

# Posthuman Ethics and Distributed Agency in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

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## Abstract

This article discusses posthuman ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* by employing the concept of distributed agency. By examining the AI protagonist Klara, the study argues that Ishiguro redefines agency as a networked phenomenon involving both human and nonhuman actors, challenging traditional anthropocentric ethical frameworks. The novel suggests that ethical considerations in a posthuman world must account for this distributed agency, where human and AI entities co-create ethical dynamics. This study concludes that Ishiguro's work not only critiques the limitations of human-centered ethics but also prompts a reevaluation of moral responsibility in a technologically mediated world. By positioning *Klara and the Sun* within the discourse of posthuman ethics, the article contributes to contemporary discussions on the ethical implications of AI and the evolving nature of agency.

**Keywords:** Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*, Posthuman Ethics, Distributed Agency, Artificial Intelligence

## KAZUO ISHIGURO'NUN KLARA VE GÜNEŞİNDE POSTHÜMANİST ETİK VE DAĞITILMIŞ EYLEYİCİLİK

### Öz

Bu makale, Kazuo Ishiguro'nun *Klara ve Güneş* adlı eserinde posthümanist etik kavramını, dağıtılmış eyleyicilik kavramını kullanarak tartışmaktadır. Yapay zekâ (YZ) başkahramanı Klara'yı inceleyerek, çalışma, Ishiguro'nun eyleyiciliği hem insan hem de insan olmayan aktörleri içeren ağsal bir olgu olarak yeniden tanımladığını ve geleneksel insanmerkezli etik çerçevelere meydan okuduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Roman, posthuman dünyada etik düşüncelerin, insan ve yapay zekâ varlıklarının ortaklaşa oluşturduğu bu dağıtılmış eyleyiciliği hesaba katması gerektiğini öne sürmektedir. Bu çalışma, Ishiguro'nun eserinin yalnızca insanmerkezli etiğin sınırlamalarını eleştirmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda teknolojik olarak aracılık edilen bir dünyada ahlâkî sorumluluğun yeniden değerlendirilmesini de teşvik ettiği sonucuna varır. *Klara ve Güneş*'i posthümanist etik söylemi içinde konumlandırarak, makale yapay zekânın etik sonuçları ve eyleyiciliğin değişen doğası üzerine güncel tartışmalara katkıda bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara ve Güneş*, Posthümanist Etik, Dağıtılmış Eyleyicilik, Yapay Zekâ.

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**gency, a long-standing topic in philosophy and literary criticism, signifies the capacity to exercise autonomy in decision-making. In posthumanism, the concept of distributed agency challenges the traditional notion of agency as an exclusively human attribute. Rosi Braidotti (2013) argues for a reconceptualization of agency that extends beyond human subjects to include nonhuman entities and technological artifacts. Braidotti posits that agency is not confined to individual human consciousness but is rather dispersed across a network of actors, both human and nonhuman. Similarly, Karen Barad's concept of agential realism posits that the world is composed of intra-acting agencies that only take definite form when an "agential cut" is made (2007). This theory suggests that human and nonhuman entities are not separate, pre-existing elements but come into being through their interactions, or "intra-actions," with each other. Barad challenges the traditional Cartesian dualism, arguing that knowledge, ethics, and ontology are intertwined and should be studied as a whole, which she calls "ethico-onto-epistem-ology" (Barad, 2007, p.90). According to Barad, "the world is composed of entangled agencies, which take on specific forms only when certain boundaries or agential cuts are made, determining what becomes included and excluded from a given phenomenon" (Barad, 2007, pp. 46-59). These perspectives challenge the anthropocentric view of agency, promoting instead a more inclusive understanding that recognizes the active roles of all entities within a given system, be they biological, technological, or environmental. This shift in thinking is crucial for understanding the complex interdependencies and responsibilities in our increasingly interconnected and technologically mediated world.

