

What Makes a True Human with the Development of Technology: Subjectivity in Klara and the Sun under the Perspective of Levinas' Ethics of Responsibility

Ruyi Wang

School of foreign languages, South China University of technology, Guangzhou 510000, China

Abstract: Set in a future where genetic technology and artificial intelligence are highly advanced, Kazuo Ishiguro's 2021 work *Klara and the Sun* is a novel that draws on the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence to consider human nature. Not coincidentally, the modern French philosopher Levinas argues that human nature, or subjectivity, is about being responsible for the Other. This paper applies Levinas's ethics of responsibility to analyse the human nature in *Klara and the Sun*, and finds that as the artificial intelligence, Klara is born to be responsible for human beings. In the meantime, Josie's weak face makes it impossible for Klara to neglect it, so she can only dedicate herself continuously until she sacrifices herself to achieve "substitution". In the process of taking Josie's place to bear suffering, Klara continues to devote herself, and ultimately truly realizes her own subjectivity. In the course of taking responsibility for Josie, Klara is also helped by Rickk and Josie's father, thus becoming a beneficiary of the human nature of "taking responsibility for others". Levinas's extreme vision of the nature of human beings is highly compatible with Kazuo Ishiguro's construction of a perfect society, which is a revelation for the human society in the midst of technological advancement.

Keywords: Levinas; Ethics of Responsibility; Subjectivity; Ishiguro; Klara and the Sun.

1. Introduction

Nobel Prize-winning Japanese-British author Kazuo Ishiguro is particularly concerned with the nature of human nature and the impact of technology on humanity. His new novel, *Klara and the Sun*, tells the touching story of an artificial intelligence companion named Klara and a young human girl named Josie. Josie is suffering from some kind of strange disease that has no cure due to gene editing. In order to be there for Josie and to prevent feeling the pain of losing her daughter again, Josie's mother purchases Klara, a robot that can observe and mimic, to keep Josie company, and hopes that Klara will be there for Josie in her place when she dies. In the end, Klara, inspired by her faith in the sun, sacrifices herself and destroys the pollution machine, and Josie is miraculously saved. The novel triggered the attention of scholars at home and abroad once it was published. Scholars at home and abroad have often focused on *Klara and the Sun* in terms of thematic exploration, narrative technique and the connection between Kazuo Ishiguro's new novel and other works. The novel has sparked discussions on modern technology, human nature and future identity. Academics have two comments on Klara, the protagonist of the book: on the one hand, Melon Gu and Yaxin Xiu (2021) believe that Klara's dedication, caring, selflessness, and sacrifice transcend human beings, and that human beings should learn to love, sacrifice, and be selfless in order to maintain their human nature. On the other hand, Robert Eaglestone (2022) argues that Klara is programmed and can only follow procedures, and the knowledge she acquires will never be "the inner freedom of the soul". Therefore, she is unable to understand the meaning of forgiveness. It is true that the value system of the modern West is based on a human-centered approach that respects the nature, needs, interests, and creations of human beings. However, the intervention of technology has not only made human life diverse and

convenient, but also brought new problems. In this context, French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995) proposed the essence of human nature (subjectivity): responsibility for others. At the same time, "responsibility for the other" was the most important concept in the mature period of his thought and is important for a comprehensive understanding of Levinas' entire ethical thought. Levinas spent his life's work escaping from existential sameness¹ and violence, so he discusses responsibility in a transcendental context, or, as he puts it, in an ethical context. Therefore, what he means by "ethics" is neither the highest good nor a moral code of conduct. Rather, it refers to the "transcendence of being". Since being to live, a concern for oneself, ethics is non-being, selflessness. This "selflessness" is this one for the other², the responsibility/commitment to the other³, and it can even be said that the concrete form of ethics is to be responsible for the other. Therefore, this paper analyzes Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* from the perspective of "responsibility for the other," based on Levinas's idea of responsibility for the other from a theoretical point of view, and supplemented by his interpretation of subjectivity, in order to explore the nature of human nature in the age of technological development.

