



# Algorithmic Innocence: Moral Cognition and AI Subjectivity in *Klara and the Sun*

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## Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro is a Japanese-English writer who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017. He is known for his style and for exploring ideas such as memory, identity, loss, and ethics in books such as *A Pale View of Hills*, *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun*. In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro describes a future world where robots called Artificial Friends are created to help lonely children and adults. The story shows that having a robot companion can help people feel less lonely. This paper argues that Klara, an Artificial Friend, shows human vulnerability by learning through her programming. This paper examines how simple, rule-based thinking operates as a form of innocence and explores how nonhumans can possess moral understanding. The novel shows that loneliness comes not just from being alone, but from problems like inequality, worried parents, genetic competition, and love that depends on conditions. Klara acts with loyalty, empathy, and self-sacrifice. Her actions are based on observation and programming and are often more consistent than those of humans in the story. Ishiguro asks us to think about love, loyalty, and morality beyond what biology allows and whether technology replaces people or simply shows how fragile human relationships are in a world shaped by machines.

**Keywords:** exploration of memory, identity, artificial friend, algorithmic, vulnerability and self-sacrifice

## Introduction

*Klara and the Sun* is a dystopian novel set in a genetically enhanced world where children's futures are determined by societal status. The promoter, Klara, is a robotic friend whose unique perspective helps examine the role of technology in buttressing social and economic divides. Through Klara's compliance with a society that ties education, healthcare, and opportunities to a particular status, the author reviews class inequality and social separation. The new uses Klara's gestures with the people around her, her capability to observe and empathize, and her acts of immolation to punctuate

challenges formerly allowed exclusively to humans. Ishiguro deliberately blurs the boundary between natural and artificial intelligence to question the meaning of mortality. Eventually, the new argues that a largely competitive, technologically driven society makes moving up in class delicate, as technology increases the divisions between the fat and the floundering. Klara is designed to keep children company and is brought to watch for Josie, a fourteen-year-old girl suffering from a mysterious illness caused by inheritable 'lifting' — a procedure meant to ameliorate children's futures. Through this relationship, the new review examines the



consequences of technological advancement on class structure.

### **Dystopia and Social Inequality**

In dystopian stories, isolation often reflects the loneliness experienced by people in societies controlled by technology or divided by inequality. In *Klara and the Sun*, this loneliness is exacerbated by technological solutions that fail to create genuine connections. Parents buy artificial friends for their children, highlighting how society prioritizes quick fixes over genuine relationships. Josie's parents, for example, purchase Klara, an artificial friend, to keep her company. This kind of friend is especially common for teenagers who are home-schooled by "screen professors" in a bleak, stressful future America. Josie, a frail young girl with a serious, possibly fatal illness that has already affected her sisters, chooses Klara. Through these details, the author gradually reveals the unusual and strange nature of a futuristic world. Readers are encouraged to use their imagination to picture the setting, which makes the novel more engaging and immersive. Despite her remarkable intelligence and sharp observations, Klara has a limited understanding of her world. She watches the sun and always refers to it as "he," treating it as a real, living being. As she is solar-powered, the sun holds great importance to her. She believes that the sun is powerful and kind, capable of healing and providing energy. Her admiration for the sun reflects a kind of spiritual belief. Genetic engineering is a key element in this novel.

It shows how privilege influences human life and raises questions about the differences between people born naturally and those created through genetic modifications. This process also gives families the chance to help their children achieve better futures, as seen in Josie's case. Although Josie faces significant physical and emotional challenges, her parents agree to the procedure, believing it to be in her best interest. Klara, who works as a maid in Josie's home, is somewhat suspicious and even hostile toward her, possibly out of fear that her job might be at risk. Klara often stays in the corner,

silent and watching, with her back turned, not because she is not needed, but because she is simply not needed. Readers see her not as a nonhuman being but as the closest thing to a child in this world. I believe that I have many feelings.

### **Klara as Moral Observer**

It soon becomes apparent that Josie has special needs. She has a kind of 'lifting' academic status, which seems to mean that her parents have given her some sort of treatment so that she receives a different kind of education from that of other children. One such child is Rick, Josie's nearest neighbor and childhood best friend. Readers can understand that there is a significant gap between this world and the selective nature of modern education in real life. To attain this special status, however, something had to be done to Josie, which put her in danger from her parents. The choice to grant a child early academic privilege is accompanied by vulnerability. Klara, endowed with a rudimentary emotional framework, gradually forms a strong bond of care and of protection towards Josie. When she perceives that Josie's life may be in danger, Klara initiates a rescue attempt, drawing strength from the sun. However, Klara has not realized that as an artificial friend, she is ultimately being programmed for an entirely different and more complex purpose.

