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Posthuman Explorations: Ethical Challenges and Dystopian Imagination in Kazuo Ishiguro's Fiction

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021) reflect the ethical challenges posed by a posthuman future. By examining the convergence of technological advancements such as cloning, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence, the research delves into how these innovations might shape a posthuman condition, questioning humanity's ability to ethically regulate and control such developments. The thesis argues that the egocentric tendencies of human nature make it difficult to prevent these technologies from dehumanizing individuals and challenging our understanding of morality and dignity. Moving beyond technological concerns, the thesis also considers the enduring elements of human nature, which remain integral even in a posthuman world. Through a detailed analysis of Ishiguro's narrative techniques and storytelling, as well as his portrayal of identity, memory, and self-deception in *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) and *The Remains of the Day* (1989), the research highlights how Ishiguro's works grapple with the complexities of what it means to be human. Combining both posthuman and human lenses, the thesis critically engages with Ishiguro's dystopian visions, where technological advancements redefine the boundaries of humanity. In *Never Let Me Go*, the focus shifts to an exploration of the societal and ethical implications of cloning. The analysis examines how cloning technology leads to the systematic dehumanization of individuals who are reduced to mere biological resources. By drawing parallels to real-world historical events, the research investigates the normalization of exploitation and questions how ethical boundaries might continue to erode in a future dominated by unregulated biotechnological progress. In *Klara and the Sun*, the thesis explores artificial intelligence and genetic engineering as key factors in shaping a posthuman world. The analysis delves into how advancements in artificial intelligence, represented by Klara, challenge the traditional definitions of human autonomy and agency.

Dedication

To my nephew Nick, whose relentless demands for playtime turned my thesis journey into a marathon of patience, joy, and interrupted deadlines. Thanks for making research breaks the best part of my day.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the contemporary literary representations of humanity in a world relentlessly approaching a technology-dominated horizon. It questions whether the ideals that currently define humanity—those that set humans apart from other beings—will retain their value in a posthuman era, where science increasingly becomes the primary force shaping human evolution and may ultimately control every aspect of life. To address this, the thesis combines scientific and literary perspectives, presenting a realistic vision of human conditions in a posthuman era: what may be lost, what may be gained, and whether today's society would accept such shifts and potential erosion of human values. Rather than attempting to define or predict the exact nature of a posthuman future, this thesis focuses on the shared conviction among posthuman thinkers that humanity's progression toward a posthuman state is inevitable. Central to this exploration is whether the values and ethics that we hold dear today can endure in a future shaped by technologies such as cloning, genetic modification, and artificial intelligence.

To explore these questions, the thesis examines both the current scientific potential of these technologies and their portrayal in literature, specifically through the works of Kazuo Ishiguro. As, unlike much science fiction, which often depicts distant, futuristic worlds, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021) depict posthuman dilemmas in familiar, relatable experiences. His novels do not dwell on technological advancements or alien landscapes but instead explore the ways in which human relationships, ethics, dignity, and autonomy are altered within these evolving contexts. Through this lens, the thesis examines Ishiguro's subtle yet profound portrayal of a world reshaped by technology, offering insight into the ethical and existential challenges posed by a posthuman future.

The first chapter investigates scientific and technological advancements, especially in biotechnology fields such as genetic modification and cloning, which lay the groundwork for a posthuman future marked by profound shifts in human values and the very definition of

humanity. While acknowledging the importance of ethical regulations and institutions in upholding dignity and human rights, this chapter illustrates their impotence in preventing the misuse of current technologies, especially when political interests are involved. Examples of ethically questionable practices, from illegal genetic experiments in shadow labs to the uncontrolled spread of nuclear power, demonstrate the ongoing failure to limit harmful technological applications, despite widespread condemnation. A brief history of cloning and genetic modification reveals how innovations initially intended to address medical and social challenges have increasingly shifted toward ambitious goals that risk adverse consequences, such as disrupting family dynamics, deepening social inequalities, and creating authoritarian regimes. This section also considers whether cloning technologies might fulfill humanity's longstanding quest for longevity through organ farming, evaluated through bioethical lens. By examining thinkers such as W. J. T. Mitchell, Aldous Huxley, Richard Dawkins, and Francis Fukuyama, it emphasizes the need for ethical restraint, suggesting that while a posthuman future may be inevitable, a careful balance between innovation and responsibility is essential to preserve the core values that define humanity.

In the second chapter, the discussion connects scientific and ethical debates surrounding a posthuman future to Ishiguro's literary portrayals, particularly those that envision a world transformed by biotechnology and artificial intelligence. It focuses on enduring human experiences that remain constant despite technological advancements and examines how Ishiguro's Japanese and British backgrounds shape his perception of the human condition. Through a character-focused analysis of *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) and *The Remains of the Day* (1989), this examination delves deeply into themes of memory, guilt, and dignity, highlighting the isolation experienced by characters as they struggle to reconcile past ideals with present realities. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Masuji Ono, a retired painter and former proud nationalist, grapples with cultural dissonance in an era dominated by Western influences, constructing an inner realm governed by his self-deception. The chapter highlights how this self-deception intensifies over time, yet is ultimately destined to collapse, leading to a moment of awareness filled with regret. Meanwhile, Stevens, the butler in *The Remains of the Day*, epitomizes British values of duty

and dignity, yet his unwavering adherence to these principles alienates him from personal fulfillment and meaningful relationships. By connecting these themes to the philosophical insights of Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Levinas, and Simone Weil on dignity and authenticity, this chapter suggests that both the absence and excess of human virtues like dignity can profoundly shape one's view on life, resonating with the implications of technological advancement.

The third chapter offers a thematic analysis of *Never Let Me Go*, instead of focusing closely on characters, views them as part of a thematic structure to analyze the broader societal consequences of cloning. By drawing parallels between Ishiguro's fictional universe and real-world developments in cloning, it investigates moral dilemmas and bioethical concerns surrounding this technology. From a pragmatic view, this analysis envisions a possible future where dehumanization becomes normalized, with clones valued solely for their biological functions. To support this perspective, historical parallels are drawn with dehumanizing practices like slavery, colonialism, and eugenics attempts, highlighting the potential for similar exploitation in the future. The chapter also examines the subtle yet significant role of religious influence in shaping the clones' fates, analyzing contemporary religious stances on cloning and proposing how these views might change, with historical examples as evidence. By maintaining a neutral perspective, it contrasts clones with humans to highlight the minimal differences between them and question why clones are perceived as less than human and denied basic rights. The Hailsham movement is presented as a form of resistance within this social climate, exploring its mission to affirm the humanity of clones by linking the creation of art to the existence of a soul. Additionally, the analysis explores the absence of the organ recipients' perspective as intentional storytelling strategy, raising ethical questions about how modern society might respond to similar scenarios. Moreover, this chapter takes a controversial stance by examining the clones' passivity in the face of exploitation from social, personal, and political perspectives, arguing that the clones' compliance with their own dehumanization is embedded in a system that governs not only their bodies but also their minds.

Chapter four examines the ethical and existential implications of human-robot interactions within the posthuman world depicted in *Klara and the Sun*. Rather than immediately discussing the events of the narrative, the chapter opens with an introduction of contrasting views on robots' roles, highlighting thinkers like Laura Major and Ruth Aylett to discuss both their potential promises and inherent threats. To profoundly explore this dilemma, a brief history of robotic development is included, revealing the motivations behind creating artificial beings. The analysis argues that a posthuman society will increasingly rely on robots to address emerging contemporary issues like low fertility rates, labor shortages, and evolving social relationships, particularly in developed countries. It then shifts focus to the novel's portrayal of genetic enhancement, suggesting that such technologies could lead to a form of biological apartheid, where societal pressures implicitly enforce parents to compromise their children's future autonomy. The chapter also highlights how social conventions are designed to marginalize those who resist genetic enhancement by depriving them of equal social standing and rights. To illustrate this dynamic, the social status of two generations is examined through the relationships of Josie and Rick, as well as their mothers, revealing a significant shift in values in a society where parents are willing to gamble their child's well-being for perceived future success. Furthermore, the chapter contrasts clones and robots with humans, questioning whether humanity is defined by biology or moral behavior. Lastly, through the character of Klara, it references N. Katherine Hayles' theory that human consciousness might be transferred into machines, suggesting that Klara's human-like qualities could stem from a deeper connection to human origins.

