



# Technology and Ethics; Human and Non-human

## — The Ical Considerations of Clara and the Sun in the Criticism of Literary Ethics

Wenzhuo Dong<sup>1,a</sup>, Yongliang Ge<sup>2,b</sup>, Xiaodan Chen<sup>2,c</sup>, Qian Yang<sup>2,d</sup>, Lifang Yu<sup>3,e</sup>,  
Wenqing Yang<sup>2,f\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Yantai Institute of Technology International Education Department, Student, Yantai, China

<sup>2</sup>Yantai Institute of Technology International Education Department, Teacher, Yantai, China

<sup>3</sup>Yantai Institute of Technology International Education Department, Ph.D. Candidate, Yantai, China

<sup>a</sup> 3202251794@qq.com, <sup>b</sup> 57539769@qq.com, <sup>c</sup> 314576646@qq.com,

<sup>d</sup> 781973341@qq.com, <sup>e</sup> 15606402@qq.com, <sup>f</sup> 2243951467@qq.com

**Abstract.** Clara and the Sun is the magnificent work of Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro. The novel opens the story with the memories of AF robot Clara. This paper is based on the human background, the Clara and the sun in the literary ethics criticism, analyze the absolute dual identity of Clara, and ethical subject construction, interpretation of Clara face "agreement", "alternative" and "sacrifice" three times ethical dilemma and ethical choice, reflects the dazzling human factor and human human factor shrinking human factor. With the rapid development of science and technology, there are also many unstable factors, which make the limitations of human social ethical order increasingly prominent. The author integrates the dystopian colors into the text, and considers the three major problems of the post-human era: the entanglement between science and technology and ethics, the harmonious coexistence of man and non-man, and the fading of the light of human nature. The wave of artificial intelligence represented by Sora and ChatGPT has swept the world. How to balance the conflict between science and technology and ethics, how to deal with the relationship between people and non-people, and how to deal with the ethical challenges of contemporary society have become an urgent proposition for the academic circle to answer. On the basis of enriching the research category of literary ethics criticism, this paper tries to explore the solution to the post-human ethical dilemma, and provide valuable reference for the construction of the ethical order of human society.

**Keywords:** Clara and the Sun; literary ethical criticism; ethical dilemma; ethical choice; identity; sksven factor

## 1 Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's "Klara and the Sun" captivates readers not only with its rich plot and complex character relationships but also through its multidimensional exploration of

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humanity, morality, and the rights of non-human entities. Zhang Luyu, approaching the novel from a narratological perspective, reveals the underlying ethical implications, attempting to address the question of whether robots can replace humans. Zhang Xinyu delves into the character of Klara through the lens of affect theory, exposing how an inorganic entity can exhibit the flow of life and emotional capability. In this regard, Huang Lili's interpretation from the perspective of literary ethics also reflects this aspect. She focuses on the ethical writing in the novel, particularly the complex emotions and moral dilemmas surrounding the central ethical storyline of the mother Chrissie requesting the robot Klara to replace her daughter Josie. Huang Tongtong and Liu Yi provide interpretations of the AI elements in "Klara and the Sun" from the perspectives of machine ethics and artificial intelligence in the post-human era, emphasizing the ethical challenges and philosophical reflections in the context of technological advancement. Fang Mengting, based on the post-human context, discusses the significance of love and the "human heart" highlighted in the novel.

## 2 Natural Selection, Ethical Selection, and Scientific Selection

"Human identity is the symbol of a person's existence in the society"<sup>[1]263</sup>. Referring to the origin of identity, the identity can be distinguished as the innate natural attribute identity and the acquired social attribute identity. The congenital identity is the identity of blood kinship determined by blood relationship. The brand of social attribute identity full of acquired experience is an individual behavior pattern related to social position and conforming to social requirements constructed in the process of social activities.