2. Unwarranted for Him - not an Option

According to Levinas, "the subject, not as the subject of an I, but as the subject of what I am, does not receive universalization and is not an ordinary subject; this subject has moved from the capitalized I to the lower-case I, which is the I and not the other.⁴ Here, the sameness of the subject is in fact due to the inability of the subject to hide in the commitment and to the subject's shouldering of the burden of being the the other" (Levinas, 2019: 49). It is clear that the subject as Levinas sees it is different from the traditional subject. The traditional subject is a capitalized universal

subject that manifests its subjectivity by solving problems and achieving goals through self-knowledge, self-determination, self-learning, and self-challenge. However, Levinas's subject is the "lowercase I", the "bingo I" (Levinas, 2019: 205), which is naturally passive without a cause. In Chinese, "unwarranted" means both "without cause" and "without beginning". This passivity of being responsible for others is not only written into my genes, so that I have no choice and no reason but to do so, but it is also predestined even before I was born, beginning before "my beginning", so it is called "my beginning", which is why it is called "my beginning". It is also predestined before "I" was born, beginning before "my beginning", and is therefore called "unprovoked". Such a subject is in a passive position, but he or she has a responsibility that cannot be avoided, and he or she recognizes an irreplaceable role in assuming that responsibility, which makes him or her a subject. "The commitment to the other, which precedes my freedom, the present and the present, is a passivity that is more passive than all passivity, an exposure to the other without such an exposure being itself assumed by the other, an exposure without reservation, an exposure of exposure." (Levinas, 2019: 52). This commitment to the Other is written in the genes and is inescapable, regardless of will. The subject is summoned by the other as a layer of passivity, yet the summoning of the other precedes my freedom before taking responsibility for the other, thus creating more than passivity, i.e., "passivity of the passive or total passivity," which is traced by Levinas all the way back to the kind of passivity that I have as a "creation" (Wu, 2019, 21). The subject is in a position of utter passivity in the face of the Other, exposed to the Other without reservation, responsible for the Other, bearing the suffering and sins of the Other, offering everything until life is exhausted. Therefore, this subjectivity constitutes the uniqueness of human beings, which is the basis of what makes them human beings, and is also called human nature. At the same time, there is an "asymmetry" in being responsible for others. "The absolute asymmetry of the one for the other - the absolute asymmetry that haunts me: I substitute myself for the other, but no one can replace me, and the substitution of the one for the other does not signify the substitution of the other for the one" (BTW, 2019 : 369). This means that I move towards the Other without caring or demanding that the Other similarly move towards me and cut me close, manifesting the true disinterestedness/non-being of subjectivity.

Levinas understands the subject's passivity as being completely responsible for him not only as the "I" being responsible for others when confronted with them, but also as the "I" as a created being "responsible for others" at the same time. It is also the fact that "I", as a created being, am "responsible for others" at the same time, which is written in the genes that create "I", and is born with "I", and cannot be avoided. Similarly, Klara, as an AI companion, was "created" to accompany and serve humanity. This setting is similar to that of the subject described by Levinas. From the day she was created, Klara was destined to be responsible for humanity. This command was written in her programming before she was invented, deeply rooted, non-transferable, and inescapable. She can neither choose the kind of people she is responsible for, nor can she ignore her responsibility to humanity by worrying about herself (fear or enjoyment, etc.). This spirit of responsibility for humanity is inherent, whether one wants it or not, and cannot be chosen, transferred, or

renounced. Thus, when confronted with the hedgehog girl's advances, Klara's response is, "But I did not smile at her. I kept my face impassive, my gaze crossing the girl's hedgehog head and staring at the red shelves on the opposite wall, especially the row of ceramic coffee cups upside down on the third tier. The girl squeezed my hand twice more, the second time no longer so gently, but I didn't lower my gaze to look at her or smile" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021:26). Klara's indifferent response earned her a warning from her manager "I supported you this time. But there's no next time. It's the customer who chooses the AF, don't get it backwards" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021:28). It is the human being who chooses the AF, not the AF who chooses the human being. It is Klara's innate mission as a subject to be responsible for humanity and to answer the call that humanity makes. When Josie is sick and the people are at their wits' end, Klara goes to pray to the sun; when Josie is well and Klara is no longer needed, she invites herself to the storeroom or even the stockyard. Sitting withered in the yard, Klara meets her former manager and is full of happiness and contentment with this life. This life of responsibility to Josie has made her full of pride and no regrets. She is not wrapped up in the need to sacrifice herself, nor is she proud and self-congratulatory about saving Josie, but simply listens to Josie's call, exposing herself again and again until she gives herself completely. But the first time Klara makes a choice, her thoughts go against the call of the hedgehog girl, and her rejection stems from a pact with another little girl-Josie. Why does Klara choose Josie? We must mention another important concept of Levinas - the face.