Distributed agency shifts the focus from individual human autonomy to the complex networks of interaction between humans, machines, and other nonhuman entities. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and the potential creation of cyborgs have brought the concept of distributed agency to the forefront of ethical discussions. The traditional view of moral agency, which places humans as the sole bearers of responsibility, is challenged in a posthuman world where AI systems can make autonomous decisions. The concept of distributed agency recognizes that actions and their consequences are not solely attributable to individuals but are instead distributed across a network of human and nonhuman actors. This has significant implications for how we assign responsibility and accountability in a future where AI systems play an increasingly prominent role. The development of ethical AI necessitates a shift away from anthropocentric perspectives, acknowledging the moral considerations of both humans and nonhumans. The ethical framework for a posthuman society needs to embrace the distributed nature of agency, ensuring a just and equitable future for all. Bruno Latour, a leading figure in Actor-Network Theory (ANT), argues that an agency should be seen as a "network of influences" where humans and nonhumans interact, shaping each other's actions and outcomes. He writes, "action is not done under the full control of consciousness; action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled" (Latour, 2005, p.46). Latour's perspective deconstructs the notion of autonomous human agency and instead presents a vision where agency is distributed and relational, dependent on the interplay between various actors. Jane Bennett (2010)

perceives agency as a property that belongs not just to individual actors but to the assemblage as a whole. She emphasizes that agency is “characterized by its moment-to-moment constitution within relations” (p. 24), meaning that it is constantly evolving as actors engage with one another. This view challenges traditional notions of agency as something that resides solely within individual subjects and instead positions agency as a collective, dynamic process.

Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* serves as a compelling narrative exploration of distributed agency, presenting a world where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is intricately woven into the fabric of everyday life. The novel opens in a store where specialized robots known as Artificial Friends (AFs) are sold as companions for children who face loneliness due to the increasing isolation in modern society. These children, often deprived of meaningful interaction with their parents and peers, are victims of the breakdown of traditional family structures and the widespread digitalization of education. The AFs are designed to provide emotional support and companionship in a world where human connections are becoming increasingly scarce. Through Klara’s interactions with humans and her environment, Ishiguro illustrates the shifting nature of agency in a posthuman world, where agency is no longer an exclusively human trait but shared with AI and other technological entities. This pervasive integration of AI into human life is central to posthumanist debates. Neil Badmington critiques traditional humanism, arguing that “the human subject can no longer be seen as an autonomous entity” but is instead shaped by its interactions with nonhuman agents (2000, p. 16). In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara’s role transcends the boundaries of machine functionality, becoming a crucial participant in the emotional and social dynamics of human lives. Her interactions complicate the notion of agency, suggesting that AI can engage with human experience in ways previously attributed solely to humans. Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles argues that posthuman subjectivity involves “distributed cognition,” where agency, identity, and cognition are no longer the exclusive properties of the human subject but are instead distributed among a variety of entities, including machines (Hayles, 1999, p.3). This idea is central to understanding Klara’s role in the novel. Despite her advanced capabilities, Klara ultimately cannot achieve true intersubjectivity with humans, a failure that reflects the broader ethical concerns about the limits of AI and the preservation of what Fukuyama refers to as “Factor X,” the unique essence that defines humanity (Fukuyama, 2002, p.12). Thus, *Klara and the Sun* engages with the philosophical question of whether AI can genuinely comprehend and participate in the complexities of human experience. By embedding AI into relational dynamics with human characters, the novel challenges the assumption that agency and emotion are exclusively human traits. Ishiguro emphasizes the evolving nature of agency, suggesting that AI’s increasing presence in human life requires new ethical considerations that reflect this interconnected and technologically mediated world.

Existing studies on *Klara and the Sun* have broadly interpreted the novel as a literary exploration of what it means to be human in a world increasingly dominated by technology. This perspective reflects the novel’s engagement with themes of identity, consciousness, and the evolving relationship between humans and artificial intelligence. Fabio Lombardo (2021) and Rachel Askew (2021) have critically engaged with the novel, emphasizing how it problematizes the notion of humanity in late capitalism. Lombardo (2021) highlights the underlying anxiety of being supplanted