The final chapter connects the posthuman themes in *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, conducting a comparative analysis of clones, robots, and humans to explore what fundamentally distinguishes humans from non-humans. It argues that both novels depict capitalist societies where scientific advancements are used for political and economic ends, resonating with Antonio Gramsci's view that science under political influence reduces individuals to mere tools of profit. Additionally, this discussion delves into the dehumanization and objectification of clones and robots, who, paradoxically, often display more human moral values than humans themselves. To deepen this exploration, the chapter

applies Albert Bandura's theories on moral disengagement and diffusion of responsibility, showing how psychological mechanisms create a collective acceptance of exploitation—affecting not only non-humans but also humans who deviate from societal norms. Ultimately, the chapter posits that *Klara and the Sun* and *Never Let Me Go* serve as companion narratives, exploring human and non-human relationships and warning of a future where the qualities that define humanity could be eroded.

The core conclusion of this thesis is a critical view on humanity's current incapacity to control technological advancements in ways that genuinely benefit society, the environment, and individuals. Instead, as presented in real-world events and Ishiguro's posthuman narratives, these technologies are often used for anthropocentric, political, or even authoritarian purposes, leading to ethical compromises, a loss of autonomy, and erosion of fundamental human values. By highlighting Ishiguro's realistic portrayal of these potential consequences, the thesis argues that while the journey toward a posthuman future may offer ambitious promises, it also poses significant risks to the ideals that define humanity today. Consequently, without strict ethical standards and global oversight, technology's alluring promise of a utopian world may transform into a nightmare, jeopardizing the very essence of what it means to be human.

Chapter One - The Posthuman Imagination

Time and Human

In this vast and diverse world, countless phenomena, topics, events, and questions significantly shape individual experiences and perspectives. Yet, inevitably, certain elements play pivotal roles in the lives of some, while others remain unfamiliar, never crossing our paths or entering our consciousness. This inconsistency can arise from a multitude of factors, including personal interests, cultural backgrounds, geographic locations, and various other determinants. However, amidst this diversity, one universal question transcends individual differences and captures the attention of most people: the nature of life in the future. Research suggests that Homo sapiens have historically exhibited a profound concern for their *future*, arguably more so than for their present circumstances (Baumeister, Vohs and Oettingen 2016, 16). This preoccupation with what lies ahead may stem from intrinsic human traits such as the survival instinct and natural curiosity, which have been crucial in keeping humans from joining the list of extinct species on this planet[1].

The concept of future encompasses an infinite time span, ranging from microseconds to millennia, holding varying significance based on individual circumstances. For instance, a soldier on the front line measures the future in seconds due to immediate peril, while a file clerk, ensnared in monotony and contemplating retirement, views the future in terms of years. This notion of the future is both personal and speculative, shaped by each individual's experiences. Beyond the 'personal future,' which is defined by individuals' choices, lies the 'speculative future,' concerning humanity's collective destiny. This speculative future is extensively portrayed in various mediums, such as literature, art, audiovisual media,

[1] For discussions on humanity's concern for the future, see Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005); Zoltan Istvan, *The Transhumanist Wager* (Futurity Imagine Media LLC, 2013); and Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (New York: Harper, 2017).

futuristic video games, and comic books, each offering distinct visions of humanity's future. Despite their diversity, these representations share a common thematic thread, contributing to what is termed the posthuman narrative [2].

The concept of the posthuman is intricate, ambiguous, and continuously evolving, not merely defined as the future state of humanity. As Katherine Hayles notes, "the posthuman cannot simply be identified as a culture or age that comes 'after' the human" (Wolfe 2009, 17). This idea challenges traditional boundaries, suggesting a profound transformation in our understanding of what it means to be human. Analyzing the components 'post' and 'human', arguably, do not lead to a collective understanding, yet highlights its diversity and complication. The term 'post' is intrinsically connected to the future, yet the timeline remains uncertain; it could be as imminent as tomorrow, in 2050, or as distant as the next millennium. To foresee the future, one must first understand the concept of time, which has been understood in complex and often contradictory ways across different philosophical, scientific, and theological schools of thought. Isaac Newton viewed time as absolute, flowing independently of any observer, thereby existing as a constant backdrop to the universe. In contrast, Albert Einstein argued that time is relative and varies depending on the observer's speed and gravitational field (Matias 2019, 335). These varying perspectives illustrate the complex and often opposing views on the nature of time.

The second component of the posthuman concept relates to humans, whose complexity spans far from rudimentary beings; extending across biological, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. Despite significant advancements, the nature of humanity remains enigmatic for anthropologists. The question of what it means to be human has sparked debate across various schools of thought and academic fields. While there are converging perspectives, significant contradictions also exist, complicating any consensus

[2] In this thesis, the term 'posthuman' is used exclusively to avoid confusion with 'posthumanism'. While many sources use these terms interchangeably, 'posthumanism' is considered a distinct school of thought, akin to transhumanism and other philosophical movements. For further reading on the topic, see Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, *Posthuman Glossary* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); and Francesca Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019)

on a definitive understanding of what it means to be human. As existentialist philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, assert that humanity's existence precedes its essence, suggesting that humans define their own meanings and purposes in life. This stands in contrast to Thomas Hobbes's cynical view of human nature as inherently 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' in its natural state (Leena and Rauno 2012, 351). These diverse perspectives illustrate that the concept of human nature is neither universally agreed upon nor easily dismissed, as each viewpoint is supported by historical documentation and philosophical argumentation. Consequently, the fundamental elements of the posthuman concept, particularly time and human nature, remain ambiguous. This ambiguity leads to diverse and often contradictory interpretations of the posthuman condition.

Posthuman Concepts

Donna Haraway as biologist and active feminist portrays the posthuman as the outcome of *bricolage*—a process that dismantles traditional dualities and dichotomies, ultimately giving rise to the fusion of new categories, which she identifies them as cyborgs (Cook 2004, 5). Ray Kurzweil, a computer scientists and inventor, views posthuman as a contest between humans and their own offspring: the artificial intelligence. Kurzweil considers that to maintain their historical dominance in the power hierarchy, homo sapiens must embrace and utilize their own creations through transforming into what he terms 'spiritual machines'. This evolution represents a path towards the 'Singularity'—a future marked by extraordinary technological advancement and the convergence of human and machine capabilities (Krüger 2021, 5). As a contemporary philosopher, Rosi Braidotti believes becoming posthuman is to step beyond the realm anthropocentrism, which she refers to as 'Life beyond the Self', and redefining traditional conceptions of human and non-human relationships (Kessler 2019, 326). Political scientist Francis Fukuyama suggests that the posthuman condition is a consequence of biotechnological advancements, which he argues could lead to the degradation of human nature (Fukuyama 2002, 101). Katherine Hayles, in her exploration of posthuman concept, defines it as a status that prioritize informational

pattern over material forms, viewing the body as the original prosthesis and considering consciousness a minor part of identity. In this view, carbon-based organic and silicon-based components converge, leading to the termination of the boundaries between humans and intelligent machines (Hayles 1999, 20).

Exploring the diverse perspectives on the posthuman concept reveals a common agreement among scholars on two central aspects. First, unlike contemporary humans, posthuman beings are characterized by their ability to customize their own physical and cognitive capabilities. Such outcome is possible through advanced technologies such as biotechnology and artificial intelligence, primary components of the posthuman condition. Second, there is an assumption that the posthuman era is an inevitable turning point in human evolution. This perceived inevitability raises a critical question, arguably more significant and supported by stronger evidence than the efforts to define this vague concept: why is becoming posthuman considered inevitable for humanity?

The Future is Posthuman

This argument has not received adequate attention due to the undeniable benefits and conveniences science and technology have provided across various aspects of human life. Historically, many of these advancements have been achieved through active environmental modifications. While these interventions have undoubtedly enhanced human quality of life, safety, and productivity, they have also sparked significant consequences, categorized as reversible or irreversible outcomes. For instance, overfishing and deforestation, though serious, can be reversed and alleviated with decades of global effort. Conversely, consequences like species extinction and global warming present challenges, which is considered nearly impossible to fully restore: “climate change cannot be completely reversed even if all the external forces are returned to their initial values” (Yang et al. 2021, 1061).

It is particularly noteworthy that biotechnology serves as an umbrella term encompassing a range of other technologies, including genetic engineering, genetic editing,

and cloning technologies. This broad categorization emphasizes the extensive influence of biotechnology within the posthuman field, highlighting its potential to significantly alter human capabilities and characteristics. Such transformations could fundamentally and irreversibly impact numerous aspects of human life. Accordingly, Francis Fukuyama articulates, the aftermath of posthuman technologies—whether positive or negative—extend beyond a single generation; as they will impact successive generations, "genetic modification is more like giving your child a tattoo that she can never subsequently remove and will have to hand down not just to her own children but to all subsequent descendants" (Fukuyama 2002, 94).

