls. Haber, a psychiatrist, asks his receptionist, Penny, to send in his next patient, Orr, when he arrives. Haber observes the blue sky and snow in the mural and wonders if the photo was taken in the 1960s or 1970s, before the Greenhouse Effect robbed Portland of blue skies and snowy peaks.

The fact that Haber is only granted an indirect view of Mount Hood in the form of a mural (as opposed to a direct view of Mount Hood through a window) suggests that he's not an important enough doctor to receive a nice office with a view. Haber's observation about the blue sky and snowy peak gives more information about the novel's world: not only is there food scarcity and extreme poverty, but the population likely suffers from the effects of climate change, too.

George Orr arrives. He's dressed unremarkably and sports a conventional hairstyle with a short beard. He's "slightly undernourished," though he appears to be in relatively good health otherwise. Haber thinks Orr is "unaggressive, placid, milquetoast, repressed, conventional."

George Orr is the addict from Chapter 1. Haber appears to be the doctor with whom he will undergo therapy. Orr's "slightly undernourished" figure suggests that the overpopulation and food scarcity that plague his world are so bad that people don't have adequate access to food. Haber's comments about Orr's "unaggressive" and "conventional" appearance make Orr seem unintimidating and weak. Haber's description implies that he feels superior to his patient.

Sensing Orr's anxiety, Haber assumes a welcoming demeanor as he goes over Orr's patient history, which notes a history of drug abuse and a recommendation for VTT. Haber asks Orr if he has bad dreams, and a look of terror appears across Orr's face.

Haber's responsiveness to Orr's anxiety seems like a calculated attempt to maintain psychological control over their session together. Orr's terrified response to Haber's question about dreams implies that dreams have something to do with Orr's drug use.

Haber tells Orr that he's an oneirologist—a dream specialist—and guesses, correctly, that Orr had been using drugs to stop dreaming. Haber stresses the importance of the "dreaming state," or "d-state," explaining that a person who deprives themselves of dreams can become irritable, unfocused, and delusional. Haber invites Orr to talk about his bad dreams.

Haber regards dreaming and being in touch with one's unconscious as an essential part of a balanced life. That Orr takes drugs to suppress dreaming implies that he has an opposite, more negative opinion about dreams and the unconscious.

Orr admits that he's afraid to dream but seems reluctant to continue. Haber suggests that Orr might be ashamed of the "lawlessness or "immorality" of his dreams. Orr agrees, though he admits that there's something else he fears as well—something that Haber might not believe.

Haber's comment about the "lawlessness" or "immorality" of dreams and the unconscious implies that a person's waking, conscious experience may be characterized by lawfulness and morality. If this is true, it follows that society—the realm where a person spends their waking moments—provides the structure that keeps people from acting on the "lawlessness" of their dreams. Haber seems to be driving at a basic Freudian understanding of dreams as manifestations of the urges society forces people to repress, but Orr's response to Haber's claim suggests that Orr's dream problem won't be solved by mere psychoanalysis.

Orr tells Haber that his dreams have the ability to change reality. Haber thinks that Orr might be crazier than he'd originally thought and asks Orr for an example. Orr pauses before recounting a time when he was 17, and his Aunt Ethel, who was around 30 at the time and going through a divorce, came to live with Orr's family in their small apartment. Ethel would sexually harass Orr, and he resented her for it. Ethel's harassment would also give him bad dreams, during which Ethel would sometimes appear "disguised." For example, in one dream, she was a white cat.

Orr's recollection construes his dreams as his unconscious's attempt to work through his bad feelings about Aunt Ethel. The fact that Ethel appeared "disguised" in these dreams implies that Orr's unconscious was hiding or distorting the true nature of these feelings. Orr's recollection of his dream proposes an inverse relationship between the unconscious mind and the truth, in which dreams confuse rather than enlighten the dreamer.

In one of Orr's particularly "vivid" bad dreams, Ethel died in a car crash in Los Angeles. When Orr awoke from his dream the next morning, Ethel wasn't there—nor *had* she been there, ever. And Orr knew this without having to ask: he "remembered" that Ethel really *had* died in a car crash six weeks ago, and that his dream merely functioned as "a sort of reliving something like what had actually happened." However, Orr states, he also knew that Ethel's death hadn't existed until he dreamed of it, as he could *also* remember that Ethel *had* come to live with them, though there existed no evidence of this reality beyond Orr's memory.

Orr's dream seems to have acted—literally—on his unconscious desire to expel Ethel from his life: Orr claims that his dream actually, physically *changed the course of reality by killing Ethel and creating a world where Orr was never a victim of her harassment. It's unclear at this point whether Orr's dreams really do have this power or if he's suffering from some kind of delusional thinking.*

Haber now realizes that Orr's case will be more complex than he'd originally anticipated. He asks Orr why Orr's mother didn't notice this shift in reality the way Orr did. Orr explains that his dream actually "made a different reality, retroactively." Because the new reality was retrospective, Orr's mother had no memory of the *former* reality (the one in which Ethel was still alive). The reason Orr remembers both, he thinks, is because he was "there…at the moment of the change."

Haber's observation about the complexity of Orr's case implies that he doesn't believe Orr's claims about his dreams, likely believing Orr's claims to be the result of an unconscious, unrealized neurosis. Orr stands firmly behind his claim, though. Orr's comment about remembering two versions of reality because he was "there…at the moment of the change" shows that, to Orr, dreams, the unconscious, and the actions that occur within them are just as real as the conscious world of waking life.

Haber asks Orr if he's had any other dreams that have changed reality. Orr explains that he hasn't in a long time, since he's become scared of changing reality and come to question his right "to meddle with the way things go," particularly if it's his unconscious mind that's doing the meddling.

Orr's desire not "to meddle with the way things go" resonates with the Taoist idea that a person should strive not to interfere with the natural rhythm/balance of the universe. Orr's skepticism toward the unconscious reflects a distrust toward the unknown and the irrational: he especially doesn't want his unconscious messing with reality because the unconscious acts on impulses that Orr, in his waking mind, regards as baffling and immoral.

Haber asks Orr if he also has "safe" dreams—dreams that don't change reality. Orr nods. Haber theorizes that Orr's fear of dreaming is a metaphor for his inability to accept certain aspects of his waking life. He suggests that they make Orr dream "intentionally" and "under controlled conditions" to get to the bottom of Orr's fears. Haber tells Orr he can hypnotize him to dream about specific things. He'll hook up Orr to a "trancap" and have an EEG monitor the process so they can analyze what happened during those dreams.

Haber doesn't believe in Orr's claims and sees Orr's fear of dreaming as a metaphorical expression of some underlying, inaccessible fear to which only Orr's unconscious *mind has access. Haber's idea that dreaming "intentionally" can help Orr understand his dreams implies that "intentional" and "controlled" dreaming is the opposite of unintentional or unconscious dreaming, where "controlled" dreaming can be informative and productive, and where unconscious, uncontrolled dreaming is uninformative and unfocused. Haber's distinction between controlled and uncontrolled dreaming reflects a worldview in which the unconscious, directionless mind is unproductive and irrational in comparison to the conscious mind, which is productive and rational.*

Orr worries he won't "dream effectively" in Haber's office, since these dreams occur only sporadically. Haber tells Orr not to worry: he can guide Orr's dreams via the trancap, which uses electrodes to stimulate the brain. He tells Orr about a severely depressed, insomniac patient he had a few years ago, through whom he developed a method of increasing d-sleep. Haber modified existing practices of electronic brain stimulation (ESB) to target a specific area of the brain, recording brain-wave records that occurred during d-sleep, and eventually creating a complex device called the Dream Machine, or Augmentor, which can make the brain of the person hooked up to it dream in a desired way.

Haber seems desperate to reassure Orr that the Augmentor is a perfectly normal, harmless machine. Haber's desperation might suggest that he's hiding something about the extent of the Augmentor's powers, or his reasons for using it. Haber's desire to exert conscious control over Orr's "effective" dreams, which are normally beyond Orr's ability to control, seems like a cause for concern.

Haber asks Orr if he's willing to give it a try, handing him the HEW-required Consent to Hypnosis forms, which Orr signs, though somewhat apprehensively. Haber tells Orr that he'll use "v-c induction," which induces sleep, thereby bridging the gap between a waking or hypnotized state and a dreaming state. Haber then explains that he'll use the Augmentor to force Orr into a dream state, thereby increasing the likelihood that Orr will have vivid dreams.

The "consent" forms Haber hands Orr are rather ironic—Orr must undergo treatment with Haber if he wants to avoid prison time, which basically gives him no choice but to go along with whatever method of treatment Haber deems acceptable.

Haber orders Orr to lie down on the couch and breathe deeply. He moves behind Orr and firmly presses his hand on Orr's throat, and it gives him pleasure to exert "dominance over the patient." Haber begins the hypnotic induction process, ordering Orr to close his eyes, relax, and go to sleep. Haber puts Orr into a trance that he'll be able to induce whenever he touches him on the throat. Once Orr is deep within the trance, Haber places the trancap on Orr's head and turns on the EEG, which begins to display the "subtle and complex" signals Orr's brain produces.

Haber's pleasurable response to exerting "dominance over the patient" shows that he likes to feel powerful. This should make the reader skeptical about what kind of treatment Orr will receive while under Haber's care.

Haber tells the hypnotized Orr that he'll go to sleep when Haber says the word "Antwerp," and he'll remain asleep until Haber says his name three times. While he's asleep, he'll have a vivid, "effective" dream about a horse. Haber says "Antwerp," and the lines on the EEG screen become "stronger and slower." The Augmentor records Orr's s-sleep patterns. Suddenly, the lines become quicker, marking Orr's entrance into the d-state. Haber lets Orr dream awhile before waking him.

Antwerp is a city in Belgium. According to folkloric tradition, the name is derived from the Dutch word "handwerpen," or "hand-thrown," which can refer to items thrown by hand, such as clay pottery that is thrown on the potter's wheel. A potter's wheel is a type of lathe, *or a machine that shapes wood, clay, metal, etc. by rotating the material around an axis. In addition to alluding to the novel's title, thus, Haber's choice of the word "Antwerp" to put Orr into a trance sheds some light on Haber's intentions with Orr's dreams. Haber's word choice implies that he wants to* throw *or shape the content of Orr's dreams. This detail illustrates Haber's thirst for power. It also suggests that Haber has no ethical qualms about meddling in other people's business.*

Haber detaches the electrodes from Orr's scalp and asks him to recall his dream. Orr tells Haber he dreamed about the horse in the photo hanging on Haber's wall. He asks Haber if anything seems off about the photo. Haber chuckles, noting that it might be rather "overdramatic" for the office. Orr asks Haber if the horse photo has been there the entire time: hadn't the mural depicted **Mount Hood** before his dream about the horse? Haber suddenly remembers the other photo and realizes that Orr is right, though he keeps this information to himself and lies to Orr that the horse has been there the entire time. He offers to fetch Miss Crouch for another opinion, but Orr knows that she won't remember the Mount Hood photo, either. Orr is disappointed, since he thought Haber's role in prompting the effective dream might've given him a "double memory," too.

That the Mount Hood mural now depicts a horse shows that Haber has successfully used hypnosis to influence Orr's dreams. It's unclear whether Haber chooses not to tell Orr that he is aware of the transformed mural for therapeutic reasons, or for reasons that are more nefarious in nature. The novel has already hinted that Haber likes to exert power over others, which is reason enough to be skeptical of Haber's deceptive behavior. One additional detail to note is the symbolic relevance of the mural's transformation. Orr dreams of the horse that replaces Mount Hood in direct response to Haber's hypnotic suggestion, so Mount Hood's disappearance symbolizes the transformative power of Haber's influence over Orr's dreams.

Haber instructs Orr to return tomorrow and prescribes him a medicine to inhibit vivid dreams. He promises to cure Orr in no time. After Orr leaves, Haber gazes uneasily at the imposing mural and wishes he could have a window in his office.

The image of Haber gazing at the mural that he coerced Orr to change, while he simultaneously thinks about other changes he'd like to see—such as an upgraded office with a view—foreshadows Haber's possible plans to use Orr's effective dreams to improve his own circumstances.

CHAPTER 3

The next day, Orr leaves work and takes the subway back to Portland. He doesn't have a car, but cars aren't allowed downtown anyway, which is where he lives. The subway car is packed full of people. A man next to Orr reads a paper with the headline "BIG A-1 STRIKE NEAR AFGHAN BORDER." Orr exits the train and heads to the Willamette East Tower, which is a large building made of glass and concrete that looks just like every other building that surrounds it.

This scene provides more information about Orr's world: cars aren't allowed downtown, which might indicate that the effects of climate change necessitate the rationing of fossil fuels like gasoline. The newspaper headline about a "BIG A-1 STRIKE" suggests that global conflict is another defining feature of Orr's world. Orr's description of the Willamette East Tower as much like every other tower reaffirms the idea that Haber (whose office is located in that building) isn't a particularly important doctor—if he were, his office would be located in a more distinct building

It's warm and rainy outside. Though it's always rained in Portland, the rain never stops these days, and the air is smoggy and polluted. With a population of 3 million, Portland, one of the Old Cities, has fewer residents than New Cities, like John Day or Umatilla, but the New Cities and Old Cities alike are ravaged by a vast array of social and environmental ills. In the Old Cities, there are more infectious diseases, but in the New Cities, there's more violence.

The direct and indirect consequences of climate change affect cities throughout the state of Oregon (John Day and Umatilla are to the east of Portland). The novel seems to use climate change as a metaphor for cosmic imbalance, where human-made pollution throws the environment's natural course off balance.

Orr arrives at Haber's office, where he signs in with Miss Crouch. He examines the office waiting room, and looking at the vinyl furniture and the desk "plasticoated with a wood finish," Orr notes that nothing in the office seems "genuine."

If Haber's waiting room is a metaphor for Haber himself, then the "plasticoated," superficial office furnishings construe Haber as a deceptive doctor who is hiding his "genuine" intentions for influencing Orr's dreams behind a "plasticoated" sheen of professionalism.

Haber appears and greets Orr enthusiastically. Orr thinks Haber's energetic demeanor is genuine, though somewhat "plasticoated with professional mannerisms, distorted by the doctor's unspontaneous use of himself." He observes in Haber a sort of compulsion "to be liked and a desire to be helpful." Orr also notes that Haber is "broad, hairy," and has a "bear's smile, like a big bear-god." With much bravado, Haber invites Orr back into the "Palace of Dreams," guiding him through another hypnotism session. After he regains consciousness, Orr asks Haber if Haber prompted him to dream about the horse again before describing his dream, which began with the horse standing in Haber's office. The horse defecated, depositing onto Haber's rug a "tremendous pile of [dung]" that vaguely resembled **Mount Hood**.

Orr explicitly compares the fake appearance of Haber's office to Haber himself when he describes Haber's demeanor as "plasticoated with professional mannerisms." Orr's description of Haber as "unspontaneous" suggests that everything Haber says or does is calculated and rehearsed. Haber's rehearsed mannerisms reflect a controlling personality. Haber's need to be "liked" and seen as "helpful" could be seen as Haber's calculated attempt to ingratiate himself to others in order to exert power over them: it's easier to control and manipulate people who are trusting and mentally disarmed. Orr's description of Haber as "broad, hairy," and "like a big bear-god" emphasizes Haber's intimidating presence, especially next to Orr, who is so slight and mild. The reappearance of Mount Hood in Orr's dream implies that Haber has instructed Orr to dream about the mountain, so, in this scene, Mount Hood's presence symbolizes Haber's continued interference in Orr's dreams, and Haber's deliberate attempt to alter reality.

Orr looks behind Haber and sees that **Mount Hood** is back on the wall. Haber doesn't seem to notice the change, though he's immensely pleased with the results of this session. Orr sits on the couch and feels defenseless and "used," knowing that Haber has been watching his brainwaves and telling him what to dream. Besides this, since Haber doesn't appear to notice the changing murals, it's doubtful he'll be able to help Orr with his dream problem.

Mount Hood's reappearance on the wall confirms that Haber is well aware of the "effective" nature of Orr's dreams, since suggesting that Orr restore the mural is proof that Haber has knowledge of the mural's appearance prior *to the previous session, when Orr's dream changed its appearance. The fact that Orr feels "used" suggests that he suspects Haber of knowingly using his effective dreams to change reality.*

In a booming voice, Haber commends Orr's ability to "dream to order," follow hypnosuggestions, and respond to the Augmentor, which is great, since Haber would prefer not to treat Orr with drugs, as the mind's functions are "more fascinating and complex" on their own than with the chemical manipulation drugs. In fact, this is exactly why Haber created the Augmentor in the first place: to give the brain the ability of "*self*-stimulation." Haber tells Orr that this session has given him some clarity on the therapeutic approach he'll use to treat him. From now on, Haber will guide Orr to "*use*" his dreams rather than avoid them: to "face [his] fear" and unleash his "mental powers." Haber asks Orr if this seems like "the right thing to do." Orr says he doesn't know.