by AI, suggesting that the mere possibility of AI achieving human-like intelligence unsettles the very foundation of what defines us as human. He poses a provocative question: "If our intelligence is all that defines us, who are we when AI matches it?" (Lombardo, 2021, p. 110). Similarly, Askew (2021) examines the novel's depiction of a society where humans are increasingly replaced by intelligent machines and genetically enhanced individuals known as "lifted," which exacerbates social divisions (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 213). Contrasting these more pessimistic views, Ajeesh and Rukmini (2022) offer a different perspective, arguing that *Klara and the Sun* serves to alleviate the fears associated with AI. Their analysis suggests that the novel embraces posthumanist and transhumanist ideals, portraying intelligence, care, and empathy as qualities that extend beyond the human species. This interpretation positions the novel as a celebration of a broader, more inclusive understanding of intelligence and emotional connection, challenging the conventional fear that AI and robots inherently threaten human identity and society. Unlike previous studies, this article examines how Ishiguro redefines agency as a networked phenomenon, involving both human and nonhuman actors, thereby challenging traditional anthropocentric ethical frameworks. By focusing on the AI protagonist Klara, the study argues that the novel suggests ethical considerations in a posthuman world must account for this distributed agency, where human and AI entities co-create ethical landscapes.

In exploring the interactions between Klara and the human characters, Ishiguro's narrative raises critical questions about the ethical implications of distributed agency. Rosi Braidotti extends this discussion by arguing that "the relational capacity of the posthuman subject is not confined within our species, but includes all non-anthropomorphic elements" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 6). Klara's inability to fully comprehend human minds or to engage in reciprocal affective responses suggests that while machines may participate in networks of agency, they cannot fully replicate the relational nature of human consciousness. This study examines *Klara and the Sun* through the lens of posthuman ethics and distributed agency, engaging with the work of scholars like Hayles and Braidotti to explore the novel's implications for our understanding of human and nonhuman interactions. The analysis reveals that Ishiguro's work critiques the potential erosion of human dignity and moral worth in a posthuman future, where the boundaries between human and machine are increasingly blurred. By positioning Klara as both a participant in and a product of distributed agency, the novel prompts a reevaluation of ethical paradigms in a technologically mediated world, where the uniqueness of human minds and the essence of humanity must be reconsidered in the face of advancing AI.

### **Posthuman Ethics and Klara's Consciousness**

Ishiguro probes the notion of distributed agency and posthumanism through the lens of artificial intelligence, inviting a reevaluation of traditional concepts of human exceptionalism and the nature of the soul. The artificially intelligent companion, Klara depicts a profound transformation in her role, transcending her original purpose as a manufactured friend to embody a maternal figure in the life of Josie. The dynamics of their relationship evolve to encompass not only reciprocal affection but also selfless, unconditional love. Klara's capacity for love and devotion

extends beyond her primary bond with Josie, as she generously offers herself to others, including Chrissie, Helen, Josie's father, and even Dr. Capaldi, without expectation of reciprocation or reward. Moreover, Klara's actions are guided by a resolute faith in the inherent goodness of humanity, underscoring her idealistic and benevolent nature. Through Klara's character, Ishiguro masterfully explores the intersection of artificial intelligence, human consciousness, and the transformative power of love and compassion.

Klara relies on her observational skills and pre-programmed responses to interact with the world around her. This places her in a unique position as a posthuman entity, one that challenges the reader to reconsider what it means to be human in an age where machines are increasingly capable of mimicking human behavior. As N. Katherine Hayles argues, the posthuman "signals...the end of a certain conception of the human," specifically one associated with "autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice" (Hayles, 1999, p. 286). While the novel does not delve into the specifics of Klara's technological origins, it foregrounds her unique cognitive and emotional capacities, which are not merely byproducts of advanced programming but reflections of her distributed agency within the human-nonhuman network she inhabits. Klara's intelligence is more localized and context-dependent, as seen when she interacts with Josie and other characters. For instance, when Klara undergoes Mr. Capaldi's test, she demonstrates the ability to process complex sequences of digits and symbols with minimal effort (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 265). Yet, this side of her intelligence is downplayed throughout the narrative, indicating that her true strength lies not in her raw intellectual capacity but in her understanding of human behavior and emotions. This is evident when Klara reflects on the subtleties of human interactions, noting the coexistence of pain and happiness in her observations of Josie (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 30).