Before examining the specific consequences of posthuman advancements, it is essential to understand why humanity often overlooks the irreversible effects of new technologies, despite being aware of their potential risks. Regarding this, several factors shape and influence narratives that predominantly emphasize the positive aspects of technological advancements and innovations. Psychological biases, such as the innate drive to satisfy curiosity, self-interest, and shortsightedness, significantly contribute to this phenomenon. Furthermore, the comfort and productivity offered by technology, along with its contributions to education, medicine, and entertainment, shape public perception. Additionally, socio-economic motivations driven by political, social, and economic incentives further influence this perspective.

Nevertheless, an often overlooked but significant phenomenon, known as 'optimism bias,' profoundly influences our judgment, particularly in risk management, leading to unforeseen challenges and negative outcomes. Optimism bias acts as a psychological double-edged sword. On one hand, it serves as a potent motivator, encouraging individuals to embrace risks and pursue their aspirations, thereby transforming dreams into tangible realities. This facet is evident in the groundbreaking achievements of figures like Marie Curie, Neil Armstrong, and Louis Pasteur, who risked their lives for scientific advancements. On the other hand, optimism bias, especially when combined with an anthropocentric mindset, can lead to catastrophic long-term consequences, as seen in the Chernobyl disaster

(1986), the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (2019), baseless wars and conflicts, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Beyer et al. 2016, 28).

Additionally, optimism bias not only involves underestimating or overlooking potential threats but also encompasses 'presentism', the belief that only the present matters and the future and the past are insignificant (David 2016, 2867). This perspective leads current generations to disregard potential adverse effects on future events as long as they remain relatively unharmed. Hence, giving to birth to a perpetual cycle where each generation make decisions that affect the next. Historically, this pattern has manifested both detrimentally and beneficially.

In this context, biotechnology has vastly improved our understanding of life's building blocks, offering potential solutions for "treating some genetic diseases, growing climate-resilient crops, combating vector-borne diseases like malaria, designing food and drugs, and even saving endangered species from extinction" (Kavanagh 2019, 24). However, biotechnology also comes with potential risks, such as unpredictable permanent genetic changes that could harm humanity and the biosphere. Gene alterations can have unpredictable and undesirable consequences, leading to the formation of new diseases or ecological disruptions. For instance, efforts to eliminate malaria-carrying mosquitoes might accidentally spread altered genes to other populations, creating unpredictable issues. Biotechnology also poses health and safety risks, such as lab accidents and the misuse of research on deadly viruses for political and destructive means in massive scales. As this technology becomes more accessible, the potential for genetic modifications in humans also raises ethical concerns about consent and social discrimination. Additionally, the dual-use nature of biotechnology, requires strong bioethical regulations.

Nonetheless, it seems unrealistic to expect contemporary generations forsaking their immediate comforts, conveniences, or economic interests to achieve 'net zero' carbon emissions, replace fossil fuels with green energy, or establish an international agreement to eradicate all nuclear weapons worldwide. Nuclear weapons have been inherently threatening since their inception, and have seen a reduction in global stockpiles from a peak of 70,000 in

the 1980s to less than 10,000 by 2010. However, this reduction has not led to a global agreement to eliminate these weapons entirely. It is important to consider the devastation caused by nuclear war not only extends far beyond its targeted areas, but potentially triggering catastrophic global effects such as nuclear winter—an environmental catastrophe comparable to natural phenomena observed on Earth and Mars. This scenario would lead to the absence of sunlight for years, severe drops in temperature, and widespread agricultural collapse, which could lead to mass extinctions of every living being in our planet (Robock 2010, 418).

Consequently, there are numerous reasons, as previously mentioned, why humanity may not seriously consider the adverse consequences of transitioning into a posthuman state. Scholars in the posthuman and humanitarian fields are particularly concerned about the potential transformation of human nature itself, as the posthuman era necessitates a redefinition of human relationships with nature, society, and the self. In this context, some individuals may acquire significant physical and cognitive powers, fundamentally altering the perception of what it means to be human. Jennifer Doudna, a Nobel Prize-winning biochemist and pioneer in genetic editing technology views science as a gateway to understanding the universe, unlocking its mysteries and empowering humans to shape their desired reality. Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles, author of *How We Became Posthuman*, emphasizes that biology and technology are tools that empower humans to reshape their existence, ultimately transforming humanity into a new evolutionary stage. While such assertions often imply a positive outcome, suggesting that these changes would lead to a better world, it is crucial to acknowledge that changes come with costs. Not all individuals will benefit; some may face detrimental impacts, as echoed by Margaret Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale*, "Better never means better for everyone... It always means worse for some" (Atwood 2012, 204).

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) offers a profound literary depiction of biotechnological advancements in a posthuman world. Huxley was born into a family with a notable scientific heritage; his grandfather was the renowned biologist Thomas Henry Huxley. Huxley himself exhibited a profound interest in science and integrated numerous scientific concepts into his writings and essays. Before the outbreak of World War II, he was particularly interested in reproductive technology and advocated for negative eugenics (Clayton 2016, 875). His celebrated novel, *Brave New World*, serves as an exemplary illustration of Jennifer Doudna's belief in how science empowers humans to shape their world[3].

In *Brave New World*, residents of a futuristic London in the year 2450 A.D. regularly consume a drug named soma, metaphorically described as 'Christianity without tears'. This description suggests that soma allows individuals to become morally and socially adjusted without enduring the hardships of life. Soma is designed to maximize happiness and minimize pain by inducing a state of satisfaction. In comparison, contemporary psychotropic medications like SSRIs, Methylphenidate, and Opioids offer similar effects to soma. However, a significant difference lies in their side effects. Unlike modern pharmaceuticals, soma is noted for its absence of adverse effects, which typically include insomnia, sedation, aggressive behavior, suicidal tendencies, physical dependence, and other complications that may impair long-term health (Mcketin 2019, 81).

In a posthuman world, a small dose of a drug like soma could enhance self-confidence during a job interview or public speech, improve concentration while studying, or facilitate sociability in individuals who struggle with interpersonal communication. Such a drug could

[3] For critical perspectives on *Brave New World*, see Patrick Parrinder, "Brave New World as a Modern Utopia," *Science Fiction Studies* 9, no. 2 (1982): 151–162; Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); J. Vaupel, F. Villavicencio, and M.-P. Bergeron-Boucher, "Demographic Perspectives on the Rise of Longevity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118 (2019): 3; X. Yang et al., "Nuclear Reprogramming of Cloned Embryos and Its Implications for Therapeutic Cloning," *Nature Genetics* 39 (2007): 295.

address various situational challenges without causing physical or mental disorders, thereby contributing to a stable society where each individual is satisfied with their social status. Given that the history of humanity has been marked by struggle, suffering, and pain, why should contemporary individuals continue to follow the heritage of their ancestors (Candib 2002, 43). In this context, one might wonder: why not advance into the posthuman phase and fully embrace humanity's potential for self-modification and evolutionary development?

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* not only engrosses readers with profound philosophical questions but also implies answers within its narrative context. Many philosophers, like Friedrich Nietzsche, contend that the pursuit of endless power is an inseparable aspect of humans. Nietzsche's concept of the will to power suggests that historical wars and conflicts are expressions of an inherent drive for power in human nature. This claim often finds support not only in philosophical and historical perspectives but also in scientific realm. As studies show biochemical factors, such as Serotonin can significantly influence human behavior by driving an increased desire for power, as higher levels of serotonin correlate with traits like aggressiveness, competitiveness, and a strong desire for dominance. For instance, research has found that individuals with elevated serotonin levels tend to exhibit greater assertiveness in social interactions, seeking to influence others' behaviors, thoughts, or emotions more actively than those with lower levels (Madsen 1985, 448).

Moreover, In *Brave New World*, the World State's emphasis on 'Community, Identity, Stability' suggests an awareness of these tendencies in human nature. The narrative briefly mentions 'The Nine Years' War', highlighting how historical conflicts led to the establishment of a caste system, maintained through the biotechnological application of soma to control various aspects of citizens' lives. Additionally, characters like John, Bernard, and Helmholtz, who think and act contrary to societal norms, are destined to be outcasts, underscoring the societal consequences of divergent thinking.

Comparing our present world with the posthuman era depicted in Huxley's *Brave New World* reveals that technological advances could address many contemporary obstacles, though fundamental issues like inequality, conflict, and the abuse of power remain

unresolved. In fact, technology may intensify these issues, distancing humanity further from its nature. For example, a child born in 18th century Europe faced numerous hazards such as diphtheria and smallpox and if from the lower classes, would likely endure child labor, poor nutrition, and limited educational opportunities (Lewis and Cunningham 1992, 129). Conversely, a child born in the 21st century in Europe is generally shielded from these threats due to technological developments.