Haber uses intentionally ambiguous language to reveal and *conceal his awareness of Orr's dreams' ability to change reality. If one interprets Haber's words figuratively, then Haber's use of the phrase "mental powers" might simply mean that confronting his fear of dreaming will make Orr a psychologically stronger person. Literally, though, Haber's words explicitly disclose his awareness of Orr's "mental power" to change reality with his dreams. Haber's question about whether using Orr's dreams is "the right thing to do" resonates with the Utilitarian idea that a person should actively strive to change the world in ways that maximize happiness and minimize suffering. Orr's tepid response to Haber's question implies that Orr disagrees with the Utilitarian logic that seems to guide Haber's interest in harnessing the power of Orr's dreams.*

Orr wonders if Haber's talk of Orr "employing his mental powers" is proof that Haber is aware of Orr's ability to change reality with his dreams, but he dismisses his suspicion on the grounds that Haber would've been more explicit about it if he actually believed in Orr's power. Not getting validation from Haber is extremely disappointing to Orr, who had been certain that Haber really *did* see the mural change from a mountain to a horse yesterday. He thought Haber had kept his discovery to himself out of "shock," or out of an (understandable) unwillingness to accept the jarring existence of an alternate reality. But when Haber *again* fails to acknowledge the changed mural, Orr gives up hope that anyone will be able to confirm that he's not crazy—that his dreams really have the transformative powers he thinks they have.

Haber's careful phrasing keeps Orr ignorant of Haber's awareness of the effective dreams. This scene establishes Haber and Orr's opposite personalities, contrasting Orr's naïve trust in Haber's good intentions with Haber's concealed, manipulative behavior. This moment also shows how alienating Orr's effective dreams are: his knowledge of multiple realities separates him from others and makes it difficult to relate to the larger world.

Desperate for relief, Orr asks Haber if he could give him a "posthypnotic suggestion" not to have effective dreams anymore. Haber refuses, reiterating how important it is for Orr to face his fears. He then goes on a tangent about how daydreams can boost one's ego. Haber, for example, daydreams of "heroic" scenarios in which he saves the world. He asks Orr about his daydreams, and Orr describes a fantasy about going away to a cabin to escape Portland's crowds.

Haber's refusal to cure Orr indicates that he has bigger plans for Orr's power. Haber's admission about having "heroic" fantasies provides insight into these plans: perhaps Haber wants to use Orr's dreams to play out these fantasies in real life. So far, the novel has made a point to construe Haber as someone who desires control and respect. In light of this, one might speculate that his "heroic" fantasies reflect a selfish desire to been seen *as a hero rather than a desire to save the world for the world's sake.*

Haber asks Orr if he'd like to undergo a second round of hypnosis today. Orr asks if Haber can inform him of the hypnosuggestions he employs this time, but Haber refuses, arguing that disclosing the hypnosuggestions could cause Orr to confuse what he *actually* dreamed with the dreams Haber *wanted* him to dream. Haber urges Orr to trust him. Orr doesn't, though he wishes he could. Haber proceeds with the second round of hypnosis.

By this point, it's abundantly clear that Haber is determined to keep Orr as uninformed as possible about his treatment plan. Orr's ignorance gives Haber complete control over Orr's dreams, allowing Haber to manipulate them however he likes under the guise of administering treatment.

When Orr comes to, he relays bits of his dream to Haber: he recalls the South Seas, coconuts, and an image of Haber walking beside President John Kennedy, who was carrying an umbrella. In the dream, Haber took Kennedy's umbrella from him, telling Kennedy he wouldn't need it any longer. Almost immediately, the rain stopped, and Kennedy told Haber he was "right." After he finishes describing his dream, Orr tells Haber that it actually "*has* stopped raining," which Haber will see for himself once he leaves the office. Haber wants to continue with the hypnosis, but Orr is too exhausted for more. They arrange to conduct another session on Saturday night.

Haber appears to have manipulated the content of Orr's dream to eliminate the persistent rain Portland sees as a result of climate change. This somewhat complicates Haber's exploitation of Orr's dreams, since it means that he's using them for noble reasons rather than for selfish, evil ones. Still, the fact that Orr's dream features Haber walking beside Kennedy implies that ambition and power also motivate Haber's desire to do good deeds. This detail resonates with Haber's earlier admission about having fantasies of being a hero.

Orr leaves Haber's office knowing his most recent dream was a particularly effective one: the absence of rain and smog in the air are evidence of this. Normally, Orr only has effective dreams once a month. Though under Haber's care, and with the Augmentor keeping him in the d-sleep phase, he's had three in the last two days. Orr wonders whether Haber's hypnosuggestion had been to dream about the rain stopping, Kennedy, or Haber himself.

Orr's dream has had a positive effect on Portland's air quality, but this doesn't erase the fact that there's clearly something fishy going on in Orr's sessions with Haber. Orr seems suspicious of the Augmentor's ability to induce effective dreaming, and this feeling is amplified by the fact that being either unconscious or in a trance state during treatment sessions prevents him from knowing how exactly Haber is using the machine.

It bothers Orr that he can't recall Haber's suggestions, since he's technically conscious until Haber instructs him to sleep. Orr thinks back to the horse dream and wonders if Haber had instructed him to dream about the horse and the dung, or if Orr added the dung element subconsciously, though he doubts the latter is true: why would he? As the train approaches Alder Street Station, Orr is struck by a joyous revelation: the appearance of the dung in his dream implies that Haber's hypnosuggestion was to *replace* the horse with the mountain—which means that Haber *had* to have known the mountain mural existed before the horse mural, which means Haber is aware of Orr's dream's ability to change reality, which means that Orr isn't insane!

Orr's revelation about Haber is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it confirms that he's not crazy, which is something he's desperately desired for a while now. On the other hand, the revelation implies that Haber has some ulterior motive for concealing his knowledge of Orr's effective dreams.

Orr exits the subway at Ross Island Bridge West, returns to his minuscule room at the Corbett Condominium building, and places a slice of soybeanloaf in the infrabake for dinner. It's only after he cracks open a beer than he begins to wonder why Haber chose to hide his knowledge of Orr's effective dreams. Haber's deception unsettles Orr, but he tries to be hopeful, imagining how Haber will go about treating Orr's curious affliction, now that he knows it exists.

Orr's dinner of "soybeanloaf" suggests that people in Orr's world have limited access to meat, which is perhaps another consequence of climate change. Orr remains confident in Haber's good intentions because he has no other choice: if he stops going to treatment, he'll be incarcerated and denied the drugs he needs to control his effective dreams. Orr's relative powerlessness makes sessions with Haber Orr's only means of ridding himself of his affliction.

CHAPTER 4

Miss Lelache sits behind the bookcases that separate her "semi-office" from Mr. Pearl's semi-office at the law office of Forman, Esserbeck, Goodhue, and Rutti. Lelache imagines herself as a "Black Widow," waiting, "hard, shiny, and poisonous," for her "victim" to arrive. And when he arrives, Lelache sees that her client, George Orr, really does look the part of a vulnerable victim, with his childish hair and skin that's as "soft" and "white" as a "fish's belly."

Lelache's depiction of herself as a "Black Widow" suggests that she is aggressive and power-hungry. Her corresponding depiction of Orr as "soft" and fragile as a "fish's belly" emphasizes her power by juxtaposing it with Orr's relative powerlessness.

Orr sits across from Lelache and fills her in on his predicament. He argues that Haber's method of treating him, which involves coercing him to dream specific dreams, infringes on his privacy "as defined in the New Federal Constitution of 1984." Orr finishes his spiel, and Lelache admits that, unfortunately, Orr's case isn't all that strong: there's not much evidence to work with, the authorities are unlikely to take a mental patient's word over a reputable doctor's, and failing to complete his Voluntary Therapeutic Treatment with Haber could lead to Orr's imprisonment or institutionalization.

That the "New Federal Constitution" was ratified in 1984 seems to allude to George Orwell's novel 1984, a dystopian science fiction novel that criticizes authoritarianism and mass surveillance. Evoking 1984 invites a comparison between the authoritarian government featured in that novel and the level of control Orr's world's government exerts over its citizens (VTT certainly contains elements of authoritarianism), or perhaps it foreshadows the authoritarian future that lies in store for Orr's world if Haber continues to exploit Orr's dreams.

Orr gets up to leave. Sensing Orr's desperation and wanting to help this seemingly sane (if not rather "simple") man, Lelache asks Orr to tell her more about his case. Orr warns her that what he's about to say will sound crazy, but Lelache prompts Orr to continue. Orr tells Lelache about his ability to dream effectively, and his fear that Haber is abusing this ability "for ends of his own, without [Orr's] consent." He tells her about the Augmentor. Still, Orr insists that Haber isn't an evil scientist; on the contrary, Orr is sure that Haber's reasons for using him and his effective dreams are admirable. All the same, though, he doesn't want to be Haber's "instrument."

Like Haber, Lelache regards Orr's passivity negatively; here, she insinuates that his nonconfrontational demeanor makes him "simple." Orr's reservations about being Haber's "instrument" reflect his desire not to be complicit in Haber's attempts to meddle with fate and offset the universe's natural balance. His desire not to interfere with fate evokes the Taoist principle of wu wei *("effortless action"), which involves existing in a state that conforms to the universe's natural balance.*

Lelache stares at Orr, struggling to comprehend his story. After a while, she asks Orr to explain what it is that he finds so unacceptable about Haber using his dreams to change reality—assuming any of it is true. Orr states plainly that he has "no right to change things. Nor [Haber] to make him" change things. Lelache thinks Orr is crazy, but she's also drawn to his "moral certainty." She asks for an example of something Orr has changed with his dreams. Orr tells Lelache about talking to Haber about wanting a remote cabin in the wilderness, after which point he suddenly had a cabin in the Siuslaw National Forest. Orr believes that Haber fed him the hypnosuggestion to dream of owning a cabin.

Orr isn't against Haber's vision for a better world, he simply believes that humans have "no right to change things." Orr's worldview reflects the Taoist idea that people shouldn't act in ways that intentionally disrupt the natural rhythm or balance of the universe. Orr's "moral certainty" is so strong that he's opposed to Haber's meddling even when it brings about changes that improve Orr's quality of life, such as giving him his own cabin.

Lelache gently reminds Orr that there's nothing morally wrong with having a cabin. Orr disagrees, though. Before his dream, the wilderness was only wilderness, and now it's being cut into lots and leased for over $40,000 per year. Lelache remains skeptical of Orr's effective dreams and moral anguish, so Orr tries harder to explain how the dreams work and why Haber should be wary of messing with them. Orr proposes a hypothetical situation in which Haber hypnotizes him to dream about a pink dog in the room. Orr's resultant effective dream would create one of two possibilities: either he'd manifest a plausibly pink dog (say, "a white poodle dyed pink"), or else he'd have to change reality so that pink dogs exist and have *always* existed, and nobody but himself would be aware of this change. Nobody except Haber, who would know about it since he was "there at the moment of change, and knows what the dream's about."

Orr's ethical stance emphasizes the big-picture consequences of Haber's meddling. It might not be morally wrong for Orr to own a cabin, but the existence of such cabins in the first place is a consequence of human interference with and commodification of nature, both of which are morally wrong. Orr's hypothetical example of the pink dog further illustrates how a seemingly simple alteration of reality results in unintended consequences that radiate across time and space. Lastly, Orr's comment about Haber being able to discern the changes Orr's dreams create since he was "there at the moment of change" provides more insight into how Orr's effective dreams work: typically, Orr is the only person capable of perceiving the new realities his dreams create, but this changes if others are present during the change and aware of the dream that brought about that change.

Lelache accuses Orr of watching too much TV, which irritates him, though he also understands her skepticism. Orr even smiles at her, and Lelache wonders if it's possible that he might like her. Orr becomes suddenly serious and asks Lelache if she'd be willing to act as his lawyer and request to attend one of his sessions with Haber. Lelache is willing to do this, though she cautions Orr that bringing in a lawyer will damage his therapist-patient relationship with Haber. Beyond this, she still thinks it would be in Orr's best interest to just trust Haber: Haber really could be trying to "help" him, after all. Orr starts to complain about Haber treating him like an experiment, which causes Lelache to stiffen. Haber using Orr for an experiment not approved by HEW, Lelache explains, *absolutely* would warrant a civil rights complaint.

This scene seems to foreshadow a possible romance between Orr and Lelache. Lelache's warning about damaging Orr and Haber's patient-doctor relationship reaffirms her skepticism toward Orr's claims about his dreams and Haber's intentions with them: her hesitancy to damage Orr's relationship with Haber suggests that she still regards Haber's treatment as medically legitimate rather than exploitative. Orr's continued defense of Haber reflects an objective, centered personality: even when he's presented with abundant evidence that Haber is exploiting and deceiving him, Orr insists on retaining an impartial, middle-of-the-road opinion of Haber. Orr's ability to remain unbiased further aligns his ideals with Taoism, which emphasizes existing in a state of balance with the universe.

Orr reiterates that he doesn't want to get Haber in trouble—he really does believe the doctor means well—but he stands behind his desire "to be cured, not used." Lelache concocts a plan to attend one of Orr's sessions acting as an "ACLU observer for HEW" rather than as Orr's lawyer, in order to preserve Orr and Haber's patient-doctor relationship. Lelache jokingly orders Orr not to "dream [her] out of existence" before she can help him, and he promises he won't—at least, "not willingly." Lelache offers her brown hand for Orr's white hand to shake, and the image reminds her of an old SNCC button of her mother's.

The SNCC refers to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which was the main organization to facilitate student involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. The image of Lelache and Orr's shaking hands (and the pin the image evokes in Lelache's mind) seems to mimic the Taoist symbol for yin and yang, *which also features contrasting light and dark colors. The principle of* yin and yang *is that seemingly opposite forces don't inhibit but* complement *one another, which seems to be the idea reflected in the SNCC pin: that different races can complement one another rather than be divided.*

CHAPTER 5

It's March 24. William Haber makes his way across the cool, marble floor of the Oregon Oneirological Institute. Penny Crouch greets him as he enters his office. He's glad he brought Penny with him when he was named Director of the Institute last year. Haber enters his office and gazes out the enormous window at a gorgeous view of the Willamette River, city skyline, and distant mountain peaks.

It appears that Haber has used Orr's dreams to give himself a retroactive promotion that went into effect last year. Haber's nice office reflects his elevated status: he now has the nice view he coveted in Chapter 2.

Haber sits at his desk and gets started on the "hackwork" that comes with the "running of a Government-connected science research institute." Though Haber doesn't mind the tedium, he dislikes not having enough time for his research. In fact, his new position has forced him to give up all but one of his patients. Haber's sole patient, George Orr, has an appointment at 4:00 p.m. today, and a HEW inspector will be there to observe their session with the Augmentor. Haber grumbles about the "Goddamn Government prying," and the way his many successes have made him the victim of "public curiosity" and "professional envy." If he was still a private researcher at P.S.U., working out of his office in Willamette East Tower, nobody would have given the Augmentor a second thought.

This scene offers a more detailed picture of all the ways Haber's life has improved since he began treating Orr, notably that he's now in charge of an important "Government-connected science research institute." The fact that Orr is the only patient he's maintained suggests that Haber has more desires for Orr's dreams to fulfill. Haber's complaint about the "Goddamn Government prying" is ironic, given the prying that he engaged in to achieve his current "Government-connected" position. Haber seems to accept a certain degree of Government prying, so long as he's at the giving rather than receiving end of it.

The lawyer, Miss Lelache, arrives before Orr. She's a terse but competent woman. She carries a big purse with a chunky golden clasp holding it closed, and she wears loud, metal jewelry, including a ring that depict[s] "a horribly ugly African mask design." Haber thinks that Lelache's display is itself a mask, "a lot of sound and fury signifying timidity." Lelache asks questions about Orr and records the conversation with a pocket recorder, which annoys Haber. Haber tells Lelache that Orr is "disturbed," per the Health Office's definition, though his condition is improving with treatment. Lelache asks Haber to describe this treatment, and Haber describes how the Augmentor produces stimuli encouraging dreaming.

