

## Hope and Spirituality of an AF in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

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### ABSTRACT

It has long been believed that emotions are a distinctive feature of humans. In a world where artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly ingrained, it's intriguing to consider a time when AI may feel emotions similar to those of human beings. AI systems' evolution and incorporation of emotional quotient will result in AI that, when a new skill is mastered or a task is completed effectively, it might also feel happy or satisfied. This AI may experience feelings of sadness or disappointment, which, in theory, might motivate it to look for more effective solutions or to convey the severity of the problem more clearly. AI will probably have a stream of consciousness, the same as humans. *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro is set in a future where artificial intelligence and human life meet. Human-like robots, known as "Artificial Friends" (AFs), are created to serve as companions for children. Klara, the central character, is an AF with a unique perspective on the world. The novel explores complex questions about what it means to be human and AI with emotional quotient. This research article attempts to analyze the novel's underlying themes of hope and spirituality, particularly Klara's belief in the sun, from the philosophical perspective of a humanoid.

**Keywords:** *Hope, Spirituality, Artificial Friend, Human, Dystopian, Science Fiction, Emotions, Humanoid.*

### Introduction

British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro is well-known for his subtle explorations of memory, identity, and interpersonal connections. Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1954 and moved to the United Kingdom when he was five years old. He has won various accolades for his literary works, including the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature. His writing is praised for its deep

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emotional resonance, elegant storytelling, and perceptive observations of human nature. He is also renowned for his restrained and evocative prose. He frequently uses delicate storytelling techniques and unreliable narrators to tackle complex philosophical and psychological issues. His writing consistently captivates readers with its sophisticated narrative style and thought-provoking matters, enhancing his credibility as one of the most significant writers of modern literature.

Ishiguro has been writing magnificently about the delicate balancing act of remembering without completely giving in to the past. His topics have included memory and the evaluation of memory and its burdens and reconciliation. With “Klara and the Sun,” he’d grasped the related fading issue. How does it feel to live in a society whose values and customs have surpassed your own? What happens to those who have to be rejected so that others can advance?

Various researchers have talked about AI’s technological and ethical implications in Ishiguro’s work, but with limited focus on the themes of hope and spirituality.

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis methodology, which involves a close reading of Klara and the Sun to interpret the thematic elements of hope and spirituality as manifested through Klara’s perspective. Ishiguro’s treatment of dystopia in his novels reflects a subtle and introspective approach to the genre, in contrast to standard dystopian writings that frequently focus on openly oppressive regimes or apocalyptic calamities. His dystopian scenarios are marked by subtle, sneaky ways of control and ethical compromise rather than openly tyrannical regimes or stunning future vistas; his writings are distinguished from more traditional or sensationalist depictions of dystopia by their complexity and emotional depth, as opposed to their significant, catastrophic events. Since the dystopian components are woven into daily life, they are more sinister and subtle. His approach to dystopia is based primarily on his characters’ emotional and psychological depth.

Klara and the Sun is a dystopian novel in which artificial intelligence and humans interact deeply on an emotional level. Two things make this setting challenging: First of all, the narrative is presented in the first person, and the protagonist is an AF named Klara, which means that an artificial intelligence (AI) machine somewhat humanoid is telling the story of her experiences with the use of sensors and machine information processing. Ishiguro has “humanized” Klara (by using “her,” not “it”). This indicates that the story takes some surprising

turns to explain why Klara acts in a way that is almost human. Second, the queries that Ishiguro poses are reasonable given that they are the most commonly asked ones regarding robotics and artificial intelligence: What characteristics distinguish a human being? What happens to a machine that can just stop working yet has sentience and resembles a human? Can emotions exist in a machine? The way Ishiguro portrays Klara's humanization and (possible) development of sentience and how the novel concludes are what makes the novel so fascinating.

It explores faith, hope, and the pursuit of transcendent experiences through the lens of Klara's spirituality. Throughout the story, her actions and decisions are influenced by her spiritual beliefs, which affect how she views her world and the obstacles she experiences. Her hope serves as a source of inspiration and a personal haven, mirroring the novel's larger investigation into the nature of belief and the various ways humans look for comfort and purpose.

Klara's memory is not just a passive data repository but actively understands and interprets her experiences. She is remarkable as her emotional and intellectual traits are interwoven, blurring the lines between human and artificial intelligence; she notices the world and even changes in people's expressions through the window of the store where she is for sale. 'Klara, you're quite remarkable,' Manager said, keeping her voice soft so as not to disturb Rosa and the others. 'You notice and absorb so much.' (Ishiguro, 14)

Klara always tries to understand complex or new emotions far more than her capability, persuading readers of her humanness. "I believe I have many feelings," Klara says. "The more I observe, the more feelings become available to me." (Ishiguro, 85) Despite her extraordinary intelligence and keen observation, Klara has little worldly knowledge. She also observes the sun, whom she always refers to as "he" and treats as a living entity. As a solar-powered AF, the sun's sustenance is critical to her. She views the sun as a powerful and benevolent entity capable of healing and providing energy. Her reverence for the sun reflects a form of spiritual belief.