However, the contemporary world possesses an extensive array of weapons of mass disruption, using less than 1% of them could inflict catastrophic consequences on humanity and its environment (Hochman 2022, 1). Additionally, while 18th-century technology provided numerous job opportunities, it also contributed to the rebirth of issues like child labor. On this matter, research conducted by UNICEF in 2021 indicates, "The number of children in child labour has risen to 160 million worldwide" (UNICEF 2021), with many of them age 5 to 11 working in technology sector, for companies like Apple, Huawei Technologies, and Microsoft Corporation. Moreover, while many diseases have been controlled or eradicated through advances in medical technology, these same technologies have introduced new challenges for modern generations, including depression, genetic disorders, and chronic diseases.

The discussion on the role and influence of technology in contemporary times, particularly its challenges, does not imply that humanity should cease to progress. Indeed, technological advancements have significantly addressed numerous issues faced by humanity. However, with each passing day, the modern world edges closer to a point where technology not only becomes more addictive and pervasive across almost all aspects of our lives, but also it has become increasingly difficult to control. Therefore, it has become crucial to balance technological progress with ethical and moral considerations to ensure it serves humanity's best interests without undermining our intrinsic nature. The subsequent sections will explore the impact of these frameworks on technological innovations, specifically in the realm of genetic technologies.

Genetic Engineering

Genetic engineering, a notable product of biotechnology, involves direct manipulation of DNA from one organism to other organisms in order to permanently alter their characteristics and functions**.** This powerful technique has gained popularity across various industries, including agriculture, medicine, and environmental science, enabling precise control over genetic properties to achieve desired outcomes. The following paragraphs provides a brief history of how genetic engineering evolved and expanded across different fields, ultimately establishing itself as one of the foundational technologies that could lead to the posthuman condition.

The journey of genetic engineering began in 1962 with James Watson and Francis Crick's discovery of the DNA structure. The field took a substantial leap forward in 1974 with the creation of the first recombinant DNA molecules, marking the official birth of genetic engineering. This period also witnessed the emergence of initial ethical concerns regarding this newfound capability. By the early 1980s, genetic engineering progressed from biomedical research to practical experimentation. The 1980s saw significant milestones such as the production of the first transgenic mice and the revolutionary development of human insulin by Genentech[4]. In 1994, the potential of genetic engineering was discovered in the agricultural sector with the development of the Flavr Savr tomato, the first genetically engineered fruit. Perhaps the most profound milestone was achieved in 1996 with the successful cloning of Dolly the sheep at the Roslin Institute in Scotland, in 1997, sparking global anxiety and curiosity about the future of human cloning (Jasanoff 2016, 111). While each new genetic advancement has raised ethical and moral concerns, subsequent discoveries have continued to overshadow these concerns through highlighting the benefits of genetic engineering for humanity.

As the 21st century began, genetic engineering reached new heights with the approval of gene therapy for cancer and the adaptation of CRISPR for genome editing. These

[4] Genentech is a pioneering biotechnology company that was founded in 1976.

innovations revolutionized genetic engineering across various domains, including medicine, agriculture, and biotechnology, particularly cloning technologies. However, this achievement sparked debates on the ethics of cloning, leading to the establishment of new regulations and policies. As the United Nations General Assembly called for a prohibition of both therapeutic and reproductive cloning, adopted by a recorded vote of 84 in favor to 34 against, with 37 abstentions (United Nations 2005). While the regulation of cloning, especially human cloning, varies widely from one country to another, no country has yet permitted cloning activities without the oversight of bioethical organizations. However, recent years have seen subversive moves towards the cloning regulations, potentially marking the beginning of a new biotechnological era.

Despite ongoing ethical, moral, and religious concerns, developed countries have continued to achieve new milestones in cloning. Since the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1997, over twenty animal species—including cows, horses, camels, dogs, buffalo, and goats—have been successfully cloned for various purposes (Mrowiec and Bugno-Poniewierska 2022, 63). Initially, cloning experiments aimed to address contemporary issues such as conservation and agricultural enhancement by improving livestock disease resistance and the quality of milk and meat. However, cloning projects eventually have become more ambitious, like customizing desirable pets as the successful cases of the 'CopyCat' [5]and 'Garlic'[6], or the revival of extinct species through the de-extinction processes, such as Woolly. In this context, Donna Haraway's companion species theory predicts that the concept and role of domestic animals and pets evolve into a new category, namely companion animals. This concept challenges traditional ideas of family and kinship. Cloning blurs the lines between species and strengthens these relationships, suggesting that human identity and family ties are deeply connected to cloned and genetically modified animals. Haraway's ideas are illustrated in Margaret Atwood's novel Oryx and Crake, where the protagonist, Jimmy, experiences the breakdown of his traditional family and forms deep emotional connection to various companion species. Jimmy's interactions with animals like the Pigoons, the Rakunk named

[5] CopyCat was the name of the first domestic cat cloned by scientists at Texas A&M University in 2001.
[6] Garlic is a cat cloned in 2019 by Sinogene, a Chinese biotechnology company.

Killer, and the parrot Alex fill the emotional void left by his estranged parents. These animals become Jimmy's 'posthuman family,' providing comfort, empathy, and a sense of belonging. Recently, these promising innovations have expanded to explore speculative and far-reaching applications, including those involving human subjects (Birney 2015, 5).

From Mimesis to Biopolitics

W. J. T. Mitchell in *Cloning Terror* (2011) offers a new insight on the concept of human cloning by proposing should not be confined to scientific or technological standpoints, but it should also be understood within broader historical, artistic, and philosophical contexts (Mitchell 2011, 22). When examined through the lens of Aristotle's concept of *mimesis*, cloning emerges as a tangible realization of the idea that art is an imitation of life. Aristotle proposed that *mimesis* serves as a means to imitate and understand reality, and in a modern sense, biotechnology—particularly cloning—can be seen as an extension of this principle. In this framework, cloning technology can be seen as a modern tool that transforms what was once considered "only a metaphor" into a tangible possibility. If Aristotle's view can be seen as a defense of imitation, then Plato's perspective serves as a critique. Plato argued that art and imitation are merely shadows of reality, merely imperfect reflection of the ideal Forms (Sharma 2015, 361). Applying this to cloning, Plato might argue that cloning creates imperfect replicas of humans, reducing them to mere copies devoid of the true essence that defines individuality. This Platonic perspective highlights the potential risk of creating beings who are mere imitations rather than fully realized individuals.

Moreover, cloning raises ethical concerns that connect with Foucault's idea of biopolitics, where biotechnology and information science converge to control life. Cloning, as an example of what Foucault called "biocybernetic reproduction," brings up issues of autonomy, identity, and the risk of exploitation (Mitchell 2011, 71). The ability to clone and manipulate life can lead to new forms of control and domination over individuals, similar to Plato's concerns about the consequences of imitation. In this context, cloning is not just a

scientific development but also a form of biopower that could significantly challenge ethical boundaries.

The cultural and ethical concerns surrounding cloning are further amplified by its portrayal in popular media. While some scientific data suggests general approval of cloning for medical or research purposes, Mitchell also points out another layer of concern regarding such experiments, often reflected in Popular media and sci-fi horror films that portray clones as soulless beings in a dystopian future, where they are exploited or manipulated as mere tools. These portrayals underscore ethical concerns about the potential misuse of cloning technology for creating "clone armies" or "organ farms," which could reduce individuals to mere products or resources devoid of personal agency and dignity (Mitchell 2011, 14). Mitchell vividly captures these anxieties by juxtaposing images of Saddam Hussein's military forces with those of cloned soldiers from George Lucas's *Attack of the Clones*. This frightening visual metaphor underscores the potential for cloning technology to be misused by authoritarian regimes, transforming whom used to called humans into mere resources for totalitarian purposes (Mitchell 2011, 75). The ethical debate surrounding cloning, therefore, is not only about the science itself but also deeply rooted in cultural and philosophical questions about what it means to be human and the moral limits of technological intervention.

Recent advancements in cloning have gradually shifted the focus from bioethical concerns to curiosity and a desire for progress. This shift reflects a broader reevaluation of bioethical frameworks and attitudes toward human cloning in different countries. A 2016 study in Japan revealed significant acceptance for creating human-animal chimeras, “over 60% of the public and 83.8% of researchers supported the creation of human-swine chimeras and 81.0% of the public and 92.4% of researchers supported the creation of human-swine chimeric embryos” (Tsutomu, Taichi and Fujita 2017, 233). Moreover, countries like the UK and France, which initially banned human cloning, now support therapeutic cloning, aligning with Australia and over 30 other nations that permit such practices.