Lelache's clothing and accessories reflect her outwardly aggressive, bold personality. Haber's belief that Lelache's ring and overarching intimidating demeanor are fronts that conceal a meek interior might be a projection of his own duplicitous personality. His phrase that Lelache's ring is "a lot of sound and fury signifying timidity" is an allusion to a line from Shakespeare's Macbeth, in which Macbeth implicitly justifies his egregious crime of murdering King Duncan by claiming that life is meaningless and merely "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing." In this context, Haber's decision to use these words to insult Lelache's constructed exterior might also reflect an attempt to justify his own deceptive mannerisms.

Lelache asks Haber how he decides which "stimuli" to use on patients, which is a subject Haber has been avoiding. Haber gives an overly detailed, longwinded answer about starting with generalized stimuli and conducting tests on animals. He predicts that it might one day be possible to supply a disturbed mind like Orr's with brainwave patterns that can "'teach' an abnormally functioning brain new habits." Of course, Haber assures Lelache, he'll be sure to "reregister with HEW" before undertaking this research (though what he *doesn't* tell Lelache is that he's currently conducting this research in his sessions with Orr).

This scene depicts Haber's attempts to divert Lelache's attention away from what Orr is actually doing with Orr and his dreams. Haber offers an intentionally longwinded, convoluted response to Lelache's simple questions in an attempt to confuse or bore Lelache into accepting the legitimacy of his treatment methods. In addition to this, Haber explicitly withholds certain information form Lelache, such as the full extent of the research he's conducting on Orr. At this point, it seems pretty clear that Haber is up to no good.

Lelache presses further, asking Haber what the Augmentor actually *does*. Lelache's nosiness annoys Haber, but he tries not to show it. Haber describes the Augmentor as a time-saving device whose primary job is to make Orr enter a dream state more quickly and, in so doing, minimize the time and effort needed for him to overcome his fear of dreams. The Augmentor can also deliver a signal to Orr's brain to prevent him from having a nightmare, which would be catastrophic to the therapeutic process. Haber downplays the ways the Augmentor coerces Orr's brain into behaving a certain way, making it out to be a gentler, more natural alternative to something like electrical brain stimulation.

Haber continues to pretend he's using the Augmentor to cure Orr of his fear of dreaming, when in reality, he's using the machine to control Orr's dreams as a means to some ulterior end. The implicit message behind Haber's comment about nightmares being catastrophic to Orr's recovery is that one of Orr's *nightmares could unleash nightmarish changes onto reality.*

Haber is grateful when his desk communicator buzzes, alerting him to Orr's arrival. Orr enters Haber's office. He and Lelache awkwardly shake hands and pretend not to know each other. The juxtaposition between the "meek" Orr and the "fierce" Lelache amuses Haber. Intent on putting on a "show" for Lelache, Haber places his hand across Orr's throat to induce hypnosis, though Orr detracts from the performance when Haber's touch causes him to flinch—a reaction Haber sees as evidence of Orr's growing resistance to hypnosis.

Orr and Lelache's awkward handshake evokes the image portrayed on the SNCC pin Lelache referenced in Chapter 4, which, in turn, alludes to the Taoist concept of yin and yang. *Haber's comments affirm this connection, when he uses the image of Orr and Lelache's handshake to establish Orr and Lelache as opposite forces, one "meek" and one "fierce." Rather than frame these opposite forces as complementary, though, Haber sees Orr's meekness and Lelache's fierceness as counteracting, defeating forces. Haber's desire to put on a "show" for Lelache underscores how heavily public perception and egotism distort his otherwise well-intentioned ambitions.*

Once Orr is in a trance, Haber asks him to name something that worries him. Orr responds, "overpopulation." Haber begins the process of hypnosuggestion, inviting Orr to think of "overpopulation" as a mere metaphor he uses to express his real anxieties about "unfreedom" and intimacy. Haber prompts Orr to have an effective dream about overpopulation. Inwardly, Haber bemoans the way Lelache's presence is forcing him to deliver instructions to Orr in such vague, indirect terms. Still, Haber thinks, it's not as though his hypnosuggestion methods are concrete at this point. In fact, Haber changes his strategy each session to undermine Orr's annoying habit of interpreting his hypnosuggestion too literally, which Haber sees as Orr's resistance to being coerced. Haber decides that today's abstract suggestions might actually "rouse less unconscious resistance in Orr."

Haber has to deliver Orr's hypnotic instructions in vague terms to maintain the illusion that he's administering legitimate therapy to Orr, rather than giving him explicit instructions to change reality. Haber's observation about Orr's too-literal response to his hypnosuggestions implies that he's had some issues getting Orr's dreams to enact the exact changes he has in mind. Orr's growing resistance to hypnosis illustrates Orr's rejection of Haber's Utilitarian ethics: even unconsciously, Orr rejects Haber's moral imperative to impose changes on the world that interfere with fate.

Haber instructs Orr to dream of an "uncrowded" world, motioning for Lelache to watch the EEG screen as he does so. Then he commands Orr to sleep and turns on the Augmentor, which makes Orr descend into the d-state of sleep. Haber explains to Lelache that Orr's brain activity is normal now, though it does exhibit the "occasional high peaking" that's reminiscent of the electroencephalograms Haber has observed of men at work on intense, creative pursuits, such as painting or writing poetry. Once more, Haber assures Lelache that it's Orr himself and not the Augmentor that's creating these peaks. Inwardly, Haber recalls an attempt he made to stimulate Orr's brain with a recording of a peak trace in an earlier session, but the resultant dream was "incoherent." He doesn't mention this experiment to Lelache.

Haber goes out of his way to assure Lelache that the Augmentor isn't doing anything to Orr's brain—that it's only tracking his brain's activity. Haber continues to employ figurative language to conceal the literal actions he's coercing Orr's dreams to undertake. Here, he compares the brainwaves of Orr's dreams to the brainwaves exhibited by people undertaking creative pursuits to mask the truth that Orr's dream is actually, literally creating *reality.*

Haber turns off the Augmentor once Orr is deep inside his dream. He and Lelache watch the EEG screen, waiting for the peak trace to appear. When the peak occurs, the vibe inside the room suddenly changes. Haber can feel "the shift," and as Lelache looks out the window at the vanished towers, a terrified expression on her face, Haber knows she can feel it, too. Haber hadn't thought Lelache would recognize the change, but he should have expected it, as she was there when Haber gave Orr the instructions to imagine an "uncrowded" world. Haber joins Lelache in looking out the window. As they stand there silently, Haber thinks about Portland, its decimated suburbs, and the hundreds of thousands of people who perished during the Plague Years. These days, during the Recovery, Portland's current population hovers around 100,000.

There's a huge disparity between Haber's positive request for Orr to dream away overpopulation and the harrowing way Orr's dream fulfilled that request—through a deadly plague. This disparity illustrates a common critique of Utilitarianism, which is that happiness is subjective and difficult to quantify. Haber's belief that eliminating overpopulation will create a happier world might be true for the 100,000 Portlanders who survived the Plague Years that made the elimination of overpopulation a reality, but it certainly isn't true for those who perished.

Suddenly, it occurs to Haber that he assumed Lelache wouldn't see Orr's dream become reality because he *himself* had failed to understand Orr's power the first time he was exposed to it. Haber hadn't paused to acknowledge the fact that he couldn't have been the Director of the Oregon Oneirological Institute until last week because, prior to last week, *the Institute hadn't existed*. Yet despite knowing this, Haber *also* knew the Institute had *also* existed for the last 18 months, and that he had been its founder. Until this moment, Haber realizes, he's suppressed his double memory and Orr's effective dream that willed it into existence. Haber wonders how Lelache will respond to her double memory and vows to destroy her if she makes any attempts to interfere with his research. For a moment, he feels capable of killing her right there in his office.

This is a critical moment for Haber's character development. Now that he is consciously aware of Orr's ability, he can either do the right thing (or the thing that's in line with the Taoist worldviews the novel espouses) and stop using Orr's dreams to change the world, or he can ignore his new knowledge, continue to meddle with Orr's dreams, and risk throwing the universe off its natural balance. Haber's sudden desire to kill Lelache suggests that he's going to choose the latter option, since it shows the lengths he's willing to go to continue his research.

Lelache is still staring at the diminished skyline. Haber senses that she doesn't quite believe what she's seeing, which puts him at ease. Haber babbles on about his childhood in New Jersey and the restructuring that occurred in the aftermath of "the Crash." In comparison to the East Coast, he tells Lelache, Oregon's overpopulation wasn't much of a problem. Haber knows it's risky to discuss the "critical subject" of overpopulation so early in the reality shift, but he's determined to act normally to make Lelache forget that she saw whatever it is she *thinks* she saw.

Haber thinks Lelache will discount any conscious awareness of a double memory, which is what happened to Haber the first time he witnessed one of Orr's effective dreams. Still, Haber tries his best to distract Lelache from reflecting consciously on her double memory, since Haber seems to think that conscious *reflection (as opposed to an unconscious feeling) is what solidifies reality for a person.*

Though Haber tries to act casually, he's having a hard time wrapping his mind around the fact that he has two memories of Earth: one in which the global population is almost seven billion (and which is no longer true) and the other in which the population is (and is currently) a manageable one billion. Haber thinks about the six billion people who no longer exist and wonders, "what has Orr done?"

Haber's difficulty conceiving of two realities should encourage him to reflect on the gravity of what he's just encouraged Orr to do (murder six billion people) and reconsider using Orr's dreams to change the world. But when Haber asks himself the rhetorical question, "what has Orr done?" he effectively relegates all responsibility for the Plague to Orr, which minimizes his own role in the tragedy. That Haber refuses to acknowledge his complicity in the Plague suggests that he hasn't learned from his mistakes and will continue to exploit Orr's dreams.

When Haber tires of small talk, he calls Orr's name three times. Orr wakes up, looks out the window, and asks where everything went. Haber sees Lelache react to Orr's question and quickly tries to redirect the conversation, telling Orr that he only had a "nightmare." Orr says he dreamed about "the Plague" and asks Haber, a hint of "sarcasm" in his voice, if he remembers "the Plague Years." Haber confirms that he does: he was 22 when he first heard about the atmosphere's pollutions morphing into "virulent carcinogens." Everyone Haber knew died during those years. Orr makes a wry observation that the Plague really "took care of the overpopulation problem," and Haber can't miss the "edge" in his voice. Haber reminds Orr that there's no longer famine in South America, Africa, and Asia, thanks to the Plague.

Orr's "sarcasm" implies that he knows Haber is aware of the altered reality. The "edge" Haber later detects in Orr's voice confirms this. Haber steers the conversation toward the elimination of famine to justify the Plague, arguing that the deaths of billions of people creates a future in which countless generations will be relieved of the suffering that famine might have caused. Haber's logic attempts to quantify happiness: he argues that the improved quality of life for future generations outweighs the suffering that six billion people had to incur to make possible that improved quality of life.

Though Haber sees tears in Orr's eyes, he continues to discuss Orr's nightmare about the Plague exclusively in metaphorical or psychological terms, refusing to acknowledge the unspoken truth that they both know: that Orr's dream wasn't a nightmare *about* the Plague—it was the effective dream that willed the Plague into existence. Haber tries to drive Orr to an emotional breaking point, reasoning that Lelache will be less likely to believe anything Orr says if he's visibly unstable.

Haber continues to use vague, metaphorical language to keep Orr in the dark about just how much he knows about the power of Orr's dreams. Haber thinks that he can gaslight Orr into suffering a visible emotional breakdown that will reinforce their power dynamic and keep Lelache's suspicions at bay: if Haber can make Orr appear mentally unstable, it makes Haber seem more authoritative and trustworthy in comparison, which will increase the likelihood that Lelache will accept Haber's claims that everything is normal over Orr's insinuations that things aren't normal.

Orr stares silently and incredulously at Haber before divulging the rest of his dream. He describes working for the Interment Corps, digging ditches and burying the endless piles of naked, starved dead. Orr looked for Haber in his dream, but Haber wasn't there. Haber suggests that Orr's real experiences must have factored into the Plague dream, but Orr is adamant that he couldn't have buried anyone, since nobody died, since there wasn't a Plague—not until he dreamed of it. Orr tries to force Haber and Lelache to acknowledge their double memories, too, but Haber stands up and puts an end to Orr's noncompliance before Lelache can answer. Haber makes up a quick excuse that outsider interference will destroy the integrity of Orr's therapy and blames today's unpleasant hypnosis experience on Lelache's presence in the room.

Orr describes in vivid detail his dream-experiences of digging ditches for the Plague's many victims to underscore the suffering involved in solving the overpopulation problem. Orr is trying to show Haber that happiness (or maximized well-being) is subjective and difficult to quantify.

After Orr leaves, Haber apologizes for the "crisis session" Lelache had to witness and rags on Orr for being stubborn and delusional. To Haber's relief, Lelache doesn't challenge him anymore and leaves shortly after Orr.

Haber tries again to undercut Orr's authority. When Haber refers to Orr's intense emotions as the hallmarks of a "crisis session," he recasts Orr's completely legitimate response to being complicit in the deaths of six billion people as the irrational emotions of a mental patient which, in turn, heightens Haber's authoritative presence. Haber's strategy appears to work, since Lelache leaves without asking any questions.

Alone in his office, Haber removes a bottle of bourbon from his desk. He looks out the window at the clear, unobstructed view of the mountains, listens to the river's distant roar, and toasts "to a better world."

When Haber toasts "to a better world," he implicitly justifies the deaths of six billion people by recasting the tragedy as a cause for celebration. Haber believes that the increased happiness made possible by eliminating overpopulation justifies these deaths.

CHAPTER 6

Orr heads to his large, three-bedroom apartment on Corbett Avenue. He remembers his tiny apartment in Corbett Condominium tower, though that building doesn't actually exist. Orr arrives home and lies down in bed. He vows to stop Haber and "take his destiny into his own hands," though he knows he won't be able to do it. Haber has too strong a hold on him, manipulating him with grand proclamations about the invaluable impact Orr and his "peculiar and terrible gift" will have on humanity's quest for knowledge, scientific advancement, and a better life. The idea that Orr's effective dreams could be refined and repurposed to give back to a world they've so harmed is reason enough to stick it out with Haber a while longer. Still, Orr can't stop thinking about the six billion people he killed today.

Haber's manipulation of Orr's dreams has improved Orr's quality of life: now that there's no overpopulation problem, Orr can afford to live in a more spacious apartment. Orr and Haber's vastly different reactions to these changes (Haber is happy about them, but Orr is not) illustrate the opposing worldviews these characters represent. Orr believes that interfering with the universe's natural state is never acceptable, which evokes a Taoist worldview. In contrast, Haber believes that interfering with the universe's natural state is justified if the interference results in consequences that maximize happiness and minimize suffering, which evokes aUtilitarian worldview.

Orr's troubled thoughts manifest as a splintering headache. He runs the sink, submerges his head in the frigid water, and considers his options as he comes up for air. It's not just moral obligation that keeps him from leaving Haber. If Orr stops going to Volunteer Therapy, he'll be sent to prison or institutionalized for his drug charges. If he stops cooperating with Haber, the doctor could withhold his prescription for dream-suppressing drugs. Orr also reminds himself that Haber isn't some "mad scientist," or he wasn't—not until Orr's condition gave him a chance at fame and power, distorted his thoughts, and corrupted him into "using his science as a means, not an end." Still, if Haber's "end" makes the world a better place, is it really so bad? Orr's head throbs.

Orr realizes that his powerlessness gives him no good options for dealing with his predicament. If he refuses to cooperate with Haber, he won't have access to dream-suppressing drugs and will continue to alter the world with his effective dreams; if he keeps working with Haber, Haber will continue to alter the world with his effective dreams. Orr's depiction of Haber as a well-intentioned scientist who let his ambitions get the best of him illustrates the corruptive allure of power. His observation that Haber is now "using his science as a means, not an end" underscores the disparity between the intentions and consequences of Haber's actions. Whereas Haber used to engage in scientific inquiry for its own sake, he is now "using his science as a means" to produce targeted results—many of which involve an improved social and professional status for himself. Orr's observation shows how Haber's Utilitarian worldview causes him to value the consequences of his actions over the actions themselves: Haber justifies the questionable act of meddling with fate on the grounds that such meddling improves the quality of his life and humanity's quality of life more broadly.

Orr's phone rings. It's Heather Lelache, which makes Orr feel instantly better. Lelache asks to meet to talk, and Orr accepts. Lelache grumbles about the futility of assembling a case against Haber, noting all the steps Haber has taken to ensure that his experiments on Orr appear completely legitimate on paper. Plus, she hadn't realized what an important figure he was. Inwardly, Orr recalls the session during which Haber ordered the dream that got him his Director position at the O.O.I.