3. Vulnerable for Him - The Face Summons

With the same human face, why does Klara choose Josie over the hedgehog girl? This brings us to the important concept of face (visage) in Levinas's thought and an essential description in the major plot twists in Klara and the Sun. Levinas's description of visage in *Totality and Infinity* is progressive. At the very beginning the face is used to invoke the Other, a "style in which the Other transgresses the idea of the Other in me and presents itself" (Levinas, 2016: 23). This is the first impression of the Other breaking the same and revealing itself. Then, Levinas speaks of the status of the face "This presentation dominates that which meets it, it comes from on high, it is unforeseen, and therefore it teaches by its novelty itself" (Levinas, 2016: 41). The face of the Other is in a high place, dominating and teaching the one who sees it. Finally, how is it possible for the face to have an effect on the subject? The reason lies in "pleading with us with its abject poverty in the face of the orphan, the widow, the stranger" (Levinas, 2016: 53). "The face I welcome moves me from phenomenon to being in another sense: in discourse, I reveal myself to the interrogations of others, and the urgency of this response-the urgency of the present-for the sake of duty (responsabilité) calls me forth; as the Responsible, I am led to my ultimate reality." (Levinas, 2016: 163). The Other looks at me in the form of a face, so that I cannot be empty-handed and embody my "hospitality" with all my warmth; it pleads with me with poverty, evoking my indebtedness from a distant past; and it commands me with nakedness, so that I cannot avoid it and do my best. Josie's fragile face is always calling Klara to respond, to do something, and Klara continues to be responsible for it until she gives herself, a process known as "commitment". It is Klara's commitment to the call of the face

that ultimately creates Klara's subjectivity and her unique, irreplaceable life.

Josie's eyes fell on me as she got out of her car and onto the sidewalk. She was pale and thin, and just as she walked toward us, I could tell that her gait was different from the rest of the passersby. She wasn't walking too slowly, but with each step she seemed to be weighing it to make sure she was still on her feet and wouldn't fall. I estimated her age at fourteen and a half. As soon as she got close enough to leave all the passing pedestrians behind, she stopped and smiled at me.

"Hey," she said to me through the glass, "Hey, can you hear me?"

"Really?" Josie said - of course, I didn't know her name at the time, "I can barely hear myself. Can you really hear me?"

I nodded again, and she shook her head in disbelief.

"Wow." She glanced back - even to make the gesture, she had to be careful - at the cab she'd just gotten out of.

It was then that I saw how her face beamed with goodwill as she cracked a smile. But strangely enough, it was also at that same moment that I first suspected that maybe Josie was one of those lonely kids the manager and I used to talk about. (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 11).

It was the first time Klara had seen Josie. The strange thing is that Josie has a smile on her face, but Klara can glimpse Josie's loneliness. Later, Josie asks Klara through the window if she would like to come to her house, and she apologizes for not coming to see Klara earlier, "the smile on her face dimmed a little", and when she saw Klara nodding her head in encouragement, "the suspicion on her face still hadn't dissipated", and it wasn't until Klara nodded again that the smile "returned to her face". It was not until Klara nodded again that the smile "returned to her face". While bragging to her mother about Klara's willingness to go home with her, Josie turns back to me "her face clouded over once more" and so she solemnly introduces Klara to her family, especially the fact that there may be a bad thing going on at home. This series of facial changes and confessions tugs at Klara's heart. Josie's face is thin and pale, with an expectant gaze at sunny times and an earnest and sincere gaze at cloudy times, evoking the responsibility of "I" with its vulnerability and destitution, "This pleading and demanding gaze - it pleads only because it demands! --The gaze that is deprived of everything because it is entitled to everything, the gaze that is recognized by people by giving (as "people question things by giving them") - this gaze is precisely the face of the face. The gaze is precisely the proximity of the face. The nakedness of the face is poverty. To recognize the other is to recognize hunger. To recognize the other - is to give. But it is to give to the Master, to the Dominator, to the one to whom I approach as the vous on high." (Levinas, 2016: 51) Josie's haggard face creates a kind of pleading proximity, where Klara has to recognize its weakness and poverty thus acknowledging its position, being responsible for it and giving to it. At this point, Klara has become a responsible subject, endlessly accountable to Josie, always more accountable to Josie than Josie "demands", and thus Josie becomes the "you in high places". Klara is infinitely responsible for this face, which is why she waits for Josie when she does not arrive as promised, and rejects the overtures of others.