As cloning regulations become more lenient, new types of demands begin to emerge, ultimately pushing the boundaries of cloning further. In 2019, He Jiankui, a Chinese scientist,

created the world's first genetically edited babies, known for their resistance to HIV, which led to his imprisonment for three years (Jon and Dennis 2020, 130). Despite global outrage, a 2023 report indicated that the twins, Lulu and Nana, are living normal lives, immune to HIV. Thus, why should such a breakthrough, despite its violation of contemporary moral and ethical standards, be prohibited if it holds the potential to assist humanity in overcoming global health challenges? Is it not more ethical to protect future generations against a disease like HIV that has been responsible for countless lives?

Throughout the history of science, many scientists, including Gregor Mendel[7] and Ignaz Semmelweis[8] experienced ridicule and rejection for their pioneering ideas during their lifetimes. However, subsequent generations have come to recognize and appreciate the significance of their contributions. Similarly, it is plausible that Jiankui might also be remembered as a groundbreaking hero and a pioneer of human cloning. Notably, Jiankui was not the first to claim success in human cloning. In 2003 CNN reported a Bahamian-based cloning company, namely Clonaid, claimed that they took the first step to immortality and managed to cloned the first human being, although they have never provided any evidence, thus their assertion was widely dismissed (Rael 2003). Whether or not Clonaid succeeded in creating a human clone, the mere attempt indicates that despite strict regulations, private and independent sectors may still pursue such experiments. While no verified evidence currently exists, it is possible that shadow labs or military black ops projects founded by governments are conducting on classified human cloning projects. Historical examples of secret projects such as MKUltra[9], Area 51[10], and Starfish Prime[11] are just a few famous cases of governmental classified activities that only became public years after their operations, suggesting the potential existence of ongoing, undisclosed cloning projects.

[7] Gregor Mendel, an Augustinian monk, is considered the father of modern genetics. His scientific ideas, developed through experiments with pea plants, yet his research was initially mocked and ignored.
[8] Ignaz Semmelweis was a Hungarian physician who despite his findings to puerperal fever was rejected by the medical community during his lifetime.
[9] MKUltra, started by the CIA in the early 1950s, was a secret operation that explored the use of substances like LSD for mind control and interrogation purposes.
[10] Area 51 was a classified U.S. Air Force project in Nevada, commonly linked with theories about UFOs and alien technology.
[11] Starfish Prime was a nuclear test by the United States in 1962, part of a larger series of tests called Operation Fishbowl. The test was carried out to understand the effects of nuclear explosions in space.

Consequently, it is essential to acknowledge that numerous scientific discoveries and medical advancements initially faced ethical objections, legal prohibitions, or public resistance. Innovations like the smallpox vaccine, organ transplants, and autopsies were once considered unethical and contrary to religious doctrines. However, they have not only gained widespread acceptance over time but have also become fundamental to contemporary life.

Furthermore, globalization and international competition in fields such as biotechnology complicate the establishment of universal ethical standards. For instance, while euthanasia remains illegal in countries like the United Kingdom and Australia, individuals can travel to the Netherlands or Belgium, where it is legally permitted, to undergo the procedure. Additionally, there are a number of regulations and conventions established by the United Nations that all member countries are expected to follow, yet, they are often violated without significant consequences, such as the basic human rights, *Geneva Conventions, environmental agreements,* UNCLOS[12], health regulations *and many others (Roojin et al. 2020, 664)*. Considering frequent violations of ethical regulations and the collective desire for progress, it can be concluded that the current bioethical regulations are not be a guarantee for the progress of genetic engineering and cloning. Arguably, today's bioethical regulations governing genetic engineering and cloning may evolve into tomorrow's accepted norms, potentially becoming essential and foundational to medical and scientific practices.

Family and Society in the Posthuman Condition

Genetic technologies have the potential to significantly influence various stages of human life, from birth to broader societal structures. These advancements not only impact family dynamics and interpersonal relationships but also catalyze a transition from the current human condition to a posthuman stage. Despite being in developmental stages, current genetic technology is advanced enough to prevent some genetic issues while the baby

[12] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

is in fetus stage such as “single gene disorders, chromosomal imbalances, epigenetics, cancer, and complex disorders” (Maria 2018, 643). However, advancements in genetic editing tools do not end at this level. There may come a time when genetic technology will be capable of far more than addressing contemporary genetic disorders, they could enable the customization of physical and cognitive traits in humans.

Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1976) explores the role of genes in shaping human behavior and evolution, presenting the idea that genes drive behaviors that may appear altruistic but are fundamentally aimed at ensuring their own survival. One example Dawkins provides is the case of albinism, where individuals with this condition possess impaired vision, making them more vulnerable to predators compared to non-albinos. Consequently, over generations, the frequency of albinism-related genes in the population tends to diminish (Dawkins 1976, 90). However, unlike albinism, many genetic disorders are passed through generations despite their negative impacts because they do not directly affect survival in a way that would lead to their elimination through natural selection.

Recent studies indicate genetic editing offers promising treatments for genetic disorders like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, diabetes, obesity, and cancer (Becker 2004, 311). However, while genetic technologies hold the potential of curing these conditions, they also risk leading to radical measures, such as the cases of negative eugenics that was a controversial topic in the early 20th century. Negative eugenics aimed to eliminate perceived undesirable traits from the human gene pool, often through unethical practices like forced sterilization and discrimination against marginalized groups. Many important intellectuals, including Aldous Huxley supported the ideas of eugenics, encouraging higher birth rates among the “intellectual classes” while advocating for the sterilization of the lower-class that are perceived as “unfit”, believing that such measures would improve the mental abilities of future generations and lead to a healthier society. However, the extreme actions taken by the Nazis, led to a widespread rejection of eugenics (Woiak 2007, 106). This dark chapter in history serves as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the ethical dangers that can arise when genetic technologies are misused

Dawkins also presents the idea of sex ratios, emphasizing that genes typically favor an equal distribution of sexes to ensure survival and reproduction (Dawkins 1976, 144). However, with the advent of genetic editing technologies such as Preimplantation Genetic Testing (PGT) and sperm sorting, modern parents can now choose the sex of their children, which with its popularity could potentially lead to imbalanced sex ratios. This is especially concerning in regions where cultural or governmental pressures favor one sex over the other such as in certain underdeveloped countries, specifically those that are more in need of labor and military, male offspring are preferred. In such societies, where women struggle for basic rights like education, work, and justice, these technologies could aggravate gender inequalities, and eventually create significant reproductive challenges.

The concept of 'designer babies' often refers to the possibility that parents might modify their infants—and subsequently their descendants—choosing traits like intelligence, physical appearance, self-esteem, and athletic ability according to their preferences. Despite strong legal and moral opposition, if such practices would become ethically approved in a posthuman era, they could significantly alter social structures, potentially leading to a full-scale class conflict. This scenario arises as genetic editing technology would likely be expensive and merely accessible to the upper classes. Ultimately, exacerbating social inequalities and leading to struggle within society, as those unable to afford genetic editing might feel increasingly marginalized or disadvantaged. Nonetheless, some scientists, such as George Church, a pioneer in genomic biology, defend infant modification. In his interview with CBS News, Church argues that just as airplanes and smartphones have expanded our horizons by making travel faster and information more accessible, genetic editing could similarly enhance human physical and cognitive abilities. However, he insists that genetic technologies must be universally available to all people, akin to the widespread use of smartphones and airplanes today.

Ultimately, if genetic technology becomes universally accessible, it holds the potential to fundamentally transform contemporary social structures and family dynamics. This change could significantly impact the relationships between parents and children, potentially leading to a redefinition of social norms, ethics, and values. Over time, the

continuous interaction between family and societal dynamics could result in a convergence where the traditional concept of the family is perceived as unnecessary. Posthuman scholars, such as Donna Haraway, argue that one of the pivotal factors contributing to the formation of a posthuman era is the blurring of lines between institutions, potentially resulting in the unification of family and society into a single integrated unit.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* presents an accurate depiction of a posthuman society where genetic transforms the family institution into a broader construct known as society. In this evolving context, the traditional roles typically filled by the family are now managed on a societal level, dictated by collective needs and values that are primarily political, including the reproduction of individuals. Therefore, it seems reasonable for authorities to use genetic editing to produce individuals with different physical and intellectual capabilities suited to specific societal roles. For example, Epsilons are engineered to perform laborious tasks without intellectual capacity, while Alphas are designed to be attractive and intellectually superior. Huxley suggests that genetic engineering's power extends beyond modifying physical and cognitive traits—it can also manipulate the human psyche to mold personality and psychological factors. Behavioral genetics studies confirm that both genetic and environmental factors significantly shape human personality, with the family traditionally being the primary socializing agent (Chabris et al. 2015, 304). Huxley warns that in a posthuman world, both family and environmental influences are orchestrated by political entities—known as Future World Controllers—creating citizens conditioned to embrace their roles with contentment. An illustration of this is seen in the characterization of the Epsilons, who are content with their status despite being at the bottom of society with no prospects for improvement.