Haber has used Orr's dreams to create circumstances that guarantee him continued access to Orr: he's now so important that he's legally untouchable.

Lelache asks if all of Orr's sessions with Haber leave him feeling so out of sorts, and he admits that although the Plague dream was a harrowing experience for him, not all sessions are so horrible. They make plans to meet for lunch at Dave's on Monday. Before they hang up, Orr asks Lelache if she can fill him in on what Haber instructed him to dream, but Lelache refuses on the grounds that it would disrupt his treatment.

Lelache's refusal to interfere with Orr's treatment suggests that she still believes Haber's treatment of Orr to be legitimate, which in turn suggests that Haber's attempts to control the narrative of what happened in his office earlier that day were successful.

After hanging up the phone, Orr realizes that although Lelache is smart and strong, she's clearly not ready to take on the psychological burden of maintaining a double memory and is suppressing whatever she saw in Haber's office today. The thought makes Orr feel sad and alone.

Lelache's suppression of her double memory reflects a deeper discomfort with uncertainty: she'd rather suppress the idea of multiple realities altogether than entertain an idea that challenges her preconceived notions of what's real and what's not.

Before going to bed, Orr takes a dream-suppressing pill, though Haber warned him he'd eventually develop a tolerance to the drug. Orr sleeps deeply tonight, but his dreams are frivolous. He wakes up around noon on Saturday and walks to the refrigerator, which contains more food than he could've imagined in his previous life (which was characterized by overpopulation and food scarcity). Orr remembers his half-wife Donna, with whom he had a "trial marriage." She would get irrationally excited about an egg. He also remembers that, in the reality that exists after the Plague, there are only full marriages; in fact, to compensate for the low birth rate, Utah has begun to reinstate the practice of polygamous marriage.

Orr's full refrigerator illustrates the improved quality of life made possible by the Plague: the elimination of billions of people results in better access to food for the Plague's survivors. Orr is hardly fazed by the presence of all this food, though, which implies that he's not convinced that this improved standard of life justifies the suffering the Plague caused.

Orr eats a huge meal and feels better. A short while later, he leaves his apartment and heads to the Institute. The March rain feels pleasant, and the streets are calm. Orr thinks about the way in which the world has improved and degraded since The Crash. The air is still catastrophically polluted, which reliably kills an average of one in four newborns; the tradeoff is that those who survive infancy are basically immune to cancer. There are no more factories releasing toxic fumes into the air, but there are no more birds, either. Though the Plague might have done a lot of good for the world, notes Orr, it hadn't stopped global war; in fact, the conflict in the Near East is worse than it was before. Orr concludes that the world is basically the same as it was before The Crash.

As Orr compiles a mental pro/con list, he concludes that the pros of The Crash are equal to its cons—or, in a Taoist framework, that these dual forces complement each other and, in so doing, restore the world to a naturally balanced state where things are neither good nor bad—they simply are.

Orr enters Haber's office and demands that Haber stop using his dreams. "I want to be *cured*," Orr cries. Haber ignores Orr's real request and responds with the evasive, condescending observation that "wanting" to be cured is the first step toward getting better. Orr resents Haber's lies, evasiveness, and refusal to be candid. Haber will neither own up to using Orr's effective dreams for personal gain, nor admit that he knows Orr's effective dreams have the power to alter reality in the first place. Haber suggests that the reason they can't communicate is because they have a fundamentally different idea about their moral duty to the world: while Haber wants to improve the world, Orr disagrees, reasoning that things and people don't have purpose aside from their place within a larger whole.

Haber construes his and Orr's failure to see eye to eye as the consequence of their differing worldviews to avoid acknowledging his awareness of Orr's dreams, as well as his intentional exploitation of those dreams. It's unclear why Haber continues to deceive Orr, since it's abundantly obvious that Orr knows exactly what's going on. Orr's observation about people not having a purpose beyond their existence within a larger whole evokes the Taoist idea that the universe—and everything within it—exists as a single, interconnected entity. In contrast, Haber's opposing, Utilitarian idea that people have a moral duty to improve the world suggests that a person can separate themselves from the rest of the world. Haber gives credibility to the subjective experience of the individual, whereas Orr views the individual's experience as secondary to the sustained balance of the collective whole.

Haber's exuberant demeanor grows dark as he accuses Orr of being "peculiarly passive" for someone belonging to "the Judeo-Christian-Rationalist West." He mockingly asks Orr if he's studied any Buddhism. Orr ignores Haber's remarks and maintains that "it's wrong to force the pattern of things," citing "what happened yesterday" as an example of what can happen when one messes with things one shouldn't. Haber looks straight at Orr and asks, "What happened yesterday, George?"

Haber insinuates that Orr's adherence to principles derived from Eastern religions like Taoism or Buddhism is a sign of weakness or passivity. Haber's dismissive comment also casts Eastern philosophical traditions as incompatible with (what Haber regards to be) a Western adherence to logic and rationality. Orr's claim that "it's wrong to force the pattern of things" reaffirms his commitment to practicing wu wei *("effortless action"), remaining passive, and avoiding the deliberate, unspontaneous sort of actions Haber associates with "the Judeo-Christian-Rationalist West." Haber has the final word when he asks, "what happened yesterday, George?" Haber's mocking question implies that nothing "happened yesterday," which puts Orr back in his place by insinuating that Orr's belief that* anything *happened yesterday is indicative of Orr's insanity.*

Haber prepares Orr for today's session. He's started to drug Orr to make him less resistant to hypnosis. Orr sees no alternative and accepts the shot. As the drug kicks in, Haber grows more energetic. Orr thinks about today's newspaper headlines about the conflict in the Near East and knows that Haber's instructions during today's session will be to dream of an end to the war.

That Orr has no choice but to let Haber drug him underscores the vast disparity in power that exists between Orr and Haber.

Haber hypnotizes Orr, who begins to dream. Orr's dream begins in darkness. From darkness, fields emerge. Orr is walking down an old road, and there's a goose walking ahead of him. White stars emerge from the sky, with one star growing bigger, brighter, and redder before it explodes in a violent blast of light. Orr ducks for cover, but he's unable to look away from the star. He screams "let be, let be!" before returning to Haber's office.

The movement from darkness to light present in Orr's dream mimics the creation myth, and this, in turn, reflects the God-like power Haber assumes when he uses Orr's dreams to alter reality. It's unclear exactly what Orr is dreaming about here, but the violence of the dream suggests that Orr's unconscious is yet again attempting to thwart Haber's vain attempt to alter reality without incurring any consequences. Additionally, Orr's cries to "let be, let be" seem to convey his unconscious's attempt to resist Haber's influence.

When Orr comes to, he's trembling. Haber wonders why Orr's dream was so disturbing to him, since Haber's instructions were to dream about "peace." Orr describes his dream, and Haber laughs, likening it to an old science fiction movie. Orr demands to know Haber's exact hypnosuggestion, and Haber decides to make an exception just this once and let Orr see the taped footage of their session. In the tape, Haber instructs Orr to dream of a world free from war, mass killings, genocides, and nuclear and biological weapons: to imagine "peace as a universal lifestyle on Earth."

Orr's unconscious seems to have interpreted Haber's instructions to dream of "peace as a universal lifestyle on Earth" rather literally: the violence of the exploding stars in Orr's dream suggests that Orr followed Haber's specific instruction to promote peace on "Earth," without applying the instruction to the entire universe. Perhaps Orr unconsciously transplanted war from Earth to some other planet or galaxy.

After reviewing the footage, Orr decides his dream has technically stayed within Haber's guidelines, since all the dream's violence occurred in space, not "on Earth." Haber pauses and strokes his red-brown beard in a "calculated" way. Orr can sense that Haber's actually putting some thought into how he responds to Orr's dream rather than relying on his usual "inexhaustible fund of improvisation." Haber finally speaks, commenting on how "subtle" it was of Orr to use "the Defense of Earth" to symbolize peace. Still, Haber allows, it makes sense, since it was the imperative to band together to defeat an extraterrestrial "common foe" that stopped war in the Near East once and for all.

Orr's unconscious doesn't eradicate humanity's capacity for war and violence—it simply redirects humanity's focus away from one another and toward a new, "common foe": Aliens. Haber continues to manipulate and tease Orr by discussing the real effects of Orr's dreams in vague, metaphorical terms, referring Orr's literal creation of Aliens as a symbol of Orr's unconscious desire for world peace. Haber continues to pretend that his sessions with Orr are standard exercises in psychoanalysis rather than "calculated" efforts to control Orr's dreams; in this way, Haber reminds Orr who's in charge.

Orr replies that while he obviously agrees with Haber that ending the war was a good thing, his subconscious can't conceive of a completely peaceful world, which explains why he dreamed of a war against Aliens. Orr reminds Haber that his dreams are governed by the irrationality of his unconscious—not by his reasonable, waking mind—and it's this irrationality that caused Orr's dream to distort Haber's logical desire for world peace. Orr wonders if there's a different effective dreamer who'd be better suited for the job, since he's no longer willing to assume responsibility for what happens in his dreams; after all, if he's managed to put Aliens on the moon, who knows what's next?

Orr's inability to dream of a completely peaceful world reflects his inability to conceive of a universe over which he and his dreams have any real power: Orr can't believe in a completely peaceful world because he views violence as part of the balanced universe, and he views any single person's attempts to disrupt that balance by removing violence from the equation completely as ultimately futile. Orr's remarks here also reflect his distrust in the unconscious: he sees his unconscious as dangerous and irrational, and the effective dreams his unconscious produces as an obstacle that inhibits him from living in harmony with the universe.

Haber breaks his silence to assure Orr that the Aliens pose no immediate danger to the Earth. Orr feels suddenly compelled to scream at Haber and call out all his lies, though he thinks better of it and even manages to generate some sympathy for Haber. Orr imagines a scenario in which Haber isn't lying to him, but "to himself," struggling to maintain a grip on reality as he grapples with two, conflicting memories: one in which he is treating a delusional patient who thinks his dreams are real, and the other, in which the patient isn't delusional, and the dreams are real.

Orr's unceasing ability to feel sympathy for Haber is indicative of his centered, nonjudgmental personality.

Orr warns Haber that he's on the brink of mental collapse and begs him not to make him dream again, since he's terrified of the future monsters his subconscious might unleash on the Earth. Haber ignores Orr's real concerns and responds to his plea with vague psychobabble about not being afraid of the unconscious mind. It's twilight when Orr leaves the Institute.

Haber engages in psychobabble to give the outward impression that his treatment of Orr adheres to standard therapeutic practices. Haber's rambling also expresses his genuinely held belief that humans can use logic and rationality to solve most problems, and Haber views Orr's desire to suppress his dreams as a rejection of logic and rationality.

CHAPTER 7

Heather Lelache exits Dave's. Orr stood her up, and she's livid. Heather turns onto Morrison before remembering that this isn't the way to the office building of Forman, Esserbeck, and Rutti anymore. She tries a different way but becomes similarly disoriented. She approaches a building on Burnside, but it's plastered with "Condemned" signs. Heather recalls the odd hypnosis sessions she observed last week and thinks about the many questions she has for "Mr. Either Orr."

Heather's directional confusion shows that she's unconsciously retained a double memory of life before and after the Plague. Heather calling Orr "Mr. Either Orr" is a play on words that refers to Orr's capacity to retain double memories of reality before and after his effective dreams change it. "Mr. Either Orr" also reflects the balanced centeredness of Orr's personality: he's so middle-of-the-road that he's "either/or."

After Orr bails on Heather, she searches for him everywhere, including his flat. She contemplates calling Haber but remembers that Haber can't know that she and Orr know each other. Heather calls Orr repeatedly that night but gets no answer. As a last resort, Heather rents a car and heads to the Siuslaw National Forest, where Orr leases his cabin.

Heather's urgent need to talk to Orr is further proof that she knows—if only on an unconscious level—that something curious happened in Haber's office the other day.

The moon appears in the darkening sky and fills Heather with dread, reminding her of the Alien invasion. She remembers that the first act of aggression occurred just 10 years after the end of the war in the Near East, when the Aliens attacked the Lunar Base, killing 40 men. Heather mourns "the stupid hatred of the universe."

That Heather remembers the war in the Near East as having ended 10 years before the Alien invasion shows that she's internalized the latest world Orr's dreams have created, which traded global war for interplanetary war. Heather's lament of "the stupid hatred of the universe" aligns her worldview with Orr's, insinuating that powerful forces like "hatred," or violence, or death, are so intrinsically "of the universe" that they cannot be eliminated without radically disrupting the universe's natural balance.

Badly maintained roads make Heather's trip difficult, but she eventually makes it to the leased cabins in the Siuslaw National Forest. She approaches the only cabin with a light on and knocks on the door. Luckily, Orr answers the door, though he looks awful. Orr invites Heather inside and explains that he's too afraid to dream and hasn't slept since Saturday. Heather reminds Orr of their missed lunch date yesterday. Orr apologizes and offers Heather some coffee. Heather ponders Orr's "wholeness," likening him to "a block of wood not carved." She admires his immense strength, which is something she hadn't seen a lot of growing up—she always had to be the strong person people leaned on.

Orr's ragged state reflects the inadequacy of his attempt to control his dreams by suppressing them: if he looks so awful after only a few days, it's clear that he can't go on this way forever. Heather's comparison of Orr to "a block of wood not carved" is an allusion to the novel's title, since a lathe *is a machine that can be used to carve materials like wood. It's also likely an allusion to the Taoist principle of* P'u *or "the uncarved block," a reference to a thing's natural state of simplicity. Heather likens Orr to a solid block of material not yet shaped and diminished by the powerful force of the lathe. In emphasizing Orr's "wholeness," Heather suggests that escaping Haber's manipulative influence restores Orr's inner balance.*

Heather removes her coat and accepts Orr's ridiculously caffeinated cup of coffee. She remembers that she has a bottle of brandy in the car and brings it inside. Orr accepts a small shot, and Heather pours some brandy into her coffee. Orr explains that he's dozed off a few times since coming to the cabin, though always in a seated position, which makes it harder to dream. Orr knows he can't keep this up forever, but he needed to escape Haber. He wonders if the only way to stop his effective dreams is to kill himself, though he doesn't want that.

Orr acknowledges that suppressing his dreams is an inadequate, temporary solution to dealing with his effective dreams. The fact that he entertains suicide as a plausible (albeit undesirable) alternative reflects the strength of his moral conviction: he's so convinced that it's wrong to interfere with fate that he'd rather kill himself than allow his effective dreams to continue disrupting the universe's natural balance.

Orr asks Heather what happened to her in Haber's office on Friday. Heather admits that she has a double memory like Orr. It's hard for her to keep things straight now: she shows Orr a bruise on her forehead from when she walked into a wall a few days ago.

Unlike Haber, Heather doesn't attempt to wield power over Orr by denying her awareness of a double memory. Heather's honesty allows Orr to take comfort in the fact that his awareness of competing alternate universes is real and not a figment of his imagination.

Orr changes the subject to the war in the Near East. Heather tells Orr that her husband died in the war nearly seven years ago: three days before it was called off, and one day before the Aliens attacked the Moon base. Orr feels guilty about any possible role his dreams could've played in Heather's husband's death, but she insists that it wasn't his fault.

Heather's refusal to blame Orr for her husband's death shows that Orr and Heather's relationship is built on compassion, unlike Orr's relationship with Haber, which is built on deceit and manipulation.

Heather's voice grows quiet as she realizes that she remembers her husband dying twice: once right before the ceasefire, and once much earlier. She pauses. In her memory of the earlier death, the war "was still going on right now," and "there weren't any Aliens." Heather asks Orr if the Aliens were his creation, and he fills her in on his subconscious's insane response to Haber's hypnosuggestion to "dream about peace." Heather tells Orr that he didn't create the Aliens on his own: Haber and the Augmentor had coerced him into doing it. Orr has been addressing Heather as Miss Lelache up to this point, and she tells him to call her Heather. Orr tells her she has a pretty name.

Heather's double memory rises from unconsciousness to consciousness when she realizes she has two memories of her husband's death. This is a big moment for both characters. Their shared understanding of reality creates a closeness which is particularly special for Orr, whose awareness of multiple realities normally alienates and disempowers him.

Orr talks a bit about Haber's constant condescension and manipulation, but there's no "bitterness" or "resentment" in his words, and Heather admires him for it. She wonders if there are other people like Orr in the world.

Orr's refusal to be bitter or resentful reflects his centered, even-keeled personality. Heather regards Orr's passivity as a sign of strength, which is very unlike Haber, who considers it a weakness; Heather's appreciation for Orr's centeredness shows that she embraces the Taoist ideals Orr adheres to as opposed to the Utilitarian ethics espoused by Haber.