Levinas has noted, "Among the ethical discourses opened by the face, the primary one is 'Thou shalt not kill.' Thou shalt not kill another, this is the first claim and the first command of the other. In this way the face also judges the 'I' (Levinas, 2016: 234). The face of the other is a constant indictment of

my rudeness to them, and the face of the other signals that "thou shalt not kill," and that not only do I not have the right to harm others while they watch, but I cannot stand by and watch them die from their own inaction. Not only do I not have the right to harm others while they watch, but I cannot stand by and watch them die because of my own inaction, or my indifference to their suffering and helplessness. So when the frail Josie confronts Klara with a lonely smile, Klara, while trying to comfort Josie by telling her that she is living a good life and alleviating Josie's apologies and regrets for being sick; on the other hand, taking advantage of the fact that Josie has asked her to deliver a letter to Rickk, she decides to walk through the overgrown meadow alone to pray to the sun. Klara's behavior was a response to Josie's watchful eye and a way to prevent Josie from losing her life because she did nothing, and she was righteous in whatever she did. "That thought flashed into my mind again, this time more conclusively than ever: even given the sun's magnanimity and generosity, this thing I was about to do was still risky and required my full attention. I listened to the breeze among the grasses behind me and the distant cries of birds, and while gathering my thoughts, I walked across the mowed grass toward Mr. McBain's barn" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 135). In contrast, Josie's more fragile face calls out to Klara, forcing her to step up and take responsibility for Josie time and time again in order to prevent her "inaction" from leading to her death. What does Klara do, or how far does she go, to answer the call to Josie? In the face of the call, Levinas chooses to be completely for him, taking the place of others to suffer until he loses his life; and how will Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara choose to do the same?

4. Completely for Him - Dedication Replacement

For Levinas, "substitution" is the ultimate form of subjectivity. He writes: "Substitution and interruption take place when [I] take up the burden, which is pressed upon me without any possibility of avoiding it. And it is in the midst of this that what is unique (unicité) about me (moi) begins to make sense" (Levinas, 2019: 49). Substitution (i.e., representation) does not mean that one subject goes and occupies to substitute for another, but rather that whoever has subjectivity will express substitution for the other. It is when such a subject assumes responsibility that I manifest my unique subjectivity. And the inescapability of such a responsibility is precisely the way to interrupt sameness. The subject is this one, and to take it on for the sake of the other is substitution. The subject is absorbed into a glorious transcendence that dismantles what it is essence. At this point, the "I" as the lowercase I, not the capitalized universal subject, takes on its true meaning. The "I" realizes its own subjectivity in its commitment and in its complete sacrifice for the other. And this kind of unreserved sacrifice is not selective, but it is engraved in the gene of "goodness" from the day of birth.

Klara is such a friend, she took Josie's face as a call, took Josie's pain on her own shoulders, and used her own practical actions to try to extend Josie's life over and over again, even if she went through a lot of trouble, she would not give up, and even if she sacrificed herself, she had no regrets.

Klara, who was nourished by the sun, took the sun as her hope to save Josie, so she pushed aside the grass, overcame her fear, and set foot on the "overgrown and overgrown road" alone, and came to Mr. McBain's barn, and sincerely prayed:

"I understand how abrupt and rude I have been in coming here. I realize how abrupt and rude I have been in coming here. The sun has good reason to be angry with me, and I fully understand that you are not even willing to consider my request" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 137). Fearing that her prayers were not sincere enough, Klara even offered to take the initiative in destroying the Custine machine that was polluting the air, "My mind was filled with great fear, but I said, 'But Mr. Paul believes that if we take out this solution we can destroy the Custinus machine'" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 202: 189). Josie's father tells Klara that in order to destroy the Curtins machine she will need the P-E-G9 solution, which just happens to be in Klara's body and is an organic part of her body. Klara is smart enough to even make the connection that Josie's father could use this to destroy Klara to stop her mother's plan to replace Josie with Klara. She also knew that removing the solution would have some effect on her body, and even looked with fear at the sun-shrouded world again. However, without hesitation, she still smiled and nodded, saying, "Then let's give it a try" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 202: 189).