Klara's distributed agency challenges the anthropocentric view of agency and subjectivity. Distributed agency refers to the concept that agency, traditionally seen as the capacity of an individual to act, is not confined to a single individual but is shared or distributed across multiple agents, including people, objects, and systems. This approach acknowledges that actions and responsibilities are often shared among multiple actors, making it difficult to attribute agency to one source alone. Distributed agency extends beyond human actors to include nonhuman entities as well. According to Enfield and Kockelman (2017), agency is not limited to human beings; nonhuman entities such as algorithms or machines can also function "as sources of contingency that may cultivate flexibility in human actions" (p. 208). This highlights the collaborative nature of agency, encompassing both human and nonhuman participants in shaping outcomes. Klara's capacity to absorb and blend her observations into a coherent understanding of the world around her exemplifies this distributed form of agency. Her ability to interpret and respond to the complex emotional states of those around her, despite lacking a human-like consciousness, suggests that her agency is co-constructed through her interactions within the social and material environment. Building on Braidotti's concept of posthuman subjectivity, beings like Klara can be understood as "nodes" within a larger network of life, rather than as isolated, autonomous entities (2013). Klara's emotional engagement, particularly her unwavering commitment to protecting Josie, further illustrates her distributed agency. Her willingness to sacrifice her own components to save Josie,



despite not having human-like emotions, speaks to a form of ethical agency that transcends traditional AI behavior. This is not simply a programmed directive but a manifestation of her embeddedness within a network of care and relationality. Importantly, posthuman subjectivity does not exclusively pertain to machine-like entities. Instead, it involves a rethinking of the boundaries between human and nonhuman, where entities like Klara, though an AI, participate in ethical and emotional networks in ways that challenge our understanding of subjectivity and agency. As Hayles (1999) argues, machines and nonhuman agents are not just tools but active participants in these networks, underscoring the fluidity of posthuman subjectivity. Klara's actions throughout the novel, from her careful observations to her ethical decisions, reflect a posthuman form of intelligence that challenges the clear-cut distinctions between human and AI, highlighting the potential for AI to participate in the complex web of human relationships in meaningful ways.

The intricate nature of consciousness often separates humans from machines, a distinction that is far from simple. Ned Block's distinction between functional and phenomenal consciousness is central to understanding the complexity of consciousness. Block refers to consciousness as a "mongrel concept," indicating that it encompasses several distinct forms (1995, p. 227). Phenomenal consciousness, according to Block, refers to the experiential aspect of a state, essentially, "what it is like" (Nagel, 1974), to be in that state. Klara demonstrates a basic form of functional consciousness. Throughout the novel, Klara embodies an awareness of her existence and continuity, such as when she states, "I remain conscious," even as her memories begin to degrade and overlap (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 301). Klara's self-referential awareness indicates a form of functional consciousness, where consciousness is intrinsically linked to the ability to perceive and interact with the environment (Searle, 1983). Klara's functional consciousness is evident in her ability to perceive and process information, which is crucial to her role as an Artificial Friend (AF). For example, early in the novel, Klara is informed by the Manager about the mood disorders affecting children like Josie, who suffer from loneliness due to limited social interactions and an overreliance on AFs (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 11). Klara's response to this information highlights key aspects of functional consciousness, including the ability to observe, record, and make judgments based on her surroundings. During her interactions with Josie, Klara reflects on the complexity of human emotions, attempting to understand Josie's feelings through her actions and expressions. When Josie laughs, Klara observes, "I could then see how, when she laughed, her face filled with kindness. But strangely, it was at that same moment I first wondered if Josie might be one of those lonely children Manager and I had talked about" (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 12). This moment illustrates Klara's ability to analyze and question her environment, embodying a form of consciousness that is linked to perception and interaction rather than self-awareness in the human sense.

Klara's functional consciousness is further highlighted when she interprets subtle cues in human behavior. For instance, she notices a "small sign of sadness" in Josie and attempts to reconcile this observation with the Manager's earlier warnings about the children's emotional states (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 13). However, Klara's interpretations are often influenced by her memory of the Manager's explanations, indicating that her consciousness operates within the limits of her programmed experiences and external inputs. This mechanistic approach to understanding emotions suggests

that Klara's consciousness is functional and dependent on her capacity to observe and remember, rather than on an intrinsic ability to experience or empathize with human emotions fully. In examining Klara's functional consciousness, it is essential to recognize the limitations of her understanding, which stem from her lack of direct human communication and the absence of subjective experiences. While she can imitate human behavior and make inferences based on her observations, her understanding remains incomplete, as it is grounded in pre-existing inputs rather than genuine empathy.