What Klara refers to as the "Cootings Machine" begins to terrify and enrage her as it stands for several days in the street outside the store, spewing forth pollution that completely hides the sun's rays. She perceives the machine as a threat to the very essence of life itself, and her contempt for it grows as she links its presence to the misery that both makes her feel weak and causes discomfort for humans.

Her perception of the sun is multifaceted; it represents hope, and her interactions with it give her a framework to comprehend the world around her. Her belief in the sun is especially significant in times of adversity. On one occasion, she witnesses a beggar and his dog in an unusual position; they are lying like discarded sacks and do not move all day. Klara assumes they have died and is shocked to discover the following morning that they are still alive and believes that the sun has, in his great benevolence, provided them with a unique form of sustenance. This incident signals a turning point in Klara's journey. It confirms her conviction that the sun sustains life on both a physical and spiritual level. She internalizes the notion that the sun can bestow life and vitality, leading her to assume that her prayers and devotion can influence its actions.

From her spot in the store, Klara, with her exceptional observational qualities, watches carefully the behavior of customers who come in to browse and those who pass on the street outside. "Let me tell you something, Klara. Children make promises all the time. They come to the window, they promise all kinds of things. They promise to return and ask you not to let anyone else take you away. It happens all the time. But more often than not, the child never comes back. Or worse, the child comes back and ignores the poor AF who's waited, and instead chooses another. It's just the way children are. You've been watching and learning so much, Klara. Well, here's another lesson for you. Do you understand?" (Ishiguro, 33) Despite Manager's warning she remains hopeful that the customer will soon choose her. She is eventually picked by 14-year-old Josie, who first liked her and asked her not to go away with any other kid. Despite long wait, Klara was hopeful of Josie's return, never losing faith. 'Why would I be gone?' I said quietly. 'We made a promise.' (Ishiguro, 40)

Klara went on to live with Josie and her mother, Mrs. Arthur, on a desolate prairie. Soon after joining them, Klara discovers certain children are genetically modified to become more academically proficient. Ishiguro skillfully depicts a future where human being and AIs are both developing in congruent ways. Human children are being "modified" and AIs are becoming human-like. There are few opportunities for socialization because education is given solely at home by tutors using screens, and parents who can afford it frequently purchase AFs for their kids as companions. Josie is really sick, and that her older sister Sal has passed away already.

There she also meets Rick, a boy roughly Josie’s age, her only close neighbor and childhood friend. Despite his academic prowess, Rick has not been promoted, and he now encounters prejudice and fewer opportunities for employment. This “lifting” has created a societal divide between lifted and non-lifted children. This process of genetically modifying children is previously discussed in his groundbreaking dystopian novel, *Never Let Me Go*, “It concerned a scientist called James Morningdale, who is quite talented in his way. He carried on his work in remote Scotland, where I suppose he thought he’d attract less attention. What he wanted was to offer people the possibility of having children with enhanced characteristics. Superior intelligence, superior athleticism, that sort of thing. Of course, there’d been others with similar ambitions, but this Morningdale fellow, he’d taken his research much further than anyone before him, far beyond legal boundaries... But a generation of created children who’d take their place in society? Children demonstrably superior to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people. They recoiled from that.” (Ishiguro, *Never* 230) Despite this, Josie and Rick are sure they’d be together. Klara tries her best to be a good companion to Josie. She witnesses Josie’s deteriorating health and becomes deeply concerned for her well-being. We can thus see that the AI is making an emotional connection while the “lifted” children are incapable of forming meaningful connections. She hopes for the sun to pour his nourishment and cure her as he did Beggar Man and the dog.

Klara observes the family’s interactions and tries to understand the complexities of human relationships and their emotions. Josie’s mother plans to visit Morgan Falls but when she finds out that Josie is sick and was only pretending to be well; she leaves her behind with Melania, housekeeper, and goes to the waterfall with Klara. There, she asks Klara to act like Josie’s counterfeit to which she obliges; she further affirms that she will get better surely like she has found some way to treat the illness. ‘There’s special help coming. Something no one’s thought of yet. Then I’ll be well again.’ (Ishiguro, 92) This statement made by Klara when she is imitating to be Josie shows that she is indeed very hopeful that Josie will get better soon, she didn’t indulge in specific as it is her personal belief of sun’s divine power.