Klara gives up her fluids to save Josie, and cognitive recognition begins to deteriorate, "Even though I could hear her voice saying to Rick, 'There's Old Mother,' by the time I turned to the voice I saw neither Josie nor Rick, only a smooth forehead rushing at my own face" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 196). "More cones and columns-or more like fragments of them-continued to crowd into what little space remained around me. I realized at this point that one of the shards cutting in to replace Rick's shape - was in fact Josie. Once I recognized her, her image was immediately clear, and I was able to fit her in my mind effortlessly" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 197). But no matter what it takes, she is willing to make Josie better.

The story ends when Josie is on the verge of death, Klara pulls back the curtains, and the sunlight shines on Josie's weak face as she comes back to life a little bit. Klara's eyesight began to have problems due to the donation of the solution, and her functions were deteriorating step by step. Josie rarely came home after college, and Klara was even more useless, volunteering to move to the abandoned landfill for the rest of her life. Throughout the process, Klara is not without fear or lack of intelligence; what is touching is her willingness to open herself up to Josie despite the threat she knows will be posed to her, and to endure the pain until she is completely discarded and done with her life. It is Klara's unreserved substitution for Josie that returns Josie's healthy life, and Klara's life is thus unique and uncomplaining, a unique subject. Responsibility to the other, though passive in the most passive sense, "does not signify a submission to a non-self, but an openness in which what is is transcended in the sense of [one's own being] spirit [of] what is" (Levinas, 2019: 274). At this point this absolute responsibility for others accomplishes my subjectivity through substitution. Klara's final conversation with her manager exemplifies this:

"I did what I could to do what was best for Josie. That's something I've thought about many times now. I'm sure I could have continued Josie if that had been necessary. But things ended up with a decidedly better outcome, even though Rick and Josie didn't get together."

"Well, Klara, as long as you think things ended up with the best possible outcome, I'm happy."

"I'm sure you're right, Klara. That's what I've always wanted to hear every time I've been reunited with my AFs. To hear you all happy that everything went well. To hear that you

guys have no regrets. You know what? There are a couple more B3's over there, just across the yard. They're not from our store, but if you want some company, I can ask the workers to move you over there."

"No, thank you, Manager. You're as nice as ever. But I like this location. Besides, I have my memories to fine-tune and put in order" (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021:251).

Klara is born with a sensitivity that is not shared by other AFs, which means that she is destined to be non-indifference for others. In the process of Klara taking responsibility for Josie over and over again, she is no longer the AI toy displayed in the window, nor is she the same as other companion machines that only know how to follow the instructions of their masters, but rather she has a lifetime of memories to be sorted out, fulfilling the mission for which she was created, and accomplishing a unique life of her own, and truly realizing her own subjectivity. In the early stages, Klara had always believed that even if the human heart was complicated, as long as she imitated it with all her might, she would always be able to achieve a close resemblance to her own body. However, after the process of Josie's illness and recovery, she realizes that no matter how hard she tries, there is always one thing that she cannot touch - that is other people's feelings for Josie (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 251). This shows that Kazuo Ishiguro believes that human subjectivity is not about how one is in oneself, but about how one relates to others. This echoes Levinas' description of subjectivity. People live and die, but the ties with others and the promises made to others enRich the undertones of life and add to its thickness. "I substitute myself for others, but no one can replace me" (Levinas, 2019: 369), making the subject irreplaceable and accomplishing its subjectivity. The two authors are on the same path, revealing the universal meaning and common value of life.

Klara's motherly-like selflessness has touched countless readers; could it be that Kazuo Ishiguro created such an image in order to warn the world to the point of constructing a perfect human being, selfless enough to give up himself? Of course not. But from the novel, we can get a glimpse of Kazuo Ishiguro's imagination of a better human being: one who carves the best in his bones, who empathizes with others, who feels for others, and who is responsible for others. Although Levinas wants to emphasize the "asymmetry" of such responsibility for others - I go to the other without caring or demanding that the other go to me - he also proposes the idea of a "third person" while emphasizing the subject's responsibility for the other, which he calls "the third person". But while emphasizing the subject's responsibility for the other, he also introduces the concepts of "third party" and "justice" so that "the subject is turned over to become a member of society" (Levinas, 2019: 370), and the subject who once gave himself up to be the other also gets to be "held accountable by the other" (Levinas, 2019: 370). The subject who has given himself up for others can also gain the right to be "held accountable by others". Similarly, although Klara, portrayed by Kazuo Ishiguro in the novel, is an AI companion and cannot explain the reason for her strange behavior, she is helped by Rick, her father, and others at critical moments, and eventually saves Josie. In the novel, everyone is responsible for others, creating a harmonious atmosphere of "all for one and one for all," thus facilitating the functioning of society, an idea that coincides with Levinas's pursuit of a just and peaceful society.