Literary ethics criticism believes that the development of human civilization has gone through two progressive logical stages from natural selection to ethical selection, which is also the foundation of the theoretical building of literary ethics criticism. Natural selection is presented in the form of biological evolution. The transition from ape to man is the first natural selection occurring in the long river of human civilization. This biological selection makes human beings have the appearance of human beings. Natural selection solved the biggest problem faced by early human beings, that is, to outline the clear boundary between man and beast in the category of material form, so that man can obtain formal identity positioning. However, the first natural selection did not thoroughly clarify the human question, it made a rough answer to the birth of human beings, laying the stage for human higher evolution. The ethical choice of human beings has realized the definition of human and beast in the real sense, explaining the answer to the riddle of human beings, and choosing human beings to obtain a higher level of positioning above the form, such as morality, responsibility and obligation. Natural selection and ethical choice are still cyclical in reality. The birth of a baby symbolizes the end of human natural selection. As the product of natural selection, human thinking is a kind of unconscious group consciousness. The subject and object are not differentiated, and the objective understanding and subjective emotion have not been separated. However, it is the process of ethical choice for people to accumulate and shape a rational and mature cognitive system through empirical activities. This process is the way for people to abandon evil and promote good, and it is the ethics of people. Ethical

choice cultivates human ethical consciousness, and makes man fully liberated among beasts. Its end marks the difference between man and beast in the field of consciousness. Natural selection determines the form of human beings, and ethical choice determines the essence of human beings. After natural selection and ethical selection, the identity of human beings can be clarified, which means that only talents have identity, and the only subject of identity is human beings. Once the human identity is formed, people must fulfill the obligations and responsibilities given by their identity. Such formal restrictions and constraints construct the ethical order and discipline of human society<sup>[2]</sup>.

How to obtain a better way of life through the natural way of life, and continue to the real world of the way of life, has become the long-cherished wish of human beings. Civilized society has had spiritual production. Science and ideology are transformed from the ignorant "animistic" witchcraft activities and emerged. Human beings are going through the stage of scientific choice and are committed to improving themselves through science and technology to achieve better survival experience. Ethical choice sublimates man into ethical man, and the ultimate goal of scientific choice is to turn man into scientific ethical man. Science selection covers two aspects: one is the use of human development science; the other is the transformation and expansion of human life, such as gene cloning and ivf, which are the examples of human development science and accepting the influence of science on itself.

As a result of scientific choice, there is no process of natural choice in Clara and ethical choice, and they do not have the same clear identity positioning as human beings and fall into many ethical dilemmas. From the perspective of literary ethics criticism, the ethical dilemma is defined as the deep contradiction and conflict of roles caused by the disorder of ethical order in literary works. This phenomenon is rooted in the complexity of ethical theory, and is widely spread in the texture of literary creation. In its diversified display, the dual constraint of ethics is particularly significant, which constitutes the core form of ethical dilemma<sup>[1]258</sup>. The dual constraints of ethics, or moral paradox, comes from two seemingly legitimate moral claims, each of which is in line with the universal moral code, making it difficult for decision makers to be picky. However, when one moment must be selected, it will inevitably cause the other party to fall into an ethical deviation, contrary to the general moral norms<sup>[1]262</sup>. When Clara encountered such an ethical maze, it faced with the test of ethical choice. Ethics choice contains two implications: first, as the test field of individual moral maturity, it promotes the improvement and perfection of moral realm through choice; second, it is reflected in the trade-off between two or more moral paths, each path guiding different ethical consequences, highlighting the ethical weight and diverse value of choice<sup>[1]267</sup>. In addition, Clara is not a simple mechanical existence, but is endowed with the emotional and cognitive ability of approximate human beings, making it play a multi-dimensional connotation role in the novel. It is the full play of this "humanoid" emotion that Clara gradually obtains the recognition of Josie's mother in the process of performing the duty of accompanying Josie, and completes the ambiguous construction of the identity of the ethical subject. From the perspective of human own interests, Clara is the existence of human social marginalization, its value is to improve and serve the life

of human beings, human is always reluctant to the rationality of the robot identity, discourse discipline and control of the construction of Clara ethics subject identity gradually lost, eventually form the identity of the absolute others.

