

The One Apart: A Novel

Justine Avery

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The One Apart is a complex novel; its beautiful, emotional, and intense writing deals in big questions.

Justine Avery's philosophical fantasy *The One Apart* is intriguing and captivating as it chronicles Aaron's singular journey to become the ObServed, the only one who remembers all of his former lives while he is alive in his current Corporeality.

Sancha did not want a child, even while pregnant with Aaron; she expected to give him up the moment he was born. But when she lays eyes on her baby boy, an unbreakable connection is formed. From early on, it is apparent that Aaron is a special and gifted being. He seems to understand facts, feelings, emotions, and nuances that were never taught to him.

In his childhood, Aaron notices a cold, dark presence around him. He is transfixed by this ominous being that raises questions about his origins. As a young adult, he begins his education with OnLookers in a dreamlike state, the Apart, where he learns the Natural Order of Things.

The One Apart begins as purely a fantasy. Its unique story line forms many questions, including around where people come from, where they go when they die, what the purpose of life is, and whether God exists.

Fantasy elements, in combination with the philosophical elements, make for an interesting story. Avery's amalgamation of these components is innovative but leads to a narrative that lacks a substantial conclusion. Questions are left unanswered and conversations seem to be on repeat, without arriving anywhere definitive.

Philosophy comes into play the most in the second half of the book, with its discussions of the purpose of life, awakening, and awareness of a higher power all explored in relatable terms that are applicable to daily life. The novel twists perceptions of the real world and other, unknown, dimensions, and the story dives deep, questioning the realities of heaven and hell, death and reincarnation. *The One Apart* demonstrates that just because something is not obvious or tangible does not mean that it does not exist.

Dialogue makes up the majority of the text. Conversations between characters in Aaron's Corporeality are simple, fluid, and easy to follow. Conversely, conversations between Aaron and his OnLookers, Fei and Saig, as well as with the Consultation and with his enemy, Ciel, are complex.

Written in philosophical riddles, they aim to provoke questions and deep thinking, but they are often difficult to decipher. Aaron's conversations with those in the Apart, especially with Fei, are repetitive and confusing.

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KATIE ASHER (December 12, 2017)

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