5. Mutual for Him - Getting Help

Levinas defines the “third person” as “another person who is nearer, but also another person who is nearer, and who is nearer to the other” (Levinas, 2019: 367). The entry of the third is “the gathering of the things into the midst of the Thus,” “the comparison of the incomparable, the topicalization of the same” (Levinas, 2019: 368). “The reproduction, the Logos, the consciousness, the work, and the idea of being this neutrality, their latent birth is in that comparison of the incomparable. From reproduction comes the order of justice, which moderates or measures my substitution for the other, and releases itself (restituer) to the calculating/calculating The one who is near is thus made visible and presents itself as it is stared at. Thus there is also justice for me” (Levinas, 2019: 370). When the I is confronted with the Other, a distant call from the Other prior to the present, the I is compelled to offer itself, to return to the Self as responsible for the Other. The entry of the third person puts the abstract concepts of reproduction, logos, consciousness, etc., into comparable topics, thus making fairness possible. When the third person enters, the third person is the “other” of the other, and at the same time the “other” of the “I”, responsible for the “I”. The third party is the “other” of the other. Thus, the “I”, which was once a substitute for the Other, now has its own “one who is responsible for me” and realizes justice for me. Thus Levinas constructs his ideal society “where there is no distinction between near and far, but where there is also no possibility of passing the nearest and then turning away; where the [mutual] equality of all is loaded by the inequality of me [with the other], and by the responsibility of me, which is more than the right of me” (Levinas, 2019: 372).

Surprisingly, although the entirety of Klara and the Sun is centered around the story of Klara's devotion to Josie's family, Rick and his father help Klara in her successful rescue of Josie, even though neither of them knows what Klara has done. This plot of the “third party” taking responsibility for the subject in turn is similar to the “just” society constructed by Levinas. When Klara proposes to cross the meadow alone in order to reach Mr. McBain's barn, Rick first takes the initiative and asks, “Are you sure you don't want me to go with you?” (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 129), and only after receiving a negative answer from Klara does he say, “I don't quite see what it's all about. But if this will help Josie, then - hey, good luck” (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 129). But when the grass seemed more treacherous than Klara had imagined “The grass resisted my hands, and a lot of strange noises were ringing around me” (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 130), Rick appeared “One hand pushed through the grass, and the other reached out to me” (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 131). He suggests that “I don't understand a thing about this. I also understand that you can't reveal a word of it to me, for whatever reason. But if you want, I can take you there” (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2021: 132). Rick does not just guide Klara through the grass, but carries her all the way straight to her destination, and even after Klara ends all her prayers in the barn, Rick reappears to get her out of the grass. Despite Rick's verbal claims that he is selfishly worried that Klara will malfunction and not be able to account for it, the various behaviors clearly reveal a goodwill. He does not harbor a sense of superiority of man over machine, but rather a spirit of accountability to the Other to the end. Similarly, in order to fulfill Klara's wish, Josie's father, with whom she has never met before, helps her plan the destruction of the Curtins machine. Although both Rick

and his father are essentially motivated by their concern for Josie, Klara cannot produce substantial evidence that Josie will benefit from this, so their unconscious “commitment” to Klara is a response to Klara's call, thus fulfilling Klara's wish, realizing her subjectivity, and benefiting Josie, forming a perfect closed loop. This forms a perfect closed loop. It is important to note that Kazuo Ishiguro's conception of a better society echoes Levinas's ideas in many ways.