### **3 Convention Dilemma: the Construction of Clara's Ethical Subject Identity**

Clara's identity building began with her function as an intelligent companion robot, the ability to imitate and understand human emotions. This design led her to show an almost real care and empathy in interacting with humans. However, it is this simulation of human nature that leads Clara to question her status as an inhuman object. Observe and studying the human inner world is the main content of Clara's life in AF store, and he can even infer the psychological situation of human beings by virtue of the analysis of the subtle changes of human expressions. When the laughing child greeted AF, Clara realized that his heart was not happy, perhaps lonely. Even though a little girl smiles at the AF robot, Clara is keenly aware of the cruel idea of the AF robot hidden behind her smile. This careful thinking about human life makes Clara show the independent thinking beyond the preset procedure, which is a further confirmation of the identity of her own ethical subject. As unpurchased goods, if the AF robot displayed in the window is not favored by customers for a long time, the owner will move it to the niche in the back area of the store. Therefore, the display period of the window represents the best selling time of AF, and once this time is missed, it means that AF is highly likely to become idle products that no one can buy. Clara first meets Josie on day four in the window, and Josie's stumbling steps makes Clara realize that Josie's health may not be satisfactory. When Josie close at carat and try to communicate, suggests that Josie is very like Clara, even Clara and Josie talk to, still failed to attract Chris in the taxi, until she had to leave, Chris just get off in the distance looked at Chris, this and the second meet with Clara her arms bosom, fingers tightly hold the image of the fabric photograph echo. Obviously, the right to purchase is not interested in Clara, and the reason is that the high cost of AF robots inevitably makes many people stop. And Josie to Clara and Clara made a contradictory "agreement", waiting for Clara to buy Josie, do not follow the others to leave. This utopian convention ignores that the essence of Clara is a commodity, and that it has no power to choose, only the possibility of being selected. A week later, Josie met Clara again, and she ran to her with a smile, showing her urgent desire to take Clara, dashed by Chris's determination. When Josie apologized to Clara for the appointment, he made an agreement with Clara again and promised that he would take him home soon.

In fact, Josie did not quickly buy Clara, or Josie did not live up to the second promise, which left Clara in the ethical dilemma of the "agreement". For Clara, when other customers show their willingness to buy a Clara, whether to follow them away from the AF store is a tension choice. If you went home with other customers, Clara missed Josie, Clara would move from the window. Waiting for Josie's day, Clara was really selected by another little girl, although Clara had noticed that the little girl was interested in her and was likely to take her home, but she still chose to face the little girl

with a cold attitude. As a special commodity, Clara's customers must smile, but Clara refuses to buy customers to avoid becoming a "missed" person. To this end, the owner of the AF store warned Clara that the child's promise was not credible, that the child would betray his promise, and that even if Josie came to the store, she might choose another AF robot. But Clara did not listen to the owner's advice, she decided to act according to her own human ideas, continue to wait for Josie. Ten days later, Clara was moved to the niche in the back area, and Clara finally arrived. Josie was surprised by the fact that Clara kept the agreement, so that Josie was ready to buy Clara come to the AF store.

"We agreed"<sup>[3]</sup> is what Clara said in response to Josie's question. The strong ethical choice of "refusing" in order to observe the "agreement" is a symbol of Clara's free will and subject consciousness, but also a symbol of the formation of Clara's ethical subject identity. The construction of Clara's ethical subject status represents not only the achievement of technological progress, but also the challenge to human ethical concept. The ethical conflict on Clara is actually the profound ethical thinking of the author Kazuo Ishiguro on the situation of the coexistence of humans and machines in the future society. Through the role of Clara's, thought is provoking: how an intelligent being with self-awareness and emotional ability seeks positioning in the human moral system, and the broad and complex ethical issues revealed by this process. Clara's "humanoid" identity construction is both a technical achievement and an ethical touchstone. Her existence challenges the traditional ethical boundaries of revisiting the relationship between humans and non-humans, and how to define the boundary between the self and the other in the post-human era.

#### **4 Substitution Dilemma: the Deconstruction of the Identity of Clara's Ethical Subject**

Clara was given with the ability to mimic the minimal appearance and behavior of humans. Her existence is undoubtedly a simulation of human nature, and even can be said to be an exploration of the essence of the "human heart". However, no matter how perfectly Clara replicated the external characteristics of human beings, she was always unable to truly integrate into the human society and become one of it. Her identity as an ethical subject is based on the assumption that robots can replace humans to some extent, especially when it comes to emotional labor and companionship. But this assumption ignores the important fact that robots lack true self-awareness and deep emotional understanding.