With Josie’s deteriorating health, Klara worries grew as to why the sun has not sent healing yet; however, her unwavering belief in the sun’s ability to heal becomes a solace, highlighting the concept of hope as she plays the part of both caregiver and believer. “...specifically the question of why the sun hadn’t yet sent his special help as he’d done for Beggar Man and his dog. I’d first expected the sun to help Josie in the days when she’d become weak before

Morgan’s Falls. I’d then accepted that he’d perhaps been correct at that point to wait, but now with Josie so much weaker, and so many things concerning her future in uncertainty, it was puzzling why he continued to delay.” (Ishiguro, 99)

Klara views the sun as having its own sense of timing and purpose, and the delay might be linked to factors beyond her comprehension. She regards the sun with a combination of reverence, faith, and her own interpretation; this knowledge motivates her to carry out her rites and sacrifices in spite of the uncertainty and delay. This dynamic demonstrates Klara’s genuine concern for Josie’s well-being and the spiritual value she attaches to the sun’s acts of kindness. “I could understand that for all his kindness, the sun was very busy; that there were many people besides Josie who required his attention; that even the sun could be expected to miss individual cases like Josie, especially if she appeared well looked after by a mother, a housekeeper and an AF. The idea came into my mind, then, that for her to receive the sun’s special help, it might be necessary to draw his attention to Josie’s situation in some particular and noticeable way.” (Ishiguro, 99)

One day, Klara sees the sun’s passage across the sky from Josie’s bedroom and believes he sleeps at night in Mr. McBain barn on the horizon. She makes her way across the grasslands with Rick’s assistance.

So I gathered my thoughts and began to speak. I didn’t actually say the words out loud, for I knew the sun had no need of words as such. But I wished to be as clear as possible, so I formed the words, or something close to them, quickly and quietly in my mind. (Ishiguro, 139)

She begs him to pour his special sort of sustenance onto Josie and save her life, just as he did to the beggar. In exchange, she promises to locate and destroy the Cootings Machine, which causes pollution. ‘Oh yes. At least, I believe so. And I believe there’s now reason for hope. Hope for Josie. Hope that she’ll get better. But first I must perform a task.’ (Ishiguro, 142)

When Mother informs Klara of taking them to the city to get Josie’s portrait by Mr. Calpadi, she sees this as an opportunity to keep her end of deal and destroy the Cootings Machine. There Mr. Capaldi gives Klara to work on some questionnaire, Klara sneaks into the “Purple Door” and learns that a counterfeit AF of Josie is in process, not some portrait. In the unlikely event that Josie passes away, Mother hopes that Klara would incorporate her intelligence into it, becoming Josie’s actual continuance. While they are unsure of Josie’s health and have indulged in creating her substitute in case she dies, while Klara is still hopeful and keen on getting Josie

better. Klara found a Cootings Machine with Paul Arthur's, Josie's father, assistance, and although Mr. Arthur cautioned her that this loss might partially impair her cognition, she was willing to give up part of the P-E-G Nine solution in her head; since she had made a deal with the sun, she decided to follow through on the plan to disassemble the machine. "I don't mind that I lost precious fluid. I'd willingly have given more, given it all, if it meant your providing special help to Josie." (Ishiguro, 226) Strangely enough, though, through her machine-reasoning Klara ends up sacrificing in her quest for Josie's betterment. She takes a risk, acts in an irrational, unusual, unsystematic, risk-taking, and self-sacrificing manner. Klara realizes the importance of drawing the sun's attention to Josie's plight, demonstrating her understanding of sacrifice and devotion. Her concern for Josie was so profound that she readily made the sacrifice. However, Josie's condition deteriorates, and the sun remains unresponsive.

When even Rick loses hope of Josie's betterment, Klara is still hopeful against all odds. Her belief in the sun never flickered and she held onto her steadfast hope. 'Come on, Klara. She's just getting worse. The doctor, Mrs. Arthur, you can see it. They've just about given up hoping.'

'Even so, I believe there's still hope. I believe help might come from a place the adults haven't yet considered. But we need to do something now quickly.' (Ishiguro, 222) This instance perfectly captures Klara's personality, highlighting the depth of her convictions through a blend of naiveté and profound wisdom. The doctor, Mother, Rick and housekeeper, Melania, were prepared for the worst, but Klara decided to make another appeal to the sun. She remembered the Coffee Cup Lady and her Raincoat Man, she had seen outside her store. It is, of course, no coincidence that the sun shone brighter when the elderly couple found each other. However, Klara reasoned that the sun nourishes those who are sincerely in love because it enjoys seeing them together. Klara asks Rick if he and Josie are in love and would stay together forever. Rick nods in agreement. Klara then again goes to the barn to implore the sun to keep Josie and Rick, because they loved each other. She begs the sun once more to remember Josie and Rick's true, unwavering love. When Josie appeared to be on the verge of death a few days later, Klara saw the dark clouds break and assumed that the sun sent his special nourishment pouring into her sick chamber. "The Sun's nourishment then came into the room so abundantly Rick and I reeled back, almost losing balance. Melania Housekeeper, her hands covering her face, said again: 'Damn Sun!' But she made no further attempt to block his nourishment." (Ishiguro, 234)