6. Conclusion

For thousands of years, Western philosophy has been exploring the origin of the world. Whether it is water, fire or the One, it seems that this origin can only be one thing, thus forming the “monism”/simultaneity that is deeply rooted in Western philosophy. Levinas proposes the relation between the I and the Other in order to break the violence of this “sameness” on the Other: the I is no longer the “sameness” that is only concerned with its own existence. The “I” is no longer the “same” that is only concerned with its own survival, but the responsible one who is always oriented towards the Other. “The responsibility of the I towards the Other is written into the prehistory of the I for no reason at all, with extreme passivity; the face of the Other forces the I to respond, and the I is forced to do so. The face of the other pushes the “I” to respond, and the “I” is responsible for the other because of the other's feelings, until it surrenders itself and returns to itself, becoming the only one who can suffer on behalf of the other, thus accomplishing the subjectivity of the “I”. At the same time, each such “I” is responsible for the others close to it, and there is a third person on the side of the people close to it who is responsible for the “I”, and society is moving towards justice and peace under such a state of mutual responsibility. Klara and the Sun, whether it is from Klara's responsibility to Josie, her unfailing companionship or her best efforts to save her or Rick's help to Klara, all respond to the common pursuit of selflessness, responsibility and mutual help for the good of humanity.

Klara's motherly selflessness has touched countless readers and inspired human beings to think: what is human nature? Is it possible that the good qualities of human beings will become even worse than machines under the crushing of technology? In contrast to Klara, the image of the mother in the novel is intriguing. In the beginning, the mother chooses to give her daughters “genetic enhancement” twice for the sake of her daughters' so-called “better” life, and two of her daughters get sick as a result; later on, the mother buys Klara for Josie, on the one hand, she can make up for her own inability to accompany her daughters, and on the other hand, she has already conceived a terrible plan. On the other hand, she had already conceived a terrible plan: to replace the dead Josie with an advanced artificial intelligence; after buying Klara, her mother knew that Josie was looking forward to the opportunity to go to Morgan Falls with Klara, but used Josie's illness as an excuse to test Klara's mimicry alone, and then became even more awkward with Klara after she thought she had received her own mother's love; in the end, Mr. Capaldi requested to “study” Klara after Josie had been healed. After Josie is cured, Mr. Capaldi asks to “study” Klara, and the mother says she will let Klara “wither away naturally”, but in fact she still lets Klara appear in the yard. One can see how selfish, sensitive, irritable, calculating, and vain humans are compared to the innocent and selfless Klara. These shortcomings are amplified even more with the tools of technology, which in turn makes humans themselves even

more isolated. The development of science and technology should make people's material and spiritual life satisfied on both sides, but Klara sees the loneliness of human beings from the beginning to the end. Perhaps, as Levinas predicted, "those who are the most lucid and understanding in our time, at the moment when they are most completely free from the concern of 'existence for this existence itself', there is only one shadow in their clarity, and there is only one uneasiness or sleeplessness in their rest, which is the shadow of the misery that comes from the other. The shadow, restlessness, or sleeplessness that comes from the misery of the other" (Levinas, 2019:224). Only those who are restless with the misery of man's own existence and who are mindful of the Other are the ones who are truly spiritually flickering and can truly realize this man's humanity!

References

- [1] Levinas. *Otherwise than Being, or beyond Essence* [M]. Translated by Wu, Xiaoming. Beijing: Peking University Press. 2019.
- [2] Levinas. *Totality and Infinity* [M]. Translated by Zhu Gang,. Beijing: Peking University Press. 2016.
- [3] Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Klara and the Sun* [M]. Translated by Song Qian . Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House. 2021.
- [4] Wang Yujing. *The Duty to Break Out of Existence-An Analysis of Levinas' Ethical Thought on Responsibility*[J]. *Modern Philosophy*, 2023(05):78-85.
- [5] ZHU Gang. *The Exception of Existence and the Occurrence of the Infinite--On Subjectivity in the Late Philosophy of Levinas*[J]. *Philosophical Studies*, 2022. (05):94-105+129.
- [6] Robert Eaglestone. *Klara and man: motives, Hannah Arendt, and forgiveness* [J]. *Studies in Foreign Literature*, 2022. 44(01): 1-12.
- [7] Gu Melon, Xiu Yaxin. *Humanist Philosophy in the Posthuman Context--Taking Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun as an Example*[J]. *Contemporary Foreign Literature*, 2021,42(04): 115-123.
- [8] Ron C. 2021. in *Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun, a Robot Tries to Make Sense of Humanity* [J/OL]. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/kazuo-ishiguro-klara-and-the-sun>.
- [9] Shulevitz J. *The Radiant Inner Life of a Robot*[J]. *The Atlantic*, 4(2021):78-81.
- [10] Amanpour C. *Kazuo Ishiguro Asks What It Is to Be Human* [Z]. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2021/03/02>.