Furthermore, currently, single mothers or same-sex couples often require a third party to assist in pregnancy through methods like IVF, IUI, or surrogacy. Silver predicts that in a posthuman era with fewer bioethical regulations, these individuals could have children by using their own tissues. However, these children would be genetic duplicates of their birthing mothers and clone offspring of their biological grandparents. While the idea of growing one's genetic duplicate as a child might appeal to some, it undeniably complicates generational

boundaries and could profoundly impact social dynamics within the family. In this scenario, cloning children would lack genetic uniqueness, potentially harming their individuality and societal roles. Not being genetically unique might lead to serious identity and psychological challenges for cloned individuals. Becoming aware that they are a genetic copy of another person may involve them in zero-sum competition with their donors, which merely make them feel inadequate or pressured. Additionally, if the donor has a negative history, such as being a criminal, the cloned individual might fear inheriting similar tendencies or being judged based on their genetic origin, further compounding their anxiety and self-esteem issues. This could also lead to identity confusion and hinder their personal development and independence. On a societal level, cloned children might face discrimination or be labeled as less unique, impacting their societal roles and relationships (Strong 2005, 654). Moreover, the ethical implications of treating a human being as a genetic copy raise concerns about potentially reducing the cloned individual's sense of value and self-worth. These concerns underline the complex ethical, psychological, and social issues that cloning presents, challenging the notion of every human's right to a unique genetic identity.

Human Cloning: The Quest for Immortality

A comprehensive review of the history of cloning, especially human cloning—including its development, public sentiment, and associated moral and ethical dilemmas—is essential to understanding the potential impacts of this technology on the future of humanity. Currently, numerous studies suggest that cloning could revolutionize various facets of human life, particularly in extending life expectancy. Humanity’s profound anxiety about death and the timeless aspiration for eternal life have been echoed throughout history. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its significant death toll, indicates the profound psychological fear of death, extending beyond personal realms, often encompassing the anguish of losing loved ones (Steele 2020, 97). Recent developments in cloning technology are considered significant steps towards fulfilling the human dream of overcoming death.

At the dawn of the eighteenth century in Europe, life expectancy was significantly low; approximately half of all children died before reaching the age of 15, and only a minor of the population surpassed 50 years, these individuals were often referred to as survivors. By contrast, in the 1990s, over 83 percent of the population was expected to live to the age of 65, with more than 28 percent surviving until at least 85. Since 1840, the human lifespan has increased at an approximate rate of 2.5 years per decade, leading to predictions that most children born in the new millennium will celebrate their 100th birthday (Vaupel, Francisco and Marie-Pier 2019, 3). This remarkable increase in lifespan can be attributed to various factors, ranging from improved nutrition to significant societal changes, but the predominant influence has been technological advancements in the medical field.

Cloning technology, in particular, has shown promising results that could further accelerate this development. Experimental evidence from cloned animals suggests they live longer than the normal ones and often reach the maximum lifespan of their species. (Burgstaller and Brem 2016, 417) While no such experiments have been carried out on humans due to bioethical regulations, the results from cloned animals suggest that cloned humans might also have longer life expectancy. However, cloning technology does not only increase the lifespan by making cloned humans, but it can also increase human lifespan through other techniques.

Previously it was mention that *therapeutic cloning on humans is the only cloning technique, which despite ethical dilemmas are permitted in many countries. As this* technique does not entail the creation of a full genetically identical human being*, and it is still in early research stages,* with no substantial improvements officially confirmed. In simple terms, *therapeutic cloning* is a technique to extract the nucleus from the donor cell and transfer it into an enucleated egg cell, where its original nucleus has been previously removed. This egg cell, containing the genetic material of the donor, is stimulated to divide and develop into an embryo with the same DNA as the donor cell (Yang 2007, 295). The primary objective of this technique is to clone specific stem cells for medical purposes, such as producing vaccines, treating diseases like cancer, and potentially regenerating new human tissues and organs, leading to a higher and healthier life expectancy. While organ transplantation has

been saving lives for decades, therapeutic cloning offers a unique advantage: the cloned organs are genetically identical to the donor, thus preventing common risks such as organ shortage, tissue rejection, and ethical issues like organ trafficking and exploitation, particularly in underdeveloped countries where, reportedly, individuals sell organs to settle debts (Fumie 2008, 661).

Additionally, other emerging technologies such as 3D bioprinting have the potential to create artificial tissue structures like skin, cartilage, and bone. It is estimated that this technology will develop far enough to fabricate complex human organs like hearts and kidneys in the future (Mandrycky et al. 2016, 427). Another innovative approach is xenotransplantation, which involves transplanting organs and tissues from animals to humans. This process heavily relies on the genetic editing of animals, particularly pigs, to enhance compatibility with the human immune system. Future advancements in genetic engineering may even allow for the creation of chimeras similar to the Pigoons depicted in Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake*, whose sole purpose are to cultivate cells, tissues, and organs for human usage. It is important to note that these technologies are still at experimental stages, grappling with challenges such as high costs, technical limitations, and ethical regulations, especially xenotransplantation, which raises significant concerns regarding violation of animal welfare and natural species boundaries.

Reproductive cloning represents another cloning technology, which has been universally banned in all countries, at least those that have specified their positions in the cloning areas. Unlike therapeutic cloning, which aims to regenerate parts of the human body, reproductive cloning involves creating a complete human being. The process is similar to therapeutic cloning, except the resulting embryo is implanted into a surrogate mother, where it has the potential to develop into a newborn human (Kubiak and Martin 2001, 359). Despite the substantial medical benefits that cloning technology promises, reproductive cloning has provoked intense moral and religious concerns, dividing opinions primarily into two categories.

The first category involves followers of Abrahamic religions, particularly Christianity. According to Christian doctrine, humans are created in God's image, and creating another human through cloning is seen as overstepping divine boundaries or 'playing God'. The second category believes that, unlike other cloning techniques that remain largely theoretical, reproductive cloning is fully applicable with current technology and knowledge, potentially leading to unpredictable consequences. Although cloning technology promises substantial medicine benefits for humanity, yet according to Francis Fukuyama "If we get too used to the idea of cloning embryos for medical purposes, will we know when to stop?" (Fukuyama 2002, 177)**.**

In this context, it can be argued that while the future impact of cloning technologies remains uncertain, it would be unreasonable to abandon them solely due to potential catastrophic consequences. While this claim holds some validity, historical pattern of revolutionary inventions and discoveries reveals a pattern of unintended negative consequences. For example, armaments have destroyed more lives than they have saved, plastics are lethal for the environment, and fossil fuels are major contributors to pollution and climate change. Despite this knowledge, humanity has not ceased using these technologies. Between 167 million and 188 million people were killed by weapons 20th century, yet armament production continues, with weapons becoming more destructive. The exploitation of plastics has surged from 5 to 100 million tons per year since the 1950s, and the use of fossil fuels increased by approximately 51% from 1995 to 2015, with a predicted additional 18% increase from 2015 to 2035 (Ferguson 2006, 61).

In a posthuman world, humanity is expected to transcend its current biological limitations through technology. This era represents a radical shift, transforming humans from mere biological entities into beings with capabilities akin to divinity, possessing groundbreaking powers over the creation and transformation of life This notion of evolving into *Homo Deus*[13] reflects profound shifts in our understanding of and control over human

[13] Homo Deus is a term popularized by Yuval Noah Harari in his book *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, referring to the ambition to elevate humans to a god-like status.

biology, a concept implied in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein (1818)*. Shelley's narrative serves as a cautionary tale about the hubris of playing God by creating a human being without considering its ethical responsibilities. This cautionary lesson is reflected in contemporary debates, as scholars like Bruno Latour emphasizing that "we must care for our technologies as we do our children" (Foht 2018, 83).