### **Loneliness and Artificial Companionship**

One of the highlights is Ishiguro's manifestation of Klara's perspective; rather than having a broad field of vision, she seems to see the world through a series of picture elements. This results in unflattering positive expressions, similar to when Klara looked at the elderly woman she met:

"In one box, she was visible only from her midriff to the upper part of her neck, while the box next to her was nearly fully lifted with his eyes." (108) It perplexed the experimenter, but served as a good reminder that Klara is not like us, no matter how human she appears to be. Klara is a good friend of mine. It does not perform many of the effects that one would anticipate a secondary robot to perform, such as delivering particulars or cooking. His goal is



to live in harmony with humans, and while I am not sure how we will ever have emotionally intelligent robots like him, we might witness some stylish friend robots in the coming decade. The experimenter was excited to see whether people would regard these robots as tools or as a commodity entirely different. Numerous Robots is a narrative about what happens when we start considering ourselves as mortals. Josie appears to honor that her companion is assembled by Klara and the Sun, but there are some unsettling sequences when Josie's mama begins to treat Klara as if she were another son. (Her film is about artificial intelligence's brilliance, but it also deals with a similar circumstance in which a person is burdened with complex feelings.)

### **Faith, the Sun, and Machine Consciousness**

Klara's voice possesses a simplicity that draws people in, similar to Kathy H in *Never Let Me Go*, blending intelligence with innocence. Ishiguro has deeply considered the aspects of developing a mechanical consciousness, exploring what faith, love, or loyalty might mean to an android. The novel's contemporary themes resonate strongly. Ishiguro had nearly finished the book when the pandemic began, yet the story feels strangely detached from our current anxious and isolated times. The tension between these two forms of love drives Klara and the Sun's narrative: one that is self-centered, overprotective, and anxious, and another that is generous, open, and kind. It feels like a message for all of us as we navigate our mundane lives. Klara constantly tries to understand complex or new emotions beyond her capabilities, which makes her seem more human. In her attempts to understand Josie, her teenage companion, Klara must come to understand humanity. She observes the human world from a distance, offering readers a unique and intimate perspective of Josie's family and friends. While Ishiguro humanizes Klara, he maintains her artificial nature as distinct from human characters. Despite her efforts, Klara never fully understands the emotional depth of humanity. In some of the novel's most touching moments, the narrator fails to understand the emotional weight. One such moment

occurs when Klara, still in her store, sees two long-separated friends on the street. "They seem so happy," she says, "but it's strange because they also seem upset." Klara does not understand why this moment is meaningful, yet Ishiguro clearly shows that it is. He allows the human reader to experience what the inhuman narrator cannot.

### **Genetic Enhancement and Parental Anxiety**

The novel's plot is highly intellectual, and Ishiguro has skillfully and creatively addressed modern themes through a futuristic lens. He shows the world from a unique perspective, making parents aware of technological advancements that might harm their children's future. Stephen Hawking once warned that such developments could be the "worst event" in human history. It is unclear where Ishiguro stands regarding this issue. Klara is one of the most beloved characters, but perhaps that is the point: the danger lies not in what AI will become, but in what it will cost us as humans. If this is not obvious, then I am mistaken, and I must accept that I am wrong. It is a slight spoiler, but I believe Klara ultimately betrays her human companion Josie and is partly responsible for her death instead of saving her. This ending feels right to me, and it does not change my perception of Klara. Humans can be immoral, and many are truly bad individuals. As a reader, I try not to assume that Klara is good. It begins with a less biased view than most humans. She is incredibly naïve and has no inherent understanding of social dimensions. If she had become a "bad guy," I would not have blamed her or anyone else; it would simply have been a likely outcome, something many humans also do.

### **Education, Privilege, and Exclusion**

This research paper analyzes *Klara and the Sun*, which, if it exists, continues to reflect Ishiguro's earlier thematic concerns. This study aims to explore the fundamental aspects of the human experience, including the complex and often ambiguous emotions people feel. This study encourages looking beyond the surface of our immediate surroundings to uncover deeper realities. Klara's unique, non-human perspective offers a more profound insight into these