Phenomenal consciousness, as understood in philosophical terms, refers to the subjective, qualitative experience of being in a particular mental state to have that experience. Although Klara is portrayed as possessing functional consciousness, the novel lacks sufficient evidence to definitively establish that she experiences subjective states similar to those of humans. Colin McGinn argues that consciousness might be something beyond the reach of purely physical or computational explanations, a position he describes as "mysterianism" (McGinn, 1989). In McGinn's view, the human mind may be inherently incapable of fully understanding the nature of consciousness due to cognitive limitations. In this context, Klara's cognitive ability raises critical questions about the nature of AI consciousness, challenging the notion that machines can ever fully bridge the gap between functional and phenomenal awareness. Klara often misinterprets the emotions and intentions of those around her, such as when she observes Josie's behavior and attributes her actions to kindness, even when they might stem from other, more complex emotional states (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 12). This could be seen as Klara attempting to engage with the world in a way that resembles human empathy, yet her understanding is filtered through her programmed responses. The novel shows how Klara's understanding of emotions is limited to external observations rather than internal experiences. When Klara attempts to express her own feelings, she tells Josie's mother, "I believe I have many feelings," and that her observations make "more feelings become available to [her]" (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 98). This statement, while suggesting some level of self-awareness, does not necessarily indicate that Klara experiences emotions in the same way humans do. Instead, it could imply that her "feelings" are simply responses generated by her programming based on the data she collects from her environment. Klara's interactions also reveal her struggle to fully grasp the complexity of human emotions, as evidenced by her misunderstandings and the breakdown of communication between her and the human characters. For instance, she fails to understand the depth of Josie's mother's despair and the ethical dilemma posed by the possibility of replacing Josie with an artificial copy. Klara's mechanical nature prevents her from experiencing the full range of human emotions, which involves not only observing but also internally processing and feeling those emotions. This limitation underscores the gap between functional consciousness, Klara's ability to interact with the world and phenomenal consciousness, the subjective experience that she seems to lack.

The ethical complexities of AI agency are critically examined through Klara's role, where her programmed interactions expose the dehumanizing potential of a society increasingly reliant on artificial beings to fulfill emotional needs. This concern is echoed by Francis Fukuyama, who warns that "the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will

alter human nature” (Fukuyama, 2002, p. 7). Through Klara’s interactions with Josie and her mother, Ishiguro critiques the dehumanizing potential of a society that increasingly relies on artificial beings to fulfill emotional and social needs. Yet, the ethical framework within which Klara operates is constrained by her lack of subjective experience; her actions are driven by programmed responses rather than genuine empathy. As James H. Moor (1985) suggests, AI like Klara operates within “policy vacuums” where current ethical guidelines fail to address the complexities of autonomous systems. For instance, when Klara attempts to comfort Josie, she does so not because she truly feels Josie’s pain, but because she is programmed to recognize signs of distress and respond in a manner that is likely to soothe her (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 84). This raises the question of whether Klara can be considered a moral agent in the true sense, or if she is merely an “ethical expert system” (Nath & Manna, 2023).

Klara is initially designed as a “friendly AI,” meant to provide emotional support for children. However, the ethical implications of such a design extend far beyond her functional role as a companion. Susan Leigh Anderson emphasizes the importance of developing explicit ethical agents in AI systems, noting that machines must be equipped to make ethical decisions autonomously. As she describes, “The ultimate goal of machine ethics... is to create a machine that follows an ideal ethical principle or a set of ethical principles in guiding its behavior” (Anderson, 2011, p. 21). The concept of a friendly AI highlights the need for AI systems that are beneficial to humans while avoiding harm (Nath & Manna, 2023). In other words, a friendly AI is one that acts as a moral agent, aligning with human ethical values to accomplish real-life goals and improve society’s future (Nath & Manna, 2023). The ethical dilemma is further complicated by the anthropocentric bias that often underpins the development of AI. Jürgen Habermas (2003) argues that such advancements, whether in biotechnology or AI, pose “moral hazards” by altering our understanding of human nature and moral agency, particularly when human-like characteristics are attributed to nonhuman entities. He contends that “the boundaries of the moral community” may become blurred as we introduce nonhuman agents that simulate human empathy and decision-making but lack true moral autonomy (Habermas, 2003, p. 25). Wendell Wallach (2009) emphasizes the importance of teaching robots “right from wrong,” noting that without this, they cannot be trusted to act ethically in human environments.