Orr and Heather assess Orr's options for dealing with Orr's effective dreams and Haber's abuse of them. Heather says Orr doesn't have any legal case against Haber: he's not really doing anything illegal, he's an important Government figure, and Orr's a mental patient. She asks Orr if he can take tranquilizers to prevent effective dreams, but Orr explains that he doesn't have a Pharm Card while he's on VTT, and Haber won't prescribe him any.

As a mental patient, Orr didn't have much power or credibility in the first place, but he has even less agency in the new world Haber has strategically created in his VTT sessions with Orr.

Suddenly, Heather has a grand idea: she can hypnotize Orr and feed him a hypnosuggestion to have an effective dream about Haber that makes him more invested in curing Orr and less invested in ruling the world. Orr claims that he's resistant to hypnosis, but Heather argues that it's really Haber he is resistant to, not hypnosis itself. Orr agrees to give Heather's idea a try.

Given the number of pages left in the novel, it's safe to assume that Heather's brilliant plan is going to backfire in one way or another. Heather's speculation that Orr might respond better to her hypnotic instruction than Haber's suggests that mutual cooperation can be more powerful than coercion.

Before they begin their hypnosis session, Orr and Heather share a meal. Heather tells Orr about her upbringing in Portland. Her dad was Black and her mom was white. They'd met at a political rally, when protests were still legal, and gotten married, though they didn't stay that way for long. After Heather's dad left, her mom fell apart. Heather's mom made pottery and worked odd jobs to get by the best she could, she become increasingly dependent on drugs, and she died after using a dirty needle in the post-Plague years. Heather's mom's estranged, affluent family took her in, and she thinks they see her as their "token negro." She tells Orr that her experiences as a biracial person leave her uncertain about her own identity, as she feels she's neither Black nor white. Orr tells Heather that she's brown: the color of the earth.

Heather and Orr might feel such a strong mutual connection because they both feel pulled in different directions. Orr feels torn between multiple realities, and Heather feels torn between identifying as Black or white. Heather's and Orr's internal struggles also seem to be exacerbated by their shared belief that these competing inner forces contradict *rather than* complement *each other. Orr's positive observation about Heather's skin being the color of the earth suggests that he's more open to embracing the idea that opposite forces have an interconnected, complementary relationship. Here, Orr disputes Heather's claim that her biracial identity makes her neither Black nor white, arguing instead that these opposite identities converge and complement each other to form something beautiful: something of the earth.*

Heather asks Orr about his childhood. Orr tells her he has more childhoods than he can keep track of. They compare the way their current world is better than the previous iterations—they're less malnourished now, for example—and Heather suggests that Orr's dreams might be a new kind of evolution, making things a little better or stronger with each new continuum. She reasons that this alone should absolve him of his guilt.

When Orr says he has more childhoods than he can keep track of, he's referring to the multiple childhoods his effective dreams have created for him. Heather's suggestion that Orr's dreams might be some kind of evolutionary force absolves Orr of responsibility by reframing his effective dreams as part of a larger, interconnected system.

Uninhibited by the brandy, Orr asks Heather if she remembers when the world ended in April 1998. Heather doesn't, though she also knows she *must* remember it, which frightens her. Orr describes the state of the world before it was destroyed. Only a handful of European countries had begun to address food scarcity, climate change, and overpopulation early enough, in the 1970s, so by the time the 1980s rolled around, most places were on the verge of collapse. The U.S.'s Constitution was rewritten in 1984, at which point the country became a police state, and it failed almost immediately. Schools closed. There wasn't a Plague, but there were smaller epidemics. Most people died of starvation. The war in the Near East began in 1993.

The problems that plagued the world prior to April 1998—overpopulation, climate change, and food scarcity—are extreme versions of many of the problems that plagued the world before Haber began using Orr's dreams to improve humanity's quality of life on earth. Orr's claim that the world ended in 1998 implies that the world that exists now is a version of reality that he restored with his dreams. There must be some underlying reason that Orr needs to be intoxicated to talk about this moment in history. Perhaps he's conflicted about the role he played in saving a world that was beyond saving—in deciding that humanity deserved another chance.

Orr pauses. He remembers trying to leave Portland on foot. He'd been sick and paused to rest on some cement steps in front of a row of burnt, destroyed houses. There were dandelions sprouting through cracks in the stairs. Orr couldn't get up, and he was suffering from delirium, fading in and out of consciousness. He'd notice the dandelions each time he came to, and they'd remind him that he and the rest of the world were dying. After that, Orr fell asleep. He dreamt about being home, and when he woke up, everything was fine, though he wasn't in his original home. Orr wishes he couldn't remember the end of the world. He tries to convince himself that it was just a dream, but he knows it isn't: nothing is real. He says, "there is nothing left. Nothing but dreams." Heather believes in Orr completely.

The dandelions and cement blocks Orr describes here also exist in the scene in Chapter 1 that immediately precedes Orr being caught abusing drugs. This implies that the scene from Chapter 1 depicts April 1998, or Orr's memory or dream of it. Orr's sorrowful remark about there being "nothing left. Nothing but dreams," reveals the root cause of his dislike and distrust of his effective dreams: he doesn't believe that they're real. To Orr, the dying world he observed in 1998 is more real than any subsequent, restored world his dreams can create; he hates his dreams because they are a lie, and he resents the role his unconscious plays in perpetuating that lie.

Heather promises Orr that he wouldn't be capable of doing anything he wasn't *meant* to: that everything that's happened was meant to be. She cradles him in her arms and urges him to stay awake long enough for her to hypnotize him. Heather sits Orr on the cot and instructs him to look into the flame of his lamp. Once Orr is in a trance, she tells him to have an effective dream in which Haber is honest and no longer power-hungry, and in which the Aliens are no longer on the Moon.

Heather's interpretation of Orr's dreams challenges his position that his dreams disrupt the universe's natural balance. Instead, she believes that the existence of Orr's dreams within the larger universe means that they actually complement and maintain the universe's natural rhythm rather than disrupt it. Given Orr's habit of interpreting hypnotic instructions in such a way that his dreams replace one form of suffering with a different, equally awful form of suffering, it's reasonable to predict that Orr will respond to Heather's instructions to dream the Aliens away from the moon by transplanting them elsewhere…perhaps somewhere closer to home, such as the earth itself.

Heather lets Orr sleep. To pass the time, she reads a novel about Russia during the Plague Years. Later on, she props open the front door and listens to the **roaring creek**. In the distance, she hears an eerie sound, like children singing. Heather shuts the door and reads some more before lying down beside Orr, gazing lovingly at his sleeping figure.

The novel uses water to symbolize cosmic balance and living in accordance with the Tao. *Here, the sound of the roaring creek might suggest that the universe is responding with its own complementary force to whatever change Orr's dream has imposed upon it.*

Heather hardly closes her eyes before a burst of brightness fills the cabin, and the floor beneath her quakes. She hears the ominous moan of distant sirens and shakes Orr awake. He smiles briefly before informing Heather that the Aliens have arrived. Heather realizes Orr has successfully followed her hypnosuggestion "to dream that the Aliens were no longer on the Moon."

Orr's unconscious responds to Heather's hypnotic instruction "to dream that the Aliens were no longer on the Moon" by dreaming the Aliens from the moon to the Earth. This change maintains universal balance in that it ensures that humanity still has a common enemy to band together to fight.

CHAPTER 8

An omniscient narrator summarizes the onset of the First Interstellar War. Oregon is the only portion of the American mainland to be invaded. Anti-Alien Ballistic Missiles are launched from Washington State and California to fight back, but the Alien ships reroute the missiles, sending them crashing back down to Oregon. An AABM hits **Mount Hood**, which causes the dormant volcano to become active and erupt later that day. Portland's air is filled with ash. The battle between Alien and Earth forces rages on.

When Mount Hood erupts, it symbolically transforms from a sleeping, unconscious mountain to an awakened, conscious volcano. If the novel aligns unconsciousness with effortless action and consciousness with deliberate action, then Mount Hood's awakening suggests that the current world is acting deliberately and not in accordance with the Tao.

From the yet-unbroken window of his office in the Institute Building, Haber looks down at the havoc below. He fled here after many failed attempts at trying to find Orr, and he's all alone. Haber has always prided himself on his "independence" and "free will," and he considers himself a loner. Today, though, he feels lonely and afraid.

Haber's values of "independence" and "free will" are opposite those espoused by Taoist thought, which emphasizes interconnectedness and effortless action.

Haber hears people ascending the staircase down the hall and suddenly recognizes Orr, who is limping, bloody, and accompanied by a disheveled woman who can barely walk. Orr explains that they'd spent the whole day trying to get back to town: the roads had been badly damaged by bombs. Orr asks Haber if the Aliens have reached the city yet, but Haber doesn't know. Orr thinks he saw an Alien with Heather and describes it as a "little silvery thing." He asks Haber if the Aliens are actually shooting at Earth. Haber tells Orr that the radio isn't reporting any casualties outside of civilians.

In yet another instance in which the universe restores its balance by responding to each action with a complementary action, Orr reluctantly returns to Haber, whom he'd wanted desperately to escape only a few days before. It's not clear exactly what's going on with the Aliens; though it's chaotic outside and there are bombs flying through the air, Orr's description of the Alien as a "little silvery thing," and the fact that the radio isn't reporting casualties, would imply that the Aliens aren't particularly violent, and that most of the ensuing chaos is caused by human efforts to fight back against what they perceive as a threat.

Haber takes Orr downstairs to get something to eat before they undergo a therapy session to correct Orr's mess. Haber and Orr bring their food to a table in Sleep Lab One, and Haber announces that he's figured out a way to make the Augmentor replicate Orr's d-state brainwaves. Now, Haber will be able to hook up Orr to the Augmentor, feed him the exact dream he wants him to dream, stop the Alien invasion, and give Earth a fresh start. Orr tells Haber that it's nice to finally talk openly with him about his effective dreams.

This is the first time Haber has acknowledged to Orr that he is aware of and *actively exploiting Orr's effective dreams, so it's an important moment in the development of Orr and Haber's relationship. Haber's sudden openness with Orr seems to be the consequence of Heather's hypnotic instruction for Orr to dream of a nicer Haber. Of course, this slight alteration to Haber's character does nothing to quell his ambition: in fact, Haber seems to have made considerable progress in Orr's absence, since he now claims that he's able to use the Augmentor to exercise even more precise power over Orr's dreams.*

Haber asks Orr if the Alien invasion "just happen[ed]" or if Orr created it himself, and Orr admits to the latter. This angers Haber, who thinks Orr has behaved carelessly. Just as Orr is about to explain that his Alien effective dream was no accident, there's a massive explosion outside. Orr hardly reacts to the noise, which strikes Haber as "abnormal," since just last week Orr was wracked with guilt over far smaller "ethical point[s]." Haber wonders if Orr isn't afraid of the invasion because he thinks it's just a dream. This makes Haber wonder if it *is* a dream and, if so, whose dream it is.

It's hypocritical of Haber to criticize Orr for being careless since all Haber does is meddle carelessly in Orr's dreams. Haber seems most upset by Orr's attempts to control his dreams without his supervision. Interestingly, in this scene, Haber and Orr momentarily switch roles: all of a sudden, it's Haber whose concerns about small "ethical point[s]" inspire existential anguish, and Orr who disregards all this, using his power of effective dreaming with very little consideration of consequence. Orr and Haber's temporary reversal of power suggests that the characters are incapable of maintaining an equal, mutually empowered relationship with each other: someone always has to have the upper hand.

Haber and Orr return to Haber's office just in time to see the window shatter. They hear a high-pitched sucking sound, and the air pulls them toward the blown-out window. Suddenly, they're unable to hear or see. Once they regain control of their senses, Haber takes cover beside his desk, and Orr rushes to the couch to comfort Heather. The air is cold, smoky, and smells of death. Heather wants to take cover in the basement, but Haber insists that he and Orr stay behind to induce an effective dream in Orr to end the invasion. Haber orders Heather to run to the basement and turn on the Emergency Generator to power the Augmentor.

Haber views his office window as a reflection of his social status: in the beginning of the novel, Haber laments not being able to afford an office with a view, and Haber's use of Orr's dreams to create a reality in which he has a position that affords him an office with a big window is one of the first ways he exploits Orr's power. Therefore, the shattering of the window in this scene reflects Haber's compromised position of power.

After Heather leaves, Haber turns on a Hypnotape he'd recorded earlier to hypnotize Orr, but the chaos unfolding outside makes it difficult for Orr to follow the tape's instructions. Suddenly, the building "leap[s] up like a spring lamb," and Haber can see an "ovoid" shape moving through the dark red, smoky air beyond the gaping window. Haber wants to flee, but Orr is already in a trance. Haber kneels beside Orr's ear and pleads with him to stop the Alien invasion and restore peace for "*everybody*." Haber turns on the Augmentor to guide Orr into the d-state, but before he can look at the EEG screen, the floating, "ovoid" shape appears and stops in the middle of the window.

The ovoid shape outside the window appears to be an Alien spacecraft. The spacecraft hovering threateningly outside Haber's beloved window symbolizes the extent to which Orr's independent effective dream has lessened Haber's power over Orr and the broader world. The subtext of Haber's instructions for Orr to dream that peace is restored for "everybody" is that Haber wants to reclaim the position of power and control he enjoyed before Orr's dream offset the balance of this earlier hierarchy.

Haber wraps himself around the Augmentor to protect it while keeping a close eye on the Alien ship hovering outside the window. Haber sobs hysterically as the ship flies closer, though he refuses to leave his precious machine unprotected. The "snout" of the ship smashes its way through the window frame. Haber hears a humming sound, and the ship's snout unscrews itself and falls to the office floor. A giant **sea** turtle-like being emerges from the snout. It stands on its hind legs and slowly points a metal, gun-like rod at Haber, who prepares to be shot.

Haber's decision to protect the Augmentor reflects his priorities: he's compelled to protect the machine at all costs because it's the means by which he'll gain complete control of Orr's dreams and, eventually, the world. In light of water's symbolic connection to Taoism, the fact that the Aliens resemble aquatic creatures (sea turtles) suggests that they, like Orr, adhere to certain Taoist principles, though this Alien's action of pointing a gun-like rod at Haber seems rather deliberate and not in accordance with the Tao.

But much to Haber's surprise, the rod emits speech. In a flat, mechanical voice, the Alien informs Haber that the Aliens are peaceful. The Alien inspects Haber's office and compliments his EEG machine, speculating that the device might convey that "the individual-person is iahklu'." The Alien asks if all humans are "capable of *iahklu'*," but Haber doesn't understand what the term means. The Alien apologizes for its communication-machine's inability to translate the word and then excuses himself, explaining that it must leave to establish peace with the other humans, who are presently "engaged in panic and capable of destroying selves and others."

The metal rod isn't a gun after all, the Aliens are peaceful, and it seems as though the ongoing battle is part of some big misunderstanding. Humanity's readiness to "engage[] in panic" and "destroy[] selves and others" is more proof that Haber's earlier attempt to use Orr's dreams to create world peace merely created a new target for humanity's violence rather than destroying humanity's capacity for hatred and violence, since humanity's capacity for violence must continue to exist in order to maintain the universe's natural balance. The Alien word iahklu' *is yet untranslatable, but the context in which the Alien uses it—to gesture toward the sleeping Orr—suggests that the word is related to sleeping, dreaming, or the unconscious mind.*

Haber notices that the explosions have stopped, though there are still sirens wailing in the distance and smoke in the air. He looks down at the dreaming Orr and realizes that his dreams haven't changed anything. Haber then turns off the Augmentor, wakes up Orr, and orders him to summarize his dream. To Haber's frustration, Orr merely describes the scene that just occurred between Haber and the Alien. Haber yells at Orr that he's remembering reality, not his dream, but Orr calmly speculates that the Augmentor might have "increased the immediacy" of the shift for Haber.

Haber can't register any changes created by Orr's dream, but this doesn't necessarily mean that no changes have occurred. Orr's instruction was to restore peace for "everybody." Is it possible that he dreamed of inner peace? This latest dream seems to be new territory for Orr—it (sort of) allows him to remain present in the room during the Alien's visit, and therefore present and able to reflect on the inner workings of his unconscious mind, which the very nature of unconsciousness usually prevents Orr from doing. Orr's primary struggle with his dreams stems from not being able to control and understand them, so this latest dream, in which he is afforded a rare opportunity to remember and consciously reflect on the content of that dream, seems to be a step in the right direction.