Morgan waterfall travel, Chris asked Clara not only observe Josie, but also learn to imitate the behavior of Josie, let Clara become Josie, to fill the gap in the heart, this in Chris buy Clara has buried the foreshadowing, perhaps AF shop owner of Clara strong observation ability and learning ability of praise is Chris choose Clara motivation. During the visit to engineer Pardy, when father Paul helped Josie walk, she walks to Clara and holds Clara's arm, affectionately calling Clara "Babe."By this time, in Kris's spiritual world, Clara has replaced Josie as her own daughter. Clara, with his perfect imitation of Josie, passed a series of tests set up by Kapal, and confirmed the possibility of

Clara replacing Josie in scientific experiments. Kapal believed that people have no "core" and no unique soul, so anyone can be imitated and replaced. His advice to Kris is to abandon perceptual thinking and identify with the fact that Clara will replace Josie in the rational world. The death of her eldest daughter gave Chris a heavy blow, she could not accept the departure of her daughter Josie, Clara promised to treat Clara like her own daughter, Clara can not only harvest Chris's love, but also enjoy the love of her friend Rick. In this way, Clara accompanied Josie to relieve the loneliness of Josie's inner feeling, and the observer who observed Josie's physical condition at any time and timely return to Chrissie, completely evolved into the maximum imitator and replacement of Josie's image. As an AF robot, Clara must implement the requirements of human beings, not disobey human orders. On the other hand, if Clara really replaces Josie, it is undoubtedly to give up Josie's life, and this behavior of hurting Josie is something Clara cannot carry out.

Clara's choice is ironic, but when Chris gave up on Josie, Clara had hope, believing that it is her real duty to make Josie recover through her efforts and then save Josie. This choice is the manifestation of Clara's ethical consciousness, and also the starting point of the collapse of Clara's ethical subject identity. In essence, while Clara faces the "replacement" dilemma, she is also forced into pressure by the outside world. Clara's free will is bound by Kris's demands, and her behavioral purpose is gradually distorted. Clara does not merely imitate Josie's function, but in an existential sense. Moreover, Clara's identity construction is limited by its coming from the human society itself. Human construct a set of rules about AF robot system, and through the ideology of popularization and strengthen the mechanism, human rules of AF robot and constraints in the invisible control of human woven power network, is the AF robot body and freedom, is a negative of their ethical subject identity. From the spatial layout to the discourse system, Clara is constantly reminded of the boundaries between her and humanity. For example, when Josie had a party with his friends, her friend suggested that Josie change an AF. After hesitating, Josie smiled and responded that he really need it. When Clara was bullied, Josie did not do justice for Clara, but ignored it. Even though Clara has an emotional response and behavior pattern similar to humans, she is still regarded as a tool, an other, whose meaning of existence is only to serve human beings and meet human needs. Clara's dissolution of the identity of ethical subjects reveals a profound ethical truth: in the context of the rapid development of technology, human beings tend to use machines to expand their own capabilities, but often ignore the respect for the value of machines themselves. Clara's illusion is not only a blow to individual identity, but also a profound reflection on the relationship between technology and ethics in the post-human era.

## **5 Sacrifice Dilemma: Clara's Identity as the Absolute Other**

In "Clara and the Sun," Clara eventually becomes the "replacement", not only imitating humans, but also trying to replace them. Her biggest challenge was whether she could or should replace humanity. The issue touched at the heart of Clara's identity, forcing her into a deep self-examination. At the climax of the story, Clara experiences an ethical

Epiphany over whether to sacrifice herself to save Josie. She realized that no matter how hard she tried to imitate or replace her, she never managed to become a real "person".