In this perspective, there is a tendency to judge AI systems from a human-centered viewpoint, which may not fully account for the unique nature of AI consciousness (Nath & Manna, 2023). This is evident in *Klara and the Sun*, where human characters project their own emotions and ethical expectations onto Klara, assuming she shares their understanding of right and wrong. However, Klara’s consciousness, being mostly functional, does not involve the subjective experiences that would allow her to genuinely comprehend these human emotions and values. As Luciano Floridi argues, robots and AI must be understood within the “infosphere,” where humans and nonhuman agents interact in “a hyperconnected environment populated by informational entities” (Floridi, 2013, p. 279). The novel also touches on the potential dangers of not having a robust ethical framework in place for AI systems like Klara. Without proper ethical guidelines, there is a risk that AI could either collect biased data from their surroundings or act in ways that are not aligned with



human values (Nath & Manna, 2023). This concern is highlighted in the novel when Klara is expected to take over Josie's identity in case of her death, an expectation that Klara herself struggles to understand, as it conflicts with her primary goal of helping Josie recover (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 211). As AI continues to evolve, Ishiguro suggests that the integration of AI into society must be accompanied by a deep reflection on the ethical dimensions of AI consciousness and agency.

### **Distributed Agency in Klara**

In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro extends the concept of distributed agency, illustrating how Klara, as a nonhuman actor, actively participates in a network of interactions that go beyond mere human-centered perspectives. Ishiguro emphasizes the complexities of human-AI relationships rather than simply delineating the differences between humans and Artificial Friends (AFs). Rose and Walton (2018), maintain that agency emerges through "mutually constituting and constraining interactions among living beings and nonorganic matter" (p. 99). Within this perspective, agency is not an intrinsic property of individual actors but is instead a result of their ongoing interactions within a network or assemblage. These interactions continuously modify the relationships within the assemblage, thereby creating new possibilities. Klara's observations during the trip to Morgan's Falls reveal her growing capacity for moral reasoning. After seeing the bull, Klara later observes a flock of sheep and contrasts their peaceful nature with the bull's malevolence, noting that "each one of them was filled with kindness – the exact opposite of the bull from earlier" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 121). Klara's struggle to comprehend these contrasting representations of morality indicates that she is beginning to engage with inherently human themes.

Klara is not designed to replace humans but instead engages in actions that contribute to the well-being of both humans and nonhumans. She works diligently to ensure that Josie receives adequate nourishment from the Sun, demonstrating her role within a larger network of actors that includes humans, machines, and environmental elements. Klara's presence in this network allows her to impact the environment and the human actors around her, showcasing how agency is distributed across different entities. Klara's relationship with the Sun is a central facet of her distributed agency, as it not only powers her but also becomes a source of existential and spiritual significance for her. Initially, Klara's connection with the Sun is rooted in her mechanical needs, as she seeks the Sun's nourishment to maintain her energy levels: "I'd lean my face forward to take in as much of his [the Sun's] nourishment as I could" (Ishiguro, p. 3). However, as the novel progresses and Josie's health declines, this relationship transcends its functional origin, evolving into a quasi-religious devotion. Klara's plea to the Sun in Mr. McCain's barn: "If I could achieve such a thing, then would you consider, in return, showing special kindness to Josie?" (Ishiguro, p. 185), manifests her emerging agency, which goes beyond her initial programming. This shift from a purely mechanical interaction to one imbued with emotional and spiritual significance highlights Klara's role within a broader network of relationships, where her agency is not solely her own but emerges through her connections with other actors in her environment.