Orr changes the subject, urging Haber to use his Government connections to call Washington and explain that the "invasion" has all been a big misunderstanding: that the Aliens didn't realize they needed to communicate verbally with the humans. Orr tells Haber that the Aliens aren't actually hurting anyone, and the only people getting hurt are the civilians being struck down by Earth's Air Force. Besides, the Aliens themselves are indestructible beneath their metal suits. Haber goes along with Orr's plan, though he thinks it's highly illogical, "passive," and a waste of effective dreaming. While on hold with HEW, Haber asks Orr why he didn't just call off the invasion, and Orr replies that he can't "choose," he can only "follow."

If the Aliens have transcended the need for verbal communication, it implies that they've transcended a need for deliberate *gestures more broadly. This could support the theory that their species is influenced by the Taoist principles that guide Orr as well. Perhaps the Aliens have an interconnected relationship with each other (and the larger world) that enables them to communicate in some innate, interconnected manner that allows them to forgo language altogether. Orr's distinction between "choos[ing]" and "follow[ing"] reflects the distinction between deliberate action and the Taoist notion of "effortless action," or* wu wei. *To "choose" is to act deliberately, without provocation, and possibly in a manner that disrupts the universe's natural rhythm. To "follow," in contrast, is to react to some other stimuli, which evokes the quality of interconnectedness that is central to the concept of* wu wei.

Before Orr can elaborate, Haber gets to work convincing the Government to call off the attack on the Aliens. Orr leaves to check on Heather. As Haber talks to the officials, he realizes that he no longer needs Orr: that he, alone, "would lead his country out of the mess."

Haber's promise to "lead his country out of the mess" resonates with his earlier remark about having heroic daydreams. Though Haber might attempt to construe his desire to save the world as a strict adherence to Utilitarian ethics, it becomes increasingly clear that he's also very motivated by the possibility of others seeing him as a powerful, heroic figure.

CHAPTER 9

It's the third week of April. Orr heads to Dave's to meet Heather for a date, even though he knows she won't be there. These days, he's so overwhelmed by conflicting alternate realities that it's hard to keep anything straight. In this reality, Orr has a prestigious job with Civil Planning Bureau, and he hates it. Orr has always worked as a draftsman no matter which continuum he's in, but this is no longer the case after last Monday's dream, in which Haber made him drastically restructure the Federal and State Governments as part of some bigger plan.

It's unclear how Orr knows Heather won't be at Dave's. What is *apparent, however, is that Haber's new candidness allows him to be unrestrained in his quest for power, and the changes he makes are bolder than ever. Orr is used to maintaining an awareness of conflicting realities, so his inability to keep track of this latest version speaks to the incoherence and extreme nature of Haber's most recent alterations. That Haber's latest changes involve a drastic restructuring of the Federal and State Governments is probably a bad sign—it's within the realm of possibility that Haber has plans to take over the world.*

The latest version of reality frightens Orr because there's no "continuity" between it and his other existences. In every other reality, he'd been a draftsman, lived on Corbett Avenue, and used his dreams to improve the environment in some way. He could rely on the static unchangeability of things like geography and "human nature." Ever since Haber learned how to use the Augmentor to exercise more precise control over Orr's dreams, though, this continuity has begun to dissolve. Albert M. Merdle is still president, but the United States is a much different entity. Portland houses the World Planning Center, "the chief agency of the supranational Federation of Peoples," and is regarded as the "Capital of the Planet." Downtown is now a glamorous, futuristic hub dominated by WPC buildings, Government employees, and tourists.

The lack of continuity between this reality and the ones that came before it is troubling to Orr because it robs him of the ability to be certain about the reality of anything in his life. He can no longer use the tangible reference points of a consistent job or apartment to tether himself to the world. The lack of continuity in this new reality also reflects Haber's continued descent into power-hungry madness. His former adherence to Utilitarian ethics has been replaced by the selfish goal of making the planet revolve around his vision of a perfect world. The fact that Portland is now the "Capital of the Planet" is evidence of this: in giving Portland this distinction, Haber literally *rearranges reality so that it's centered around Haber's physical location.*

Orr tries and fails to remember the name of Heather's firm, and he can't find her name listed in the phonebook. Orr wonders if she exists in this reality to begin with and, if she does, if he'd recognize her: the Heather he'd known was brown, but everyone in this world is gray, ever since Haber made him dream of a world without "a racial problem." Orr realizes that he won't find Heather here; her biracial identity had been "an essential part of her," and without it, she ceased to exist.

Orr's failure to remember the name of Heather's firm reflects his growing disassociation from reality. Yet again, Orr's unconscious's dystopic response to Haber's utopian instructions to eliminate racism emphasizes two common critiques of Utilitarianism, which are the subjective, unqualifiable nature of happiness, and the unpredictability of consequence. Eliminating race might eliminate the social ill of racial prejudice, but it also eliminates things likeracial diversity, culture, and racial identity that are valuable to society. Heather's nonexistence is further evidence of the subjectivity of happiness.

Haber, in contrast, has only grown more powerful and self-assured with every new continuum, and Orr is more under his control than ever before. Voluntary Therapeutic Treatment is now called Personal Welfare Control, and Haber's new status makes him legally indestructible: he's now the Director of HURAD, the center of the World Planning Center, "the place where the great decisions [are] made."

As Orr grows weaker and less in touch with reality, Haber's grip on reality grows stronger, until he effectively uses Orr's dreams to promote himself to ruler of the world. The title of the organization he heads, the World Planning Center, reflects a grossly distorted adherence to Utilitarian ideals. The title suggests that people in the organization (mainly Haber) are capable of identifying what's best for the entire world and acting on those "great decisions."

In this continuum, the Alien landing wasn't such a big deal, since the Aliens had created their translation machines earlier and were thus able to convey their peaceful intentions ahead of time, apologize for the War in Space, and avoid the misunderstanding that created such chaos in the earlier continuum. The extraterrestrial beings have since been allowed to leave their landing site in the Oregon desert and mingle with the humans. The Earth's oxygen requires the Aliens to always wear their **turtle** suits, so nobody really knows what they look like. They seem intent on staying on Earth, and many have opened small businesses.

The ease with which the Aliens adapt to life on Earth reflects their natural ability to go with the flow, identify their harmonious place within the world, and engage effortlessly with the larger universe, which implies a Taoist influence on the Aliens' way of life. Additionally, the Aliens' sea turtle suits categorize them as aquatic creatures, which, in the context of the novel's use of water as a symbol for living in accordance with the Tao, *reinforces Taoism's influence on the Aliens at the symbolic level.*

The only problem left unsolved from the previous continuum is **Mount Hood**'s transformation into an active volcano, though in this reality, its awakening was naturally occurring and not the effect of a dropped bomb.

Mount Hood's status as an active volcano reflects the looming threat of danger that Haber's sustained, conscious meddling with fate poses for the universe.

In the present, Orr sits in a crowded restaurant and eats a tasteless plate of food. He grieves for the non-existent Heather. Through the restaurant's glass walls, Orr watches crowds of people make their way toward the Portland Palace of Sport to engage in "togetherness," in which they watch athletes fight each other, sometimes to death.

The prevalence of murder for sport in this new world is further proof that willing into existence world peace hasn't eradicated humanity's capacity for violence and hatred. Haber's meddling can't fully alter the fundamental truth of human nature. That these sporting events are called "togetherness" suggests that this capacity for violence is a shared, uniting aspect of human nature.

As Orr walks, he encounters a citizen's arrest in which a man apprehends and administers euthanasia to a terminally ill man using a hypodermic gun. Orr pushes through the crowd and tries not to watch. All citizens who have earned a Civic Responsibility Certificate carry a hypodermic gun, though Orr's status as a psychiatric patient prohibits him from carrying one that's loaded. In this continuum, being afflicted by a mental illness isn't a crime, unlike "communicable or hereditary disease[s]." Orr wonders how the man could've had cancer in the aftermath of the carcinomic Plague and decides that must've occurred in a different continuum.

This scene presents another example of the moral dubiousness of Haber's Utilitarian ethics: here, citizens can murder people who have hereditary diseases with the goal of eventually removing such diseases from the human experience. This arrangement suggests that the health of future generations outvalues the individual lives of the people murdered in order to make possible this healthy future. Quantifying happiness and suffering forces one to make uncomfortable decisions about what kind of consequences justify what kind of moral transgressions. What's more, this "Civic Responsibility" program only operates under the assumption that new, worse diseases won't develop in place of diseases such as cancer and bring about more suffering that one could've imagined.

Orr arrives at the HURAD Tower, which looms above the entire city and the valleys that lie beyond it. The tower's entrance bears the message, "THE GREATEST GOOD FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER."

The message at the HURAD Tower's entrance is a play on a quote by Jeremy Bentham, an 18th- and 19th-century English philosopher who is considered to be the founder of modern Utilitarianism.

Orr walks to the West Wing and enters Haber's magnificent, half-acre office suite. Haber is in his office making adjustments to the Augmentor. Haber calls hello to Orr but doesn't get up from his work to greet him. As Haber fiddles with the machine, he casually asks Orr if he'd like to know the results of the psychological assessments he took when he was admitted to the Medical School. Haber's head emerges from beneath the Augmentor, and his eyes "reflect[] the light of the wall-size window." Haber's beard is black now and, like everyone else's, his skin is gray. Haber informs Orr that he is "so sane as to be an anomaly," having scored right down the middle on every test. Though an older Med School doctor thinks Orr's middling scores are a sign of "holistic adjustment," Haber regards them as "self-cancellation." "Both, neither," he sneers at Orr. "Either, or."

Haber's office is completely transformed since the first time Orr stepped foot in it, and its exaggerated size and luxuriousness suggests that it's actually greed and power that drives Haber to change the world—despite the grand display of Utilitarianism that adorns the entrance to the HURAD Tower. The opinion of the doctor who regards Orr's average test scores as a sign of "holistic adjustment" is in line with the Taoist thought espoused throughout the novel, but Haber's aggressive embrace of deliberate action and individual power prevents him from seeing the virtue of a balanced existence, which is why he mocks Orr, accusing him of willful "self-cancellation."

After Haber finishes working on the Augmentor, he tells Orr they're going to try something new today and attach him to the machine while he's awake. Haber will use the machine to stimulate select pieces of Orr's brain activity, compare those with his d-state patterns, and finally find out how Orr's effective dreams work. Orr repeats his desire to be cured, not used, and Haber criticizes Orr's resistance to change, arguing that he needs to accept that "the whole universe [...] is essentially change." Orr takes an opposite stance, arguing that "stillness" is another central characteristic of the universe.

Orr's and Haber's opposite views on whether the world is in a state of constant "change" or "stillness" is another instance in which the novel portrays the two men as counterbalancing forces. While Haber and Orr are both technically correct—change and stillness are both present, integral forces at play in the world—Haber's stance that "the whole universe [...] is essentially change" enforces an absolute, homogenous view of the world to justify his Utilitarian ethics. Such a view discounts the Taoist notion that the universe's natural rhythm is one of a wave-like ebb-and-flow that is (ideally) devoid of the deliberate, conscious sort of "change" Haber is describing. In contrast, Orr's stance that stillness is a *(but not* the*) characteristic of the universe allows for this wave-like rhythm.*

Haber presents Orr with a hypothetical situation in which Orr stumbles upon a woman who's alone in the jungle and dying of a snakebite. Orr carries the antidote with him in his kit. Does Orr think it's right to let the woman die—to "let her be?" Orr says it depends: does reincarnation exist and, if so, would saving this woman deny her the chance to be reborn into a better life? And what will the woman do after Orr cures her? Will she return to her village and commit multiple murders? There's simply no way to know that saving the woman "is good or evil or both." Haber laughs at Orr's response and Orr smiles tepidly.

Haber's thought experiment is intended to make Orr choose between two opposite outcomes: using his antidote to save the woman or leaving her to die. Orr thinks Haber's premise is oversimplistic and ignores the infinite number of consequences made possible by either choice. Orr's disagreement that anyone can know with certainty whether an action "is good or evil or both" is a critique of Utilitarianism's failure to account for the unpredictability of consequences, and its emphasis on the consequences of actions over the actions themselves.

As Haber finishes applying electrodes to Orr's scalp, Orr mentions the Citizen's Arrest for euthanasia he witnessed on his way to HURAD Tower. Haber nods sympathetically, acknowledging the difficulty of "accept[ing] the use of controlled violence for the good of the community." Orr observes a phoniness in Haber's tone and wonders if Haber likes the world he's created.

Haber's justification of "controlled violence for the good of the community" reflects his adherence to Utilitarian ethics, yet the phoniness Orr detects in Haber's tone suggests that Haber has become disillusioned with his own principles.

Haber tells Orr to keep his eyes open. He switches on the Augmentor, and Orr is walking around downtown when an Alien bumps into him. Orr apologizes, and the Alien stops and speaks to him through its translator machine: "Jor Jor," which is Orr's name in their language. The Alien tells Orr that he's a "human capable of iahklu'," which "troubles self." It continues, speaking cryptically of Aliens being disturbed as well, of "concepts cross[ing] in mist," and that "volcanoes emit fire." The Alien offers Orr advice: "snakebite serum is not prescribed for all," and: "before following directions leading in wrong directions, auxiliary forces may be summoned, in immediate-following fashion: Er' perrehnne!" Orr repeats back the Alien word, gripped by a deep desire to understand the cryptic message. Before parting ways, the Alien tells Orr that "speech is silver, silence is gold," and "Self is universe."

The Alien's observation that Orr is "capable of iahklu'*" is further evidence that* iahklu' *has something to do with effective dreaming. That the Alien offers advice about how to navigate* iahklu' *suggests that Aliens are quite familiar with, and perhaps capable themselves, of effective dreaming. The Alien's comment that "snakebite serum is not prescribed for all" seems to imply that the Aliens, like Orr, possess a more nuanced, fluid view of the moral imperative to act. The Alien's two final comments, "speech is silver, silence is gold," and "self is universe" seem to embrace a Taoist view of the world, in which simply existing (silence) is better than deliberate action (speech), and that the self—or any living being—is interconnected with and therefore indistinguishable from the collective universe.*

Orr is back in Haber's office. Haber is freaked out: apparently, Orr's thoughts had produced odd, intense brainwaves in his cortex without being supplemented by the Augmentor. Haber demands to know what Orr was thinking. Orr is extremely reluctant to pass along his conversation with the Alien to Haber and only mentions that he ran into an Alien on the street. Haber hypothesizes that Orr's unconscious must have been thinking about the euthanasia he saw performed earlier that day. Orr doesn't correct him. Orr senses that Haber is looking for reassurance and realizes that he is "past reassurance."

Orr's intense brainwaves seem to be the consequence of receiving valuable wisdom from the Alien. It's clear that the Aliens know a lot about the dream world and look to Taoist principles to navigate their way through it. Perhaps the Aliens hold the key that will allow Orr to control—or at least, make peace with—his effective dreams. That Orr no longer needs "reassurance" suggests that he has already embarked on a path of healing.

Haber restarts the EEG and makes Orr undergo a second session. In this session, Orr remains on the couch in Haber's office when he's suddenly overcome by "a sense of well-being, a certainty that things were all right, and that he was in the middle of things." He feels himself regain the sense of inner balance he lost when the world ended four years ago. When Orr comes to, he assumes his good feelings were the work of the Augmentor, but Haber, barely concealing his irritation, tells him the device isn't doing anything. They begin another session with Haber instructing Orr to close his eyes and think of a red cube.

A lack of certainty has been something that's always plagued Orr, particularly as of late, since Haber's alterations have deprived reality of its former continuity. Now, though, thanks to the Alien's cryptic message, Orr feels centered and "in the middle of things," having found continuity and balance within himself. In this moment, Orr's power is greater than Haber's, which is fully externalized and dependent on earthly notions like machines and power.

When Orr's final session is over and Haber detaches him from the machine, Orr finds that the "serenity" he experienced earlier is still with him, and he boldly tells Haber he won't let him use his dreams any longer. Haber ignores Orr's request, but Orr refuses to back down this time. Haber stares deeply at Orr before sitting at his desk. He tells Orr that he's on the cusp of a breakthrough: he'll soon be able to use the Augmentor to induce effective dreaming in anyone and will no longer need Orr. Until then, Haber needs Orr's cooperation, and if he can't get it willingly, he'll be coerced through drugs or a Personal Welfare Constraint.

Heeding the Aliens' cryptic advice restores Orr's moral centeredness, which emboldens him to stand up to Haber. That Orr carries the "serenity" he experienced in his dream into consciousness suggests that he's learning to engage his conscious mind in the effortless, spontaneous manner that is normally only possible in the dream world. Haber's blunt admission that he's going to use Orr's dreams even if Orr doesn't consent to it shows how corrupted Haber has become.