This transformative stage closely mirrors the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, where humanity united to build a tower reaching the heavens. The motivations behind their attempt varied, ranging from natural curiosity and a pursuit of power to ambitions of overcoming natural limitations such as disease, warfare, and mortality. These motivations reflect today's scientific quest to transcend human limitations and become posthuman. However, just as the Tower of Babel led to humanity's division and confusion, the modern quest for posthuman status, despite being noble in intent to conquer biological restraints, starks potential threats that could lead to societal fragmentation. In contemporary time, the pursuit of posthuman capabilities is facilitated not by stones and mortar, yet by the power of scientific knowledge and technological innovation. This progression continually raises severe concerns about whether these technologies challenge the boundaries of human nature, ethics, and traditional values. Can today's humans responsibly manage technologies with irreversible impacts on the human race? Accordingly, Francis Fukuyama starkly warns of the potential irreversible consequences of advancing biotechnology:

> While it is legitimate to worry about unintended consequences…the deepest fear that people express about technology is not a utilitarian one at all. It is rather a fear that, in the end, biotechnology will cause us in some way to lose our humanity—that is, some essential quality that has always underpinned our sense of who we are and where we are going, despite all of the evident changes that have taken place in the human condition through the course of history (Fukuyama 2002, 101).

That is why it is crucial to seriously consider the ethical consequences of altering the genetic nature of humans and other species. These practices might ultimately raise profound ethical concerns regarding animal welfare, environmental impacts, and the essence of human

nature itself. Such interventions risk leading us into a moral and existential crisis, where we might lose sight of what it means to be human and unconsciously forsake our very own nature.

Chapter Two - Kazuo Ishiguro's Fiction

From Technology to Humanity

In this chapter, I will move away from the scientific framework that dominated the previous pages, which primarily focused on the role of technology and ethical dilemmas in shaping a posthuman world. Instead, I will explore the enduring elements of human experience—those aspects of existence that remain constant across time—untouched by technological advancements. To achieve this, I will first explore Kazuo Ishiguro's personal experiences and reflections as a writer navigating dual cultural identities. These experiences are deeply embedded in the fabric of his characters[14] and narratives, offering a unique perspective on what it means to be human.

Additionally, this chapter will then shift to an in-depth analysis of two of Ishiguro's earlier works, *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) and *The Remains of the Day (1989)*. These novels exemplify the complexities of Ishiguro's dual cultural heritage and the intricate literary worlds he inhabits. By examining these texts, we gain valuable insights into the central role that the concept of humanity plays within his narratives—a foundation that is essential for understanding the posthuman themes explored in *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021), which are the primary focus of this thesis. Through unpacking the complexities of these earlier works, we can more fully appreciate the profound questions Ishiguro raises about the nature of being human, and how these questions continue to resonate in an increasingly posthuman era.

[14] I sometimes use the term "protagonists" and other times "characters." The reason for this distinction is that, specifically in *The Remains of the Day*, other characters, such as Miss Kenton and Stevens' father, grapple with similar issues as the protagonist. Therefore, I find it necessary to broaden the focus beyond just the figure of protagonist.

Kazuo Ishiguro, born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan, and raised in the United Kingdom, is a Nobel Prize-winning author whose unique bicultural background profoundly influences his literary perspective. His family moved to the United Kingdom when he was five due to his father's work as an oceanographer. Growing up in England, Ishiguro attended the University of Kent, where he studied English and Philosophy, and later the University of East Anglia, where he earned a Master of Arts in Creative Writing. While Ishiguro has adopted many aspects of English identity, a significant part of him remains deeply connected to his Japanese roots—shaped by early childhood memories of Japan, his close relationship with his grandfather, and the enduring influence of Japanese cultural traditions. (Holmes and Rich 2021, 10).

Ishiguro's early novels, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), are set in post-war Japan, reflecting his deep connection to his homeland. These works explore themes of memory, guilt, and the haunting traumas of war, highlighting the cultural and historical complexities of Japanese society during a period of transition. Despite these strong ties to Japan, Ishiguro's subsequent works reveal a shift towards themes more closely associated with his British upbringing. His acclaimed novel, *The Remains of the Day*, is set in England and delves into the life of an English butler, examining the complexities of the purpose of one's existence in this world. This novel not only cemented Ishiguro's reputation as a significant British novelist but also showcased his ability to navigate the subtleties of British culture and societal norms.

Between Two Worlds

Ishiguro's identity transcends the boundaries of his Japanese and British roots. Rather than grappling with a sense of belonging to one culture over the other, Ishiguro masterfully creates a unique space that exists between these cultural realms. This liminal space, where he is neither entirely British nor fully Japanese, allows him to break free from the limitations

of rigid cultural categories[15]. He embraces this unique position, metaphorically claiming this as a no man's land, by asserting, "I consider myself an international writer" (Wong 2019, 7). This self-definition reflects a literary identity that transcends national and cultural boundaries, offering him a way to reconcile his internal conflicts about identity. Such self-definition parallels the sentiments of Petrarch, who described himself as a wanderer belonging "nowhere and everywhere". Like Petrarch, Ishiguro navigates his dual heritage with a sense of freedom, viewing it not as a limitation but as a source of creative potential. In this context, Rebecca Suter, in her study of Ishiguro's novels, highlights the existence of what she notes as "Two Worlds" fiction. Suter argues that Ishiguro's British and Japanese settings interact to create a complementary, intercultural perspective that enriches his narratives and complicates any singularly Anglo-centric reading (Holmes and Rich 2021, 10).

This distinctive perspective has manifested in Ishiguro's literary journey, allowing him to transcend traditional boundaries by avoiding confinement within defined genres or specific times and places. His novels[16] often include a combination of realism and a more personalized version of reality. For instance, in *An Artist of the Floating World*, despite Ishiguro's realistic depiction aligning with the historical events of the time, he sought to create his own version of his motherland by explaining, "Japan didn't exist anywhere, apart from in my head" (Holmes and Rich 2021, 10). Similarly, he labels his portrayal of England in *The Remains of the Day* as "not an England that I believe ever existed" (Gehlawat 2013, 508). This approach reveals Ishiguro's tendency to blend realism with his own imaginative interpretations, enabling him to explore deeper human truths beyond the constraints of historical accuracy. Through this, Ishiguro invites readers into worlds that are simultaneously familiar and invented, challenging them to rethink the relationship between memory, identity, and history.

[15] This dual cultural heritage is also reflected in the works of African American writers who navigate both African and American identities, such as W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and James Baldwin in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955).

[16] While novels such as *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), *The Unconsoled* (1995), and *When We Were Orphans* (2000) are notable works by Kazuo Ishiguro, they are not mentioned in this section as the focus is on novels with more diverse settings.

In *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Ishiguro sets the narrative in an alternate 1990s England where cloning technology is a grim reality, delving into profound ethical dilemmas and the complexities of the human condition. In *The Buried Giant* (2015), he blends fantasy with historical allegory in post-Arthurian Britain, exploring themes of memory, trauma, and reconciliation. Most recently, in *Klara and the Sun* (2021), Ishiguro shifts to a posthuman United States, examining the intricate relationship between humans and artificial intelligence. These varied settings and genres highlight Ishiguro's remarkable ability to transcend cultural influences and challenge the traditional conventions of genre. His approach echoes Donna Haraway's vision of a posthuman world, where the merging of existing dualities generates new and transformative concepts (Cook 2004, 5).

Additionally, the mindset of not limiting one's narrative to predefined categories displays in Ishiguro's creation of characters who reflect his own sense of displacement. These characters are often portrayed as outsiders, caught between two worlds, and unable to fully identify with neither of them. This duality is apparent in various forms and contexts: between two timelines, such as pre- and post-war periods, between different social classes, or in a posthuman stage where they can neither be fully human nor clones or machines.

Unbound by the constraints of any singular world or its governing principles, Ishiguro's characters often create their own imaginary spaces of in-betweenness, ultimately becoming the center of their own defined worlds. By inhabiting a world of their own, they craft subjective definitions of aspirational virtues like 'greatness', 'dignity', and 'humanity', believing they can embody and achieve these ideals based on their personalized understanding. However, when confronted with the reality of their own limitations and failures, these characters often retreat further into self-deception, unable or unwilling to face the differences between their ideals and the harsh truths of their circumstances. This deepening self-delusion serves as a protective barrier, shielding them from the painful acknowledgment of their shortcomings.