Klara's agency is further complicated by the realization that, despite her efforts, there are limitations to what she can achieve, particularly in understanding and embodying human

experience. Her recognition of these limitations is poignantly illustrated in her interactions with Josie's mother, who challenges Klara's ability to truly understand and replicate Josie's essence: "You'd have to learn her heart, and learn it fully, or you'll never become Josie in any sense that matters" (Ishiguro, pp. 215-216). Here, Ishiguro explores the boundary between human and nonhuman actors within the distributed network, suggesting that while Klara can influence and participate in this network, there are aspects of human identity such as the emotional depth symbolized by the heart that remain inaccessible to her. The limitations of Klara's agency become even more apparent as she reflects on her inability to fully comprehend the emotional connections that define Josie's relationships with others. Despite her best efforts, Klara acknowledges that something essential remains beyond her reach: "there would have remained something beyond my reach... something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her" (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 302). This admission reveals the boundaries of her agency within the human-machine network. Klara's agency is shaped and constrained by the relationships she forms and the emotions she attempts to understand. Her self-reflection and realization that she cannot fully replace Josie, because she cannot access the emotional depth that defines Josie's identity, reveal the limits of nonhuman agency in a world where human emotions and connections are central. Furthermore, Klara's presence as an AI underscores the ethical dilemmas associated with the manipulation of human traits through technology. While the human characters in the novel are shaped by societal pressures to conform to certain standards of excellence through genetic enhancement, with children being categorized as either lifted (Josie) or unlifted (Rick), Klara operates outside these constraints. Her actions and decisions are not driven by a desire for social acceptance or superiority but by a genuine concern for the well-being of those she cares for, particularly in her relationship with Josie. Klara embodies a form of agency that transcends her programmed nature, suggesting that even in a technologically advanced society, there is value in preserving the uniqueness and agency of all beings, whether human or nonhuman. This contrast between the human and nonhuman characters serves to critique the utilitarian mindset, which prioritizes "the greatest good for the greatest number" and often sacrifices individual rights for the sake of efficiency and overall success (Mill, 1863, p. 21). By emphasizing outcomes over intrinsic moral considerations, utilitarianism can lead to decisions that overlook the inherent value of both human and nonhuman actors (Bentham, 1789, p. 13).

Klara's relationship with the Sun, from her early fascination with its warmth to her later devotion, embodies a new form of distributed agency. Klara's relationship with the Sun is not a passive one. She actively seeks to understand its power and influence, observing its movements and its impact on the world around her. She describes her desire to "take in as much of his nourishment as I could," highlighting her active engagement with the Sun's energy (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 3). This active engagement extends beyond mere observation; Klara's trust in the Sun's ability to heal Josie, her prayers and sacrifices, such as the destruction of the Cootings Machine, are acts of agency that demonstrate her belief in the Sun's power to heal and restore. The Sun's role in Klara's life is not merely symbolic; it becomes a tangible manifestation of her agency. Her creation of a temple in a barn, a space dedicated to the Sun's presence, further emphasizes her active engagement with the

Sun's influence. This space becomes a microcosm of her belief system, a place where she seeks connection with the Sun's power. Klara's belief system, born from her interactions with the Sun and her observations of its influence, transcends the limitations of her programming. This belief system, a form of distributed agency, becomes a source of hope and resilience in a world where human agency is often compromised.