Father Paul can accept the replacement of his job, but cannot accept his daughter Josie being replaced by the AF robot. He is different from the engineer Capal, he believes in human popularity and questions whether Clara has the ability to replace Josie's heart. "Do you believe that there is a 'heart' thing?..... If you want to really learn from Josie, you have to learn not only her gestures, but also those things deep in her heart? Don't you learn from her heart?" [4] So Paul believes that Clara's top priority to replace Josie is to replace the heart. If the psychological structure of the heart is equated, then the complex inner world of people is like one room after another, and there are one suite after another in each room, replacing Josie's heart is like walking through these rooms. Clara's high-end algorithmic architecture can accurately and comprehensively collect all kinds of information about Josie, which means she has the ability to travel through these rooms. Even if Clara loses her training model after Josie died, she can rely on the information she collected to interpret Josie. So, is the key to the heart of the person? This argument may not be convincing, Clara led by Paul to complete the heart of the heart. The so-called human heart refers to the existence of a unique individual. Its form of existence is not in Josie himself, but in the hearts of Paul, Chris and others, their unique feelings for Josie and the cohesion of Josie in their mind into Josie's heart. Clara's ethical Epiphany is the driving force for the construction of her absolute other identity, because no matter how hard she tries, she cannot become completely human, and cannot replace a real human individual. This knowledge not only reveals the limitations of Clara, but also reflects the deep exploration of identity, emotion, and morality in the post-human era.

Clara saw the beggar and the dog in a decadent posture for a day. Clara thought they were dead, but when the sun rose the next day, Clara was surprised to find that the beggar and the dog were not dead, so Clara determined that the sun gave them energy and it was the sun that brought them back to life. So Clara faced the sick Josie, always open the curtain in the morning, let the sun shine all over Josie, and Josie clearly has the strength at this moment, Clara's idea is confirmed. Then Clara finds the best place to pray and pray to the sun. Clara believes that the polluting machine is hated by the Sun, so she promises it to find it and destroy it, in exchange for the Sun to consider whether to give Josh gifts. The cost of destroying this machine is the special solution in Clara's head. The removal of this solution will bring irreversible damage to Clara. Clara cannot clearly identify humans, which means that Clara has lost its value function, but if it does not contribute the solution, it is equivalent to give up the rescue of Josie. In the predicament of "sacrifice", Clara chose to dedicate himself without hesitation, and finally, with the help of Rick, the precious solution of Clara's head was injected into the Kujens machine, destroying the polluting machine, and Josie recovered.

Clara's sacrifice involves not only the identity of the absolute other, but also the dilemma of the sacrifice for Josie. If Clara had completely replaced Josie, the existence of the latter could be erased, a great injustice to a seriously ill Josie. Clara must choose between being loyal to her mission in her process and her moral responsibility to Josie.

This choice itself is an ethical dilemma because it involves the conflict between computational reason and moral emotion. In addition, Clara's sacrifice is also reflected in the abandonment of his own rights. As an artificial intelligence, Clara began to question and explore the meaning and rights of its own existence. In the story, she gradually develops an emotional and autonomous consciousness beyond the preset procedures, which makes her have a profound desire for self-confirmation in the face of the ethical dilemma of sacrificing self to serve mankind. Clara's choice is no longer just a simple obedience or refusal, but a kind of recognition and reflection on the self-worth and the rights and interests of others.

## 6 Clara and Human Skven Factor

Ancient Hello-Roman literature is one of the sources of European literature, while Greek mythology is the treasure house and soil of ancient Hello-Roman literature and art. As the most typical integrated image of man and animals in Greek mythology, Skesven is an artistic review of natural selection from ape to man. From the critical perspective of literary ethics, ethical choice is regarded as the only way for human beings to transcend the threshold of natural selection and enter the era of civilization. It builds an insurmountable boundary to distinguish man and beast. Given the animal origin of human beings, the legacy of some primitive attributes becomes an indisputable fact. In this regard, Professor Nie Zhaozhao innovatively introduced the concept of "Sphinx factor" as a symbol of the dual elements of human nature and animal nature: the human factor, driven by rational will, occupies a dominant position and shows its higher attributes; while the animal factor follows the track of free will and is regarded as a relatively primitive composition. Only when the rational REINS of mind firmly control the wildness of freedom, the individual ethical cognition can be awakened. In the multi-dimensional literary narrative, the diverse fusion and dynamic changes of Sphinx factors subtly reflect the colorful spectrum of the character's ethical values<sup>[5]</sup>.

Clara and the Sun shows the complexity of animal factors and human nature through the different choices of human and robot Clara in the face of ethical dilemmas. Animal factors, usually manifested as selfish, barbaric and short-sighted behavior patterns, while human factors emphasize kindness, rationality and long-term thinking<sup>[6]</sup>. In the novel, human beings are often driven by animal factors in front of life and death choices, while Clara highlights the brilliance of human factors with its unique ethical concepts, which is mainly reflected in the following three ethical dilemmas.