“The Sun continued relentlessly to shine on her, and she shifted till she was on her back, propped up by the pillows and headboard.” (Ishiguro, 235) When Josie starts to recover, Klara’s efforts come to a satisfying conclusion, demonstrating the strength of hope and belief in overcoming difficulties. The image of the sun pouring its nourishment into Josie’s room symbolizes the connection that exists between Klara’s spiritual beliefs and her physical world, highlighting the palpable effects of her hope.

Josie appears better right away, her health improves over the next few months, and she begins to drift away from Rick as she ages. Klara frets that she has deceived the Sun of Josie and Rick’s everlasting true love, but Rick reassures her that their love was sincere despite Josie and his different life choices. They would always be together on some level. Josie bids Klara farewell before departing for college. “I guess you may not be here when I get back. You’ve been just great, Klara. You really have.” “Thank you,” I said. “Thank you for choosing me.” (Ishiguro, 246) Klara accepts her fate calmly, which further sets her apart from humans even more.

As the book comes to an end, Mother believes that Klara deserves a slow fade, so she relocates to an abandoned yard. Despite her inability to move, she claims she is happy and doesn’t want to interact with other AFs. As she faces her own fading, her memories of Josie and the Sun become intertwined, representing a lasting legacy of love and hope in a world marked by uncertainty. “And I have my memories to go through and place in the right order.” (Ishiguro, 251) When the manager of her former store visits the yard, Klara tells her about her fond memories of Josie and the sun’s amazing generosity. Her unwavering hope proved futile. “I must report to you one more thing. The Sun was very kind to me. He was always kind to me from the start. But when I was with Josie, once, he was particularly kind.” (Ishiguro, 251)

### **Conclusion**

Ishiguro has deftly woven the themes of spirituality and optimism throughout the book via Klara’s ideas and experiences. Klara exemplifies a devotion that goes beyond conventional religious frameworks with her unwavering hope for the sun’s healing and her steadfast concern for Josie’s well-being. The novel delivers a sophisticated examination of these subjects, posing



important queries concerning the nature of hope and the possibility of spirituality in both human and artificial environments.

A key theme of the novel is hope, which is personified by Klara's faith in the sun's ability to heal. She has a strong sense of hope that goes beyond technological and existential limitations, as evidenced by her unwavering trust in the sun's ability to heal Josie, her human companion. Klara's view of the sun as a source of energy and life highlights an important analogy to virtually mystical human spiritual beliefs. As she poignantly asserts, "But the big thing, silently understood by us all, was the Sun and his nourishment" (Ishiguro, 11) "I suppose it's merely a hope. But a real one. I believe Josie will soon become better" (Ishiguro, 94), this quote highlights Klara's profound hope, which motivates her behavior and influences how she sees and understands her place in the world.

The theme of spirituality is similarly explored through Klara's belief that the sun is divine. Her reverence for the sun points to a spirituality that is identical to people's religious and existential aspirations. Klara's contemplations instill awe in the strength of the sun. Her belief drives her to perform ritual like placing Josie under the sun's direct rays, because she believes it will improve her health. This stance pushes readers to think about the potential that artificial entities can also interact with spiritual conceptions, challenging conventional ideas about spirituality. From a human standpoint, Klara's faith in the sun may seem superstitious. Yet, it really represents a type of spirituality and a yearning for purpose. Her beliefs are affected by her artificial nature and programming, which affects how she sees and interacts with the world, even while her actions are motivated by a genuine desire to assist Josie. Her interpretation of her observations is what drives her actions rather than cultural or conventional customs.

To put it simply up, Klara and the Sun offers a thorough examination of spirituality and hope, demonstrating how these themes can transcend the boundaries between human and artificial experiences. Ishiguro provides a provocative commentary on the nature of hope, spirituality, and the search for meaning in an increasingly technology world through the representation of Klara's belief in the sun and her spiritual thoughts. Through Klara's journey, the novel encourages readers to consider their own beliefs and the ways that hope and spirituality shapes their lives and the larger conversation about technology and human values in modern literature.

Thus, Klara and the Sun offer an insightful look at how spirituality and hope can influence life and propel behavior even in the setting of artificial intelligence. The novel directs readers to

consider the universality of spiritual pursuits, the importance of hope in adversity, and what these experiences reveal about the nature of technology and human existence.

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