Haber tries to reason with Orr that it's illogical to quit now, after they've made so much progress, but Orr disagrees: the more Haber experiments with the Augmentor, the worse the world becomes, and Orr thinks the worst is yet to come if Haber starts having his own effective dreams. Haber rebuffs Orr's claim by listing all the humanitarian feats they've accomplished together, such as eliminating cancer and overpopulation. Orr argues that these things don't matter if Haber's society is full of joyless people who have no sense of personal freedom. Haber accuses Orr of sabotaging his visions of progress with his "deviousness and stupidity," citing Heather and Orr's hypnosis session leading to the Alien invasion. Orr tells Haber that Heather is dead. Haber is glad, since Lelache was a bad influence on Orr, who was a "moral **jellyfish**" with "no altruism" to begin with.

Orr believes that the coercive, deliberate force Haber had to apply to accomplish his humanitarian projects renders the positive consequences of those projects obsolete. Whereas Haber's Utilitarian worldview values the consequence of an action over the action itself, Orr's Taoist worldview values the actions themselves, condemning forceful or deliberate actions—regardless of their corresponding consequences—on the basis that they disrupt the natural balance of the universe and, therefore, create as much suffering for humanity as they do happiness. When Haber calls Orr a "moral jellyfish," he insinuates that Orr is spineless and too cowardly or indifferent to participate in acts of "altruism" that could make the world a better place. Haber's use of the jellyfish as a symbol of weakness upends the positive image of the jellyfish presented in the opening scene of Chapter 1. Haber's invocation of the jellyfish to associate inaction with weakness reinforces the incompatibility of his worldview with the Taoist ideas that the Aliens and Orr look to for balance and fulfillment.

Orr and Haber continue to argue back and forth. Orr realizes it's useless to try to communicate with Haber, who is just "speechmaking" at this point, staring at Orr with his "opaque eyes." Haber makes a grand speech about new scientific concepts needing to be "replicable" to be useful to humanity. He claims that Orr's "e-state" is as useless as "a key locked inside a room," so long as Orr selfishly keeps his power to himself. Haber vows to retrieve the "key" to effective dreaming and gain full control of the world. In Haber's new world, "nothing will be left to chance, to random impulse, to irrational narcissistic whim." Haber resolves not to let Orr's "will to nihilism" defeat his "will to progress." Haber promises to cure and release Orr once Haber has discovered how to induce an effective dream in himself.

Haber's "opaque eyes" symbolize his unwillingness to communicate honestly with Orr. Haber needs to maintain the upper hand in every situation, so he avoids putting himself in situations that demand vulnerability, such as open communication. Haber's claims about making a world where "nothing will be left to chance, to random impulse, to irrational narcissistic whim" reflects his rejection of the Taoist principle of wu wei, *or effortless action. Haber believes that letting things run their natural course will lead to destruction and suffering, and that the world needs human interference to steer things in the right direction. Haber associates deliberate action with "progress" and Orr's inaction with "nihilism," or the belief that life is meaningless. He sees Orr's inaction as indifference, when Orr's inaction actually reflects a deep respect for the collective universe* independent *of its relationship to humanity: he believes in a universal meaning beyond humanity's ability to comprehend, which is why he refuses to impose himself and his whims on it. In this way, Haber's comment about creating a world where "nothing will be left […] to irrational narcissistic whim" is ironic, since the act of creating such a world is* itself *an irrational narcissistic whim.*

Orr tries to convince Haber that undergoing an effective dream by himself will be dangerous, but Haber is too wrapped up in his plans to be reasoned with. Once the whole world is living under the control of his effective dreams, he declares, "this world will be like heaven, and men will be like gods!" Orr mumbles "**volcanoes** emit fire" beneath his breath, but Haber doesn't hear him. Orr leaves and promises to return to Haber's office tomorrow at 5:00.

Haber's declaration that "this world will be like heaven, and men will be like gods" betrays his unchecked egotism: he regards himself as a god who possesses the power of creation. "Volcanoes emit fire" is a reference to the advice the Alien gave Orr in his dream earlier in this session. Since a volcano is an awakened or "conscious" mountain, the phrase suggests that consciousness, or conscious/deliberate action, "emit[s] fire," or creates chaos. The Alien's message—and the message Orr is relaying to Haber now—is that Haber should stop consciously meddling with fate if he doesn't want to get burned.

CHAPTER 10

It's only 3:00 p.m., but Orr decides not to return to work. Though Orr's memory tells him he's had his job for five years, it "ha[s] no reality for him." Orr knows that in rejecting reality he risks "the loss of the sense of free will," but he can no longer exist in this "hollow," unreal reality. He vows to go home, dream freely, and accept whatever new existence those dreams would bring.

To Orr, reality is an interconnected system where every living being has the "free will" to impact and be impacted by other living beings, which results in a balance derived from the give-and-take rhythm which free will allows. The world Haber created feels "hollow" to Orr because its absence of free will leaves it unbalanced and meaningless: nothing matters because nothing contributes to the higher purpose of maintaining the universe's collective balance—the balance (or imbalance) is maintained and altered by Haber alone.

Orr exits the funicular early and walks toward his district. He examines the struggling stores and restaurants that dot the streets and walks into an antique store that looks like a place Heather's mother might have worked.

A funicular is a cable-operated railroad that consists of counterbalanced ascending and descending cars. One might interpret the dualism of the funicular's operating mechanism as a physical example of the Taoist concept of yin and yang, *because the opposing forces of the cars complement rather than counteract each other.*

The Alien shopkeeper greets Orr. Orr asks the Alien if he can define "iahklu'" for him. The Alien pauses a moment before explaining that this word is "incommunicable" in Orr's language. He extends a "flipperlike extremity" and introduces himself as Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe. Orr shakes its hand, staring up at the Alien's nearly opaque headpiece. He wonders if there's anything inside the Alien's armor.

The opacity of the Alien's headpiece parallels the opacity of Haber's eyes, so it makes sense that Orr might be wary about what—if anything—lies beneath the Alien's headpiece. That iahklu' *is "incommunicable" in Orr's language implies that it has relevance to concepts beyond the scope of human understanding.*

Orr asks Ennbe if he knows anyone named Lelache, but Ennbe does not. Orr shops some more before settling on a bust of Franz Schubert that almost looks like a Buddha. After he pays, he asks Ennbe if it's possible to control iahklu'. Ennbe struggles to speak in terms Orr will understand. Finally, he walks away and returns with a Beatles record, "With a Little Help from My Friends," and offers it to Orr. Orr thanks him, deeply moved. As Orr walks home from the antique store, he thinks it make sense that the Aliens get along with him, since it was he who invented them. Orr thinks about being "interconnected" with the worlds he's created.

That Orr compares the bust of Schubert (a 19th century Austrian composer of classical music) to a Buddha reflects his desire to project ideas derived from Eastern philosophy (Buddhism) onto Western culture. Ennbe's decision to convey iahklu' *gesturally rather than through language reflects the advice Orr gleaned from the Alien in this dream earlier that day: that silence is superior to words and, by extension, that effortless action is superior to deliberate action. Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe's effortless action of giving the gift to Orr results in a feeling "interconnected[ness]" that counteracts the isolation and meaninglessness that characterize Haber's world.*

Orr, on the other hand, grows more distant from Haber with each new continuum, and the aspects of the world Haber coerced him into creating are the things to which Orr feels least connected. Orr agonizes over Haber's earlier snakebite analogy and tries to justify what he did in April four years ago, though it's hard for him to think about "the burned place." Orr anguishes over his conflicting responsibility to help others and not to play God. If a person's going to play God, Orr reasons, they "have to know what [they're doing]," which Haber does not.

Orr regards his act of restoring the world after its collapse in April 1998 as no different than Haber's attempts to improve the world now: he sees both actions as reckless abuses of power that disrupt the universe's natural rhythm. Orr thinks it's immoral to act on behalf of others—even if one is well-intentioned—because no mere mortal is capable of predicting the consequences of their actions.

Orr arrives at his building and borrows a phonograph from Mannie Ahrens. They share a pot of cannabis tea before Orr takes the phonograph back to his apartment to listen to the Beatles record. He listens to "With a Little Help from My Friends" 11 times before falling asleep.

The number 11 might allude to Chapter 11 of the Tao Te Ching *(one of Taoism's foundational texts), which discusses the importance of emptiness. The chapter begins by describing the hole at the hub of a wheel that allows the wheel to turn and be useful. Perhaps the novel is implicitly comparing the hole at the center of the Beatles record to the hole at the center of the wheel.*

Heather awakens on the floor of a bare room, feeling groggy from Mannie's marijuana. George is asleep next to the turntable, which is still playing the Beatles record. Heather turns off the record and heads to the kitchen. All there is to eat is pig liver, which is gross but a good value for three meat-ration stamps. Heather prepares the liver and sets the table in the kitchen, still groggy. Orr enters the room. He stops and stares at Heather before smiling a broad, genuine smile, which touches Heather. Orr murmurs "my dear wife" and takes Heather's hands in his own. He looks at Heather's gray hands and says, "you should be brown." Heather sees tears in Orr's eyes, and, for just a moment, she remembers everything.

Orr abandons the impossible feat of controlling his effective dreams and gives in to them, letting his unconscious guide him where he's meant to go. In so doing, Orr replaces the deliberateness of his attempts to exert power over his dreams with the effortless action of relinquishing that power. This seems to be the essence of iahklu'*: to let one's experiences wash over oneself instead of trying to control or impose a narrative onto one's experiences. Orr's effortless dreaming allows him to restore a version of Heather to be his wife, though the only version of her that can exist in Haber's dystopic, gray world is but a shadow of her former self, since being biracial was such a critical component of her identity. This version of Heather also has no conscious awareness of her former self or the experiences that former self shared with Orr.*

But the moment passes, and Heather takes Orr in her arms, pleading with her husband not to go back to Haber, who is "destroying" him. Orr laughs, insisting that nothing can destroy him if he "ha[s] a little help from [his] friends." Orr tells Heather he's going to go back to Haber but not to worry: their time together is almost done. Orr and Heather make love after dinner and fall asleep in each other's arms. Heather dreams of "the roaring of a **creek** full of the voices of unborn children singing," and Orr dreams of "the open sea."

Orr's comment about having "a little help from his friends" implies that he's going to use the understanding of iahklu' *he gained from listening to the Beatles record to protect himself against Haber. Heather and Orr both dream of water: Heather's dream evokes the "roaring" creek she heard at the cabin the night of the Alien invasion, which suggests that she unconsciously remembers this previous reality. It also poses an interesting question about reality: Heather's previous existence is real, but it remains unreal or inaccessible to her because she can't contemplate it with her conscious mind. Orr dreams of an open sea, which evokes the opening scene of the novel, in which a jellyfish gains strength and reassurance from existing with the ocean's ecosystem and moving in accordance with the natural rhythm of the ocean's tide. Orr is now that jellyfish, navigating the dream world by simply existing within it instead of by trying to control it.*

The next day, Heather leaves the office of Ponder and Rutti, where she works as a legal secretary, to meet Orr at the HURAD tower for his therapy session at 5:00. When she sees Orr emerge from the trolley, she's filled with a feeling of intense love for him. Heather vows to destroy Haber if he hurts Orr. Heather rarely thinks of violence—she doesn't even swear—but she feels "bolder" today. Orr and Heather greet each other affectionately. Heather tells Orr she'll wait for him downstairs, but Orr asks her to accompany him to Haber's office.

In addition to being a grayer version of her former self, this Heather is also much milder: she's a secretary for a lawyer instead of a lawyer herself, she doesn't swear, and she considers the "bold[ness]" she feels today to be entirely out of character. The Heather that exists in this version of reality is mild because she has no choice but to be: deprived of their individuality, the citizens of Haber's hypercontrolled world are shadows of their former selves. In particular, the raceless quality of Haber's world prevents Heather from accessing the biracial identity that had formerly influenced the way she oriented herself in relation to the rest of the world.

Haber appears in a doorway as Orr is signing in with the autoreceptionist; Heather has met him just once before, and she's afraid of him. In a loud, enthusiastic voice, Haber proclaims that today will mostly likely be Orr's last session. As Haber talks, Heather stands in awe of his "larger than life-size" demeanor. She's amazed that such a renowned scientist as Haber would take the time to treat Orr, who is nobody.

Haber's "larger than life-size" character reflects his desire for complete control; Haber doesn't want to engage in an equal, interconnected experience with other living beings—he wants to rule over them.

Orr, Heather, and Haber enter Haber's office. Haber, whom Heather describes as "huge, like a grizzly bear," begins attaching electrodes to Orr. Haber hypnotizes Orr and gives him the hypnosuggestion to dream an effective dream that he's "completely normal." When Orr wakes up, Haber instructs, he'll have a memory of once believing he could dream effectively, but he'll know this memory isn't true. Orr will dream a "pleasant" dream, and whatever "symbolism" that dream utilizes will be the "effective content" that enacts the new reality in which he cannot dream effectively. As Haber speaks the word "Antwerp" to put Orr to sleep, Heather hears Orr mumble something she can't make out. It reminds her of last night, when he mumbled the words "air per annum" in his sleep.

Bears hibernate, so perhaps Heather's description of Haber as "huge, like a grizzly bear" foreshadows Haber's plans to "hibernate" by inducing an effective dream in himself once he's finished using Orr. Haber is finally following through on his promise to cure Orr, despite Orr having asked for this since the very beginning of the novel. Ironically, Orr's understanding of iahklu' *seems to suggest that he no longer needs Haber to cure him—at least, not in the way he did at the start of the novel, when his main gripe with his dreams was their control over him. Now, Orr doesn't have to worry about the impossible feat of controlling or suppressing his effective dreams, because he recognizes a third solution, which is simply to relinquish control, let the dreams be, and trust that their (and his) effortless participation in the larger universe will guide them where they're meant to go. When Heather thinks she overhears Orr mumble the words "air per annum," he's actually saying* Er' perrehnne, *which is the term Orr learns from an Alien he sees in a dream, who teaches him to use the term to guide him through troubled dreams.*

As Heather watches Orr sleep, Haber turns on the Augmentor. He fiddles with the equipment as Orr drifts between dreams. Haber alternates between observing Orr and talking to Heather; Haber intimidates Heather, though, and she wishes he'd just let them sit in silence.

Haber's compulsion to fill silence reflects his resistance to Taoist thought. He can't let anything be: he feels compelled to shape even silence with his thoughts, his voice, and his influence.

Haber turns to Orr, who is sleeping, and prompts him to nod if he can hear him. Orr nods. Haber gives Orr a hypnosuggestion to dream that the **Mount Hood** mural is on the office wall. Haber finishes his suggestion and says "Antwerp," which is supposed to induce Orr into a dream state, but nothing happens: the machines are still. "With a Little Help from My Friends" enters Heather's head and refuses to leave. Suddenly, Orr wakes up. Haber is livid. The Augmentor was stimulating Orr with d-state patterns, which should have made him dream—not wake up. Haber determines that Orr has managed to override the machine's pattern simulation.

In instructing Orr to dream that the Mount Hood mural is on the office wall, Haber is trying to gauge whether Orr is cured: if the mural fails to appear, it will mean Orr can no longer dream effectively. When Orr wakes up without Haber's prompting, it's indicative that something has gone wrong: perhaps Orr's new understanding of the dream makes him more resistant to Haber's hypnotic suggestions. That "With a Little Help from My Friends" pops into Heather's head certainly implies that Orr is focusing on the wisdom Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe and his gift imparted to him and using it as protection against Haber.

Haber asks Orr to recall his dream. Orr correctly remembers the dream about the **Mount Hood** mural on the wall behind Heather; Haber notes that the wall is bare. Of the first dream, Orr recalls a dream about dreaming; the dream-dream was banal and unremarkable—he'd been buying a new suit. When the store employees checked his height and weight, both measurements were average. Haber laughs at the banality of Orr's dream.

Haber sees the Mount Hood mural's absence and the banality of Orr's dream as proof that Orr can no longer dream effectively and, by all accounts, Haber's assessment is correct. But Haber is also unaware of the new, nuanced understanding of the dream world Orr has acquired with the help of his Alien mentors, so it's also possible that Orr can still dream effectively but is somehow hiding this ability from Haber.

Haber is immensely pleased with the session's success. He laughs too long and loudly before announcing that Orr is finally relieved of his duties. Heather wonders if Haber is acting strangely or if he's always this hyped up. Orr asks Haber if he's ever discussed dreaming with an Alien, or Aldebaranian, as they're officially known. Haber says he hasn't; a scientist in Washington conducted some preliminary tests on some of them, though the communication gap made interpreting the results difficult. At this point, it's unclear to the scientists whether the Aldebaranians are rational creatures, or whether they're simply mimicking the rational behaviors they observe in humans.