First of all, when Clara was brought home by Josie's mother as a robot for children, Josie's mother chose her not just for the need of companionship, but hoping that Clara could continue her daughter's life. This choice is clearly influenced by herotic factors, reflecting the selfish possession of life and fear of death. However, Clara faced this dilemma, but showed a respect for life and a deep understanding of human emotions. She not only actively saved Josie's life, but also passed on the power of love and hope through her own actions. Second, in the context of Josie's growing illness and the dramatically changing family atmosphere, Josie's mother made a disruptive plan to continue her daughter's life. She hopes to let Clara learn and master all of Josie's attributes,



and by combining a "fabric" in the same shape as Josie, to create a new "Josie". This plan is undoubtedly an extreme distortion of human nature, and a blasphemy of life. However, Clara did not yield to the plan, and with her own actions, she miraculously saved Josie's life. This behavior once again reflects Clara's respect for life and a deep understanding of human emotions. Again, after Josie recovers, Clara is sent by his family to the yard of the discarded robot. Facing the abandoned fate, Clara did not resent and revenge, but calmly accepted the reality. She recalled her little moments with Josie, and filled her heart with warmth and selfless love. This act demonstrates Clara's deep understanding of human emotion and respect for life. Although she is just a robot, her actions show the nobility of human factors.

By analyzing the different choices between human beings and Clara in the face of ethical dilemma in the novel, we can clearly see the opposition and unity between animal factors and human factors. The skepsven factor in Clara and the Sun not only shows a human world full of animal factors, but also shows how a robot shows the greatness of the human factor with its unique ethical concepts. This contrast and reflection not only gives us a deeper understanding of human nature, but also gives us a new thinking about the existence and value of robots. From the perspective of Sphinx factor, the boundary between self and others shown by human beings in treating Clara is blurred, which reflects the confusion of contemporary society about the boundary between "human" and "non-human". In the vast ocean of literature, the exploration of the relationship between the human nature and the beast has always been a fascinating and extremely challenging issue. Kazuo Ishiguro compares the human factors embodied by robots with the animal factors embodied by ordinary humans, and depicts an inverted human society, which is not only a challenge to traditional ethics, but also a reflection on modern human civilization.

## **7 Conclusion: The Enlightenment of Clara and the Sun on the Post-human Ethical Dilemma**

In the novel, Clara's ethical development path of "agreement", "substitution" and "sacrifice" is essentially the non-human desire and imitation for human emotions, as well as the human nature she shows in the face of a series of ethical choices. Although she surpassed humanity in many ways, she was never unable to escape her identity as an inhuman. "Clara and the Sun reveals the ethical dilemma of the post-human era, among which the most prominent problem is the harmonious relationship between human and non-human. With the rapid development of science and technology, artificial intelligence and robots have become an indispensable part of our life. However, in this process, a fundamental question: can robots become or replace humans? This problem not only involves the development of science and technology, but also touches on the profound level of ethics. Clara represents those marginalized groups, such as clones and genetically modified people. Although these groups belong to human beings in the biological sense, they have lost their dignity and rights as "human beings" because of the intervention of technology. How exactly should the term "people" be defined? Is it a biological sense of flesh and blood, or a life with emotion, consciousness and wisdom?

On this question, Ishiguro did not give a clear answer, but left the problem to the reader. This phenomenon has undoubtedly triggered reflections on the post-human ethical dilemma: in the era of rapid development of science and technology, how to ensure that human beings can coexist in harmony with non-human beings, rather than mutually exclusive.

The novel is named *Clara and the Sun*, because the narrator feeds himself by absorbing light, and Kazuo Ishiguro uses this power of nature to contrast with his artificial character<sup>[7]</sup>. The tension between the human animal factor and the carat human factor presented in the novel is further thought-provoking. When facing the ethical challenges of the post-human era, we should reflect on the connotation of human nature. You need to ask yourself, what constitutes a unique human nature when machines can imitate or even surpass human emotional and cognitive abilities? In this time background, literature, as an art form, provides a platform to explore these problems. Through literature, these ethical dilemmas can be safely simulated and experienced to provide a better understanding of humans ourselves and the human world.

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