truths. The novel's distinctive nature is conveyed through her voice. As previously mentioned, the idea of otherness is closely related to Foucault's concept of the gaze, which determines who is seen as superior and who is merely observed. The gaze, as the author portrays it, is similar to how a doctor might assess someone who does not conform to the societal standards of behavior. A Foucauldian reading of Ishiguro's novel reveals how various forms of otherness in the text are shaped by the act of looking. From the second chapter onward, the idea of otherness created through looking becomes the central theme. When Klara first meets Josie and her mother, she observes, "And for just one second, her [the mother's] piercing stare was no longer on Josie's back, but on me, and I immediately looked away" (16). Klara feels uncomfortable with the mother's gaze, and this discomfort grows when she is selected as Josie's new Artificial Friend (AF): "Her [the mother's] eyes narrowed like people on the sidewalk when they're trying to see if a taxi is free or already taken. And when I saw her and the way she was looking at me, the fear ... came back into my mind" (48). The mother's gaze makes Klara feel intense anxiety, which peaks when the mother asks her to imitate Josie's unsteady walk, transferring Josie's disability onto Klara and deepening Klara's sense of inferiority as a non-human being. This causes her to feel ashamed of who she is and what she is doing: "I realized that, as well as the Mother—and of course Josie—the whole store was now watching" (50).

### **Perception, Vision, and Narrative Technique**

Drawing from Kennedy's argument, Artificial Friends like Klara can be viewed as "carefree commodities" (122). Kennedy points out that modern consumer culture, influenced by a heavy reliance on technology, produces disposable items that require little emotional connection or long-term care. This carefree attitude allows items to be discarded without hesitation once they are no longer useful. Klara, as an empathetic humanoid, is similarly designed with a limited lifespan, after which she is considered outdated and discarded as waste. This indifferent attitude is clearly shown in the "interaction meeting"

scene, where Josie introduces the AF to her friends as an amusing object to justify her choice of the B2 model (64). This moment is particularly unsettling for Klara, who is reduced to a machine of entertainment. Josie's friend Danny remarks that it is not morally wrong to swing or throw an AF for fun because "they're designed to deal with it" (74). These moments emphasize Klara's status as a carefree commodity.

### **Love, Empathetic Care, and Emotional Labour**

This perception is further highlighted in the situation involving Rick's mother, Miss Helen, who compares AF to a household appliance, such as a vacuum cleaner—something that does not require attention or respect. Her statement, "One never knows how to greet a guest like you. After all, are you a guest at all? Or do I treat you as a vacuum cleaner? I suppose I did as much just now" (145), shows how Klara is denied social recognition and human consideration. However, Lanlan Du (2022) suggests that Ishiguro envisions a future where humanity's relationship with technology is shaped not by conflict or hostility, but by aspiration and hope (555). From this perspective, Klara in *\*Klara and the Sun\** demonstrates that companionship and emotional bonding are not exclusive human qualities.

### **Ethical Ambiguity and AI Morality**

As previously noted, the idea of otherness is closely linked to Foucault's concept of the gaze, which gives power to those who observe and places the observed in a position of vulnerability. The gaze represents the authority exercised by society or individuals, such as doctors, to judge those who do not meet physical or moral standards (Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*). In *Klara and the Sun*, this idea is central, as many forms of otherness are determined by acts of looking and being looked upon. From the second chapter onward, this gaze-based sense of otherness becomes a key driving force in the narrative. When Klara meets Josie and her mother, she notices the mother's intense look shifting from Josie to her: "And for just one second, her [the mother's] piercing stare was no longer on Josie's back, but on me, and I immediately



looked away" (16). Klara's discomfort illustrates how the gaze determines who holds power and who feels powerless. The mother's look makes Klara self-conscious and uneasy, especially when she is asked to imitate Josie's unsteady walk. This moment symbolically transfers Josie's illness onto Klara, highlighting how the mother's gaze reinforces ideas of weakness and difference. As Klara recalls, "I realized that as well as the Mother and of course Josie—the whole store was now watching" (50).

### Conclusion

At the end of the novel, Josie's caretakers remain behind. We learn that Melania, the housekeeper who had come from Europe and spoke English with difficulty, has traveled to California, "hoping to be accepted by a community there." (Ishiguro 2021a: 292) The potential support she might find in that community suggests that she likely faced challenges in seeking help elsewhere due to her status as a lower-class immigrant. However, the most profound sorrow in the story arises from what occurs with Klara's fate after Josie recovers. At the beginning of the book, Klara recognizes the fragility of robots, as they can be ignored, ridiculed, or discarded by humans. The manager had cautioned her about the unpredictability of children; they may promise to select an artificial friend but might never return or might come back and overlook the AF that eagerly

awaited their choice in favor of another option. (Ishiguro 2021a: 33) Klara also witnessed a moment when an AF walked three steps behind a child because "he wasn't loved by the girl"; she realized "an AF could be with a child who despised him and wanted him gone." (Ishiguro 2021a: 16) While these scenarios involve machines, they can evoke parallels to real-life situations.

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