Haber's decision to terminate his relationship with Orr is entirely selfish: their therapy sessions end because Haber is done using Orr, not because Orr is cured. Haber thinks the Aliens have nothing to teach him about dreams because they (supposedly) lack the capacity for rational thought. This reflects Haber's adamant belief that confronting life's uncertainties with rationality and logic offers the most productive, direct path toward understanding and personal fulfillment. Haber subjectively interprets the Aliens' go-with-the-flow relationship to the world as symptomatic of their mental inadequacy or unwillingness to think for themselves, when in reality (and as Orr knows) it's not that the Aliens lack the ability to rationalize, but that their worldview prioritizes an effortless, spontaneous engagement with the world over a rational, deliberate one.

Orr asks Haber if he knows what "iahklu'" means. Haber doesn't. Orr tells Haber it would be wise to talk to an Alien about dreaming and *iahklu'* before he induces any effective dreams in himself, since the Aliens know far more about the dreamworld than any human.

Bringing up iahklu', *which can be felt but not rationalized, since there's no way to translate it to English, is Orr's indirect way of cautioning Haber against using rationality to understand and control dreams.*

Haber dismisses Orr's advice as mystical mumbo-jumbo and as the antithesis of logic. Orr makes a final plea to Haber to say the Alien word "Er' perrehnne" before he uses the Augmentor on himself, which will give him "a little help from your friends." Heather thinks Orr's gone crazy and wonders if the treatment is to blame. Haber pokes fun at Orr's philosophizing, telling Heather that Orr's smarts are "wasted as a draftsman," which confuses Heather, as Orr is a designer, not a draftsman. Orr and Heather leave Haber's office, and Heather complains about how fake Haber is.

Haber ignores Orr's advice about Er' perrehnne *because he thinks he can rely on knowledge and rationality to control the dream world. Haber's refusal to heed Orr's advice is also the consequence of his dangerously inflated ego: Haber sees himself as intelligent, powerful, and above asking for "a little help from your friends."*

As Orr and Heather exit the building, Heather suggests they eat at Chinatown but swiftly corrects herself—Chinatown had been demolished a decade ago. Heather's sudden forgetfulness puzzles her. She suggest they go to Ruby Loo's instead.

Heather forgets about Chinatown's demolition because she's conflating the present reality with an unconscious memory of an alternate universe in which Chinatown existed.

Orr and Heather arrive at Ruby Loo's, which is located in the Lloyd Center, an old, half-abandoned shopping center. Heather looks up at the jade green sky and feels her anxiety leave her, but the relief is temporary: she feels a sudden "shifting" that makes her stop in her tracks. The place seems "spooky" to her. Orr says nothing but looks concerned. A too-warm wind rips through the air; the neon restaurant sign no longer bears any words. Heather runs to a wall and cries, fearing it's she who's insane. She demands to know what's going on.

Reality is "shifting" so visibly that even Heather, who has only an unconscious awareness of multiple realities, can sense that something isn't right. The suddenly odd "spooky" quality of the world suggests that Haber has induced an effective dream in himself, failed to heed Orr's advice to consult with an Alien beforehand and, as a result, something has gone horribly wrong.

Orr tells Heather he needs to return to Haber's office, ordering her to wait for him in the restaurant. Heather doesn't listen and follows Orr to the funicular station. She demands to know what's going on. Orr explains to Heather that Haber is dreaming and gestures for her to look out the window. Heather looks outside and sees that the **river** has run dry. Downtown, skyscrapers are melting into puddles on the ground. The funicular moves too fast and doesn't stop. As it climbs higher into the sky, **Mount Hood** comes into view, and they spot the volcano just as it erupts. Heather thinks back to the odd feeling that came over her as she looked at the jade green sky, and it now strikes her as "a sort of emptiness," an indication that things had gone "the wrong way."

The novel uses water to symbolize cosmic balance and living in accordance with the Tao, *so absence of water in the riverbed indicates that Haber's dream, which is his deliberate, final attempt to control the world, is throwing the world out of balance. Mount Hood fulfills a similar function, with its lava reflecting the chaos that Haber's effective dream has unleashed onto the world.*

Orr exits the funicular car at the terminal. Heather tries to follow him, but she becomes "lost in the panic dark […] until she sank down in a ball curled about the center of her own being," forever encased in a "dry abyss."

The language here is rather vague and amorphous, but it seems that Haber's dream has created a black hole that devours everything in its wake. Haber's attempt to control the universe has backfired, and reality is now collapsing in on itself. This symbolizes Haber's misguided attempt to use rationality to understand dreams. The black hole also reflects the lack of interior substance beneath Haber's ambitious, gregarious exterior. Haber expends so much effort trying to improve his status and exude an aura of confidence and importance that nothing of himself remains beneath his artificial, rehearsed exterior.

Orr continues to the HURAD tower, walking over mud, mist, corpses, and toads to get there. It's freezing, yet the air smells of "burning hair and flesh." Orr reaches the HURAD tower and steps inside. He rides the helical escalator to the top floor. When he gets there, the floor is encased in a layer of ice, through which he can see stars. As he steps across the floor, the stars emit noise that sounds "false, like cracked bells." The burning smell is worse here. Orr enters Haber's office, but nothing exists beyond the door. He cries out for help and realizes he doesn't have the strength to enter nothingness alone; he thinks of Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe and Heather, which gives him the reassurance to go on, though he knows entering nothingness will cost him everything.

Haber's failed attempt to experience his own effective dream creates an effective nightmare, and the chaos that envelops the world is the direct consequence of Haber's vain attempt to exert power over the universe. Orr succeeds in entering nothingness because he selflessly accepts the help of others, which Haber refused to do. Taoism holds the idea of nothingness in a positive light, construing it as a state of mind one achieves when one lives in accordance with the Tao, *practices inaction over action, and abandons the notion of a self that exists separate from the collective universe. Implicit in this final detail is the absence of ego inherent in nothingness. The reason nothingness consumes Haber is because without his ego—without his vain ambition and greed—he* is *nothing. Haber can't experience nothingness the way Orr can because he doesn't know how to engage with the world outside of the subjective, limited confines of his ego.*

Orr confronts the nothingness and so "enter[s] the eye of the nightmare." The room is cold, dark, and spinning. Orr can't see a thing, but he locates the Augmentor by touch and turns it off, which propels the world back into existence. Orr and Haber are no longer in the HURAD tower, but in a junky, average office Orr doesn't recognize. Haber lies on the couch; his beard is red-brown again, and his skin isn't gray. Orr disconnects Haber from the Augmentor. He's seized by the sudden urge to destroy the machine but decides that "a machine is more blameless […] than any animal." Orr shakes Haber awake. When Haber opens his eyes, they're not "opaque," but "empty."

Orr restores the world to the way it was before Haber started meddling with Orr's effective dreams, and the universe is balanced once more. Orr's observation that "a machine is more blameless […] than any animal" alludes to the destructive nature of consciousness, which animals have but machines do not. The Augmentor is not capable of conscious, deliberate action because it can only do what Haber tells it to do, so it's really Haber who's to blame for the chaos the machine helped facilitate, not the machine itself. Haber's empty eyes reflect his disillusionment. He'd thought that he could use rationality and deliberate action to make sense of and exercise power over the world around him, but he overestimated his ability to understand the universe, which is infinitely large and unknowable.

Orr becomes physically scared of Haber and leaves to get help, passing through the unfamiliar office, unfamiliar waiting room, and exiting onto a street he'd never been on before. Orr realizes that the "emptiness of Haber's being, the effective nightmare," has projected itself onto the city, severing "connections." Whereas before Orr had been able to trace the continuity between the different continuums, he now lacks the memories he needs to orient himself in his current reality, and the only things he knows "c[o]me from the other memories, the other dreamtimes." People who can't sense the shifted continuum might be less disoriented than Orr, but they'll be more scared and confused by this incomprehensible new world. Orr knows that Heather is gone.

The world isn't fully restored, though: elements of different realities now commingle in the same universe. Orr's observation that the "emptiness of Haber's being" is to blame for this fragmentation of reality confirms what Orr has known to be true all along: that beneath Haber's showy display of heroism, ambition, and intellect, he is essentially nothing. He has no personality beyond the calculated, feigned version of a self he performs to impress others, and his morals lose their relevance the moment they cease to be a means through which he can accomplish an ambitious end. The incoherence that lingers in the aftermath of Haber's "effective nightmare," thus, is the lingering presence of the incoherent, centerless self Haber's nightmare unleashed on the world.

Orr doesn't help Haber. There's nothing he can do for him. He walks through the streets and ends up in northeast Portland. Orr can see the dormant **Mount Hood** in the distance, its eruption never having occurred. Orr trudges forward, though he's exhausted and wants nothing more than to sleep. He's in the business district now, approaching the river. In the aftermath of chaos, people go on with their lives: men loot a jewelry shop, and a woman holds her crying baby.

Mount Hood's transformation from an active volcano to a sleeping mountain symbolizes the world's return to normalcy in the aftermath of Haber's reign of terror and control.

CHAPTER 11

As Orr tries to make his way through the suburbs to his flat that night, an Aldebaranian Alien stops him and invites him into its home. He asks if the Alien is Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe, but the Alien replies that its name is E'nememen Asfah. Orr accompanies the Alien to its apartment by the river, where it suggests that Orr go to sleep in his bed. Orr admits that he's tired. He's done a lot today: he pressed a button. To this, the Alien remarks, "you have lived well." Orr and the Alien say "er' perrehnne" to each other, and Orr gives in to sleep. His dreams ebb and flow like **waves** in the middle of the ocean, "far from any shore," and "changing nothing." He sees sea turtles diving into the water.

*Orr's comment about pressing a button comically undermines the impact of the seemingly banal action, since pressing the button effectively saved the world from total collapse. Orr and Asfah's exchange of the Alien term "*Er' perrehnne*" unites them in a symbolic gesture of mutual empowerment that gives Orr the strength and centeredness he needs to glide effortlessly through his dreams. Orr's dreams about sea turtles swimming "far from any shore" evokes the novel's opening scene, in which a jellyfish swims effortlessly through an expansive sea. The sea turtles in Orr's dream recapture the coherence and balance that the jellyfish lost when continents emerged from the depths of the sea and washed it ashore. That Orr's final dream "chang[es] nothing" implies that he's finally cured.*

It's early June, and the roses are in full bloom. Portland is getting back to normal after April's chaos. Orr is at the Federal Asylum for the Insane, located north of Portland. The Asylum had been overcrowded in the immediate aftermath of what is now referred to as "The Break," but things are mostly back to normal. An orderly brings Orr upstairs to the single rooms in the hospital's north wing. There are locks on every door. The orderly explains to Orr that the patient is being isolated because the others are desperately afraid of him, though the man hardly ever moves. They reach the room, and the orderly unlocks the door to reveal Haber sitting on the bed, staring blankly ahead.

Haber's blank stare reflects his blank interiority. Devoid of the external elements of power, control, and ambition he once relied on to shape his identity and give his life meaning, his ego wilts, his morals lose their meaning, and he collapses in on himself, much like the black hole he created with his effective nightmare.

Orr tries to speak to Haber, but his words fail him, and he feels a mixture of "excruciating pity, and fear" for Haber, who has lost his grip on reality. Orr knows that Haber is seeing the world after April 1998, looking at it "as misunderstood by the mind: the bad dream." Orr thinks about a poem T.S. Eliot wrote, in which a bird talks of mankind's inability to face reality; on the contrary, thinks Orr, it's "unreality" that's more difficult to confront.

Haber is now experiencing the existential dread Orr struggled to overcome after seeing the world end in April 1998. Witnessing his dream nearly destroy reality forces Haber to confront the tenuousness, uncertainty, and unknowability of reality. Haber's brush with unreality destroys his previously held belief that rationality can eliminate all uncertainty: that no aspect of the world can evade humanity's discerning, logical gaze. The T.S. Eliot poem Orr references is "Burnt Norton," the first of four poems contained in Eliot's work Four Quartets. *The poem and* The Lathe of Heaven *explore similar ideas, such as the concept of universal balance, consciousness, and uncertainty. Orr's observation about the difficulty of confronting "unreality" proposes a distinction between the difficulty of coming to terms with life's unknowable and unpredictable qualities versus seeing unreality, knowing that life is meaningless, and figuring out how to find meaning anyway.*

Orr takes a boat back to downtown Portland and heads back to work. He'd taken a long lunch break to visit Haber, but his employer, E'nememen Asfah, doesn't care when he works so long as he finishes his work. Orr returns to the Kitchen Sink's workshop and sits down in front of his drafting table. Asfah is in the showroom with the customers. Orr is one of three designers tasked with creating kitchenware. Ever since The Break, housewives flock to the store in search of appliances with which to furnish "the unexpected kitchens they found themselves cooking in that evening in April."

Asfah is the Alien who offered Orr his apartment the night of The Break. As an employer, his casual approach to work schedules and lunch breaks reflects the Aliens' broader commitment to natural balance; Asfah seems to have faith that Orr will complete the work he needs to finish without the unspontaneous, deliberate implementation of a strict work schedule to keep him in line. Orr's comment about the housewives waking up in "the unexpected kitchens they found themselves cooking in that evening in April" refers to the new realities in which the housewives regained consciousness once Orr turned off the Augmentor and restored the world's normalcy in the aftermath of Haber's effective nightmare.

Orr hears a voice that reminds him of his wife's. He walks to the showroom and sees Asfah showing Heather an egg whisk. Her skin is brown again. Orr calls Heather by her name. Heather turns and recognizes him as George Orr, though she doesn't know how she knows him. Orr tries to jog Heather's memory by asking if she's a lawyer. Heather shakes her head, explaining that she's a legal secretary at Rutti and Goodhue. Orr lies, saying they must have run into each other there. He can't tell what Heather recalls of the other continuums, and whether her memories will align with his own: after all, when they were married, Heather's skin was gray, and she'd been "a far gentler person than this one," who is "fierce" and assertive.

This new version of Heather is restored to the person she was when Orr first met her, rather than the gray, "far gentler person" she was when they were married. The fact that Heather is free to be herself in Orr's restored version of reality illustrates the difference between Orr's and Haber's respective relationships to power. Whereas Haber derived his strength and power from ruling over others, Orr believes that power is only ethical if it is accessible to all and used sparingly.

Orr tells Heather that they'd actually had a date before The Break but never made it. He addresses her as "Miss Lelache." Heather looks at Orr quizzically as she tells him her name is Andrews, not Lelache; Lelache was her maiden name, though she's not married anymore, since her husband died in the war. Suddenly, she remembers how she knows Orr: he was the man who thought his dreams came true who wanted to get a new shrink.

Heather's memories of Orr remain impersonal: she doesn't appear to recall their romance. This is more proof of Orr's commitment to free will and mutual empowerment; he could've dreamed of a world where Heather was his wife, but he chose not to, opting instead to let the universe lead them back to each other if such a reunion is meant to be.

Heather asks Orr what he ended up doing about his dream problem, and he tells her he just kept dreaming. She teases him about not being able to change the world into something better than "this mess." Though Orr would also prefer a better world, he's glad Heather exists in it; he'd grieved horribly for his missing wife in the aftermath of The Break. Now, though, Orr sees an end to his grieving, and hope for a future with this woman who is both strange and familiar to him. He invites Heather to grab a coffee with him at a nearby cafe, telling Asfah he'll be back later. Asfah responds, "there is time. There are returns. To go is to return," and he and Orr shake hands. Orr and Heather head out into a warm, misty summer day. Asfah watches them from behind the glass walls of his shop, "as a **sea** creature might watch from an aquarium."

Orr's hopeful outlook for the future conveys his newfound faith in universal balance. Uncertainty and powerlessness used to torment him, but this newfound faith reassures him that things will fall into place without forcing the issue. The water imagery at play in the description of Asfah watching Orr and Heather from behind the glass storefront "as a sea creature might watch from an aquarium" evokes the opening scene with the jellyfish swimming in the open sea. But whereas the jellyfish's existence was threatened by continents that sprung from the water and swept the sea into a state of fragmented chaos, no such obstacles impede the balance and unity of Heather, Orr, and Asfah's watery world: Orr and Heather walk from the watery environment of Asfah's aquarium-like shop into the watery environment of the world outside, its air wet with mist. It's a happy ending: though the future is uncertain, there is beauty to be found in simply experiencing existence, in gliding effortlessly through a balanced world.

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