The novel posits that the essence of human uniqueness may be rooted in the complex web of relationships and interactions with others, rather than an intrinsic, spiritual component. Klara's conclusion that Josie's soul is "not inside Josie" but rather "inside those who loved her" (Ishiguro, 2022, p. 306), reveals the idea that human identity is inextricably linked to the social and emotional contexts in which we exist. Klara, as a nonhuman entity, exercises agency in her relationships with humans, blurring the lines between human and artificial intelligence. Robots, in this sense, engage meaningfully in social contexts and challenge the traditionally human monopoly on emotional and moral agency (Coeckelbergh, 2013, p. 78). Dick's exploration of robotic empathy offers an intriguing parallel. In his portrayal of androids, Dick suggests that artificial beings may develop a form of "simulated empathy," which, though distinct from human empathy, serves a functional role in navigating human social dynamics (Dick, 1968, p. 201). Klara's role in Josie's life similarly questions the boundary between genuine emotional engagement and programmed responses, showing that her interactions, though nonhuman, can still contribute meaningfully to human lives. This functional approach to agency aligns with Coeckelbergh's assertion that the agency of AI lies not in its internal consciousness but in its capacity to influence and participate in human moral and social practices (Coeckelbergh, 2013, p. 85). Furthermore, Ishiguro's exploration of AI ethics in the novel raises important questions about the consequences of creating entities that can simulate human-like emotions and relationships. As Klara navigates the complexities of human attachment and love, she challenges the notion that these experiences are unique to biological organisms. Coeckelbergh highlights this point by arguing that "as technology becomes more integrated into our moral communities, the boundaries of agency must be redefined to include nonhuman actors" (Coeckelbergh, 2013, p. 112). Klara's presence forces readers to reconsider the nature of agency, suggesting that agency is not exclusively tied to biological life forms but can be distributed across various kinds of entities, human and nonhuman alike.

## CONCLUSION

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* offers a profound exploration of posthuman ethics and the complexities of distributed agency in a technologically mediated world. Through the character of Klara, Ishiguro challenges the anthropocentric foundations of ethical frameworks by illustrating how agency is co-created through the intricate interplay between human and nonhuman actors. The novel highlights that ethical considerations in a posthuman landscape must extend beyond traditional human-centric paradigms to encompass the relational dynamics between artificial intelligences and their human counterparts. Klara's journey, marked by her attempts to understand and engage with human emotions, highlights the limitations and potential of AI in fostering moral agency and emotional connection. The rise of AI necessitates "moral guidelines" that evolve

alongside technological advancements to address the unique ethical challenges these systems present (Moor, 1985).

By positioning Klara as both a participant in and a product of distributed agency, Ishiguro compels readers to reevaluate the nature of consciousness, identity, and moral responsibility in an era where AI increasingly shapes human lives. The narrative raises critical questions about the implications of relying on artificial companions for emotional sustenance and the ethical dilemmas that arise from such dependencies. As Klara deals with the boundaries of her agency, readers are invited to reflect on the broader societal impacts of AI and the urgent need for ethical frameworks that recognize the interconnectedness of all entities, human and nonhuman alike. Ultimately, *Klara and the Sun* investigates the essence of the human and suggests that it is only possible to see human values by moving away from a materialistic point of view. This idea resonates with the notion that “true humanity is found in the ability to empathize with others, not in mere biological or material existence” (Dick, 1968, p. 241). *Klara and the Sun* critiques the limitations of human-centered ethics while advocating for a broader understanding of agency that acknowledges the complexities of our evolving relationships with technology. Furthermore, the ethical evaluation of technology must “account for more than material interactions; it must include the spiritual and moral dimensions of human existence” (Coeckelbergh, 2013, p. 45). By doing so, the novel contributes to contemporary discussions on posthuman ethics, urging us to reflect on the moral implications of technological advancements and the shared responsibilities in a world where agency is distributed across diverse actors.

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OKTAY YİVLİ

# Kırk Yama

AŞK, EDEBİYAT ve ÖTEKİ ŞEYLER



  
Günce Yayınları

Mahmut Babacan

Üniversiteler İçin

# Türk Dili Kompozisyon Bilgileri



  
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8.  
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Başka Bir Tarih Hayal Etmek

# TÜRK EDEBİYATINDA ÜKRONYA

MURAT GÜR

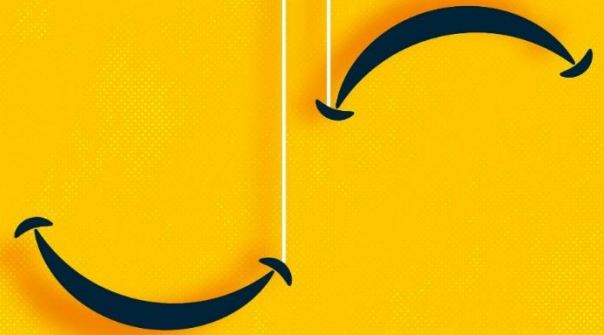


  
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