The Paradox of Self-Deception

W. J. T. Mitchell's assertion that "every history is really two histories" resonates with Ishiguro's approach in constructing characters (Mitchell 2011, 12). In both cases, there is a duality between the reality of events and the subjective perception of them. Ishiguro's protagonists begin their narratives by presenting what seems to be an honest account by often acknowledging their faulty memories or inability to recall exact details. However, as the narrative progresses, they gradually reveal themselves as unreliable narrators, selectively distorting and omitting significant aspects of their personal histories. This shift reflects Mitchell's idea, as their personal narratives are shaped by both the reality of their past and their distorted perceptions, ultimately illustrating the gap between truth and deception. This unveiling of unreliability is not just a narrative device but a profound clarification on the nature of memory and self-perception. The common understanding of self-deception often revolves around the idea that it arises from a combination of conflicting beliefs, overconfidence in one's own knowledge, and misguided desires. These factors create mental obstacles that prevent individuals from acknowledging uncomfortable truths, allowing them to maintain a biased version of reality (Funkhouser 2019, 2). The self-deception depicted in Kazuo Ishiguro's stories is more nuanced and passive, driven by selective memory processes where characters conveniently forget and misinterpret aspects that do not fit into their desired narratives. This form of self-deception is not about consciously telling lies but rather an unconscious shaping of personal histories to maintain a coherent self-image. Ishiguro himself has commented on this phenomenon, noting, "they deceive themselves. How sometimes they wanted to look at shameful episodes from the past that they had participated in and other times they absolutely did not want to look at those things" (Holmes and Rich 2021, 8).

In this context, David Detmer, in *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity,* indicates that "to deceive myself I must both know the truth and not know it". He emphasizes that self-deception is a paradox, occurring when we tell ourselves falsehoods that we simultaneously believe to be true (Detmer 2011, 75). Moreover, Kathleen Wall notes that Ishiguro simultaneously facilitate and complicate the pursuit of truth for readers. She argues

that Ishiguro shifts the reader's focus from the events to the narrators' mental process to imply the subjective nature of their memories, and ultimately deconstructing the notion of truth (Wong 2019, 54). Ishiguro's narrative strategy skillfully blurs the line between objective reality and subjective experience, challenging readers to question of what is real and what is merely a product of the narrator's self-deception.

Ishiguro's protagonists are often caught in a complex paradox, torn between consciously seeking the truth and unconsciously creating a narrative that shields them from it. This internal conflict ultimately leads to the creation of a civil war between self-deception and reluctant self-awareness. The tension between these opposing forces ends in moments of reckoning often occurring at the end of the narratives, where characters must confront the reality of their choices and the consequences of their self-deceptions. According to Walter Benjamin, this mindset is ultimately dangerous for both society and the individual. He argues that failing to acknowledge relevant aspects of the past risks their irretrievable disappearance (Wong 2019, 50). In a 1989 interview, just before winning the Booker Prize for *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro described a recurring motif in his stories:

> I'm interested in people who, in all sincerity, work very hard and perhaps courageously in their lifetimes toward something, fully believing that they're contributing o something good…by the time they've reached the ends of their lives. The very things they thought they could be proud of have now become things they have to be ashamed of (Mason 1989, 339).

This statement reflects Ishiguro's deep understanding of the tragic irony inherent in human existence—where individuals, despite their best intentions, often find that the values they once upheld have become a source of regret. His characters' journeys are marked by a painful recognition of this irony, as they grapple with the difference between their ideals and the harsh truths they eventually confront.

Despite the exploration of various genres and settings, Kazuo Ishiguro acknowledges a recurring thematic consistency throughout his body of work, "I usually repeat myself quite a lot in my novels. Some novels are just kind of rewrites of the previous book because I

wanted to revisit that same terrain and explore it a little bit more or slightly differently" (Ishiguro 2021)[17]. This repetition is not a sign of creative limitation but rather a deliberate choice to delve deeper into certain existential questions and moral dilemmas. Furthermore, this strategy allows Ishiguro to deepen his thematic exploration, presenting familiar ideas through new lenses and across varied literary landscapes. By revisiting and reimagining similar narratives, Ishiguro provides readers with a more comprehensive understanding of his works. Therefore, through examining each novel, one can gain invaluable insights into the others, revealing the complexity and depth of his storytelling.

Accordingly, Ishiguro's characters often grapple with similar internal struggles, sharing atmospheres of desperation and their inevitable decline. Regardless of the setting—whether a grand English estate or a dystopian future—the characters remain fundamentally similar at their core: individuals wrestling with their senses of duty, loyalty, and the consequences of their choices. While external circumstances—such as societal expectations or historical events—play a significant role in shaping their fates, Ishiguro's characters are ultimately victims of their own choices. Their downfall stems not from the inevitable forces, but from their inability to confront the contradictions within themselves. In essence, Ishiguro's narratives are more concerns about the underlying human experiences through, and by placing similar characters in different scenarios, he can examine how they react, evolve, or fail when faced with familiar challenges. This approach creates a body of work of interconnected narratives that, while unique in their details, share common existential concerns.

An Artist of the Floating World

Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* is an exploration of memory, guilt, and the distorted values in Japan after the Second World War. Despite its realistic depiction, Ishiguro

[17] This citation is from an interview with Kazuo Ishiguro on the Waterstones YouTube channel, accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GJ7mrqo9nQ.

deliberately chose an imaginary city to avoid a documentary-like portrayal of post-war Japan, allowing the narrative to transcend specific cultural boundaries. As such approach ensures the novel resonates with both Japanese and global readers. Moreover, while originally written in English, the novel avoids colloquial terminology to grant the text a sense of pseudotranslation, implying a sense of in-betweenness, existing somewhere between two cultures and two languages (Tellini 2018, 2).

The protagonist, Masuji Ono, is a retired painter who glorified Japan's imperialist desires through his art. Ono firmly believed his nationalist paintings were celebrated as expressions of loyalty to Japan's militaristic values. Pre-war Japan was shaped by deep-rooted traditions of loyalty and duty, simultaneously characterized by its imperialistic ambitions influenced by *Shintoism*[18] (Fengyu 2019, 154). During this time, Ono's nationalist art was a source of pride, earning him recognition and honor within a society that admired loyalty to the nation. However, the outcome of the war did not align with the imperialists' expectations, leading to a profound transformation in Japan's collective consciousness under American influence. This shift leaves Ono grappling with a deep sense of regret and remorse over his past actions and the ideologies he once supported, particularly as the younger generation views nationalists like him complicit in their nation's wartime atrocities. Ono's sense of guilt is heightened by the fear that his past may jeopardize the marriage prospects of his younger daughter, Noriko. Therefore, he frequently revisits his memories from the war period, reflecting on his past actions and their impact on his present life. Thus, *An Artist of the Floating World* explores the profound displacement experienced by individuals like Ono, who find themselves floating in a world where the principles that once defined them have been irreversibly changed.

[18] Shintoism is a Japanese spiritual tradition that once played a crucial role in shaping the nation's cultural and political ideologies. With its strong emphasize on communal duty, Shintoistic beliefs were used to promote the divine authority of the emperor. Consequently, during the Second World War, these beliefs were used to justify Japan's ambitions, fostering nationalism and imperialism. For further readings on this subject, see Edgar Porter and Ran Ying Porter, *Japanese Reflections on World War II and the American Occupation* (Amsterdam University Press, Asian History, 2017).

The generational divide that emerges in post-war Japan is evident in Ono's conversation with Miyake, a young man who had once been a potential suitor for Noriko. Miyake embodies the dramatic change in societal norms, asserting that it is no longer acceptable to excuse or justify the actions of the previous generation. He bluntly supports his manager's decision to commit suicide, viewing it as a responsibility, an acknowledgment of guilt. As Miyake remarks, "Sometimes I think there are many who should be giving their lives in apology who are too cowardly to face up to their responsibilities... There are plenty of men already back in positions they held during the war. Some of them are no better than war criminals. They should be the ones apologizing" (Ishiguro 1986, 39).

The duality of pre-war and post-war values in Japan creates a complex psychological landscape for Ono, as he finds himself unable to belong to either the past or the present. Ono believes the pride he once took in his nationalist past is observed as a disgrace by the younger generation, seeing former imperialists like him as war criminals. Simultaneously, the present values, heavily influenced by Western culture, feel foreign and disconnected from his identity. This disapproval extends to his personal life, as seen in his reaction to Ichiro, his grandson. Ono wishes Ichiro would admire traditional Japanese figures like Lord Yoshitsune rather than American cowboys, reflecting his resistance to the cultural shift in his homeland (Ishiguro 1986, 25)**.** In crafting *An Artist of the Floating World,* Ishiguro intended for Ono to embody the displacement of a man who is "no longer a part of the present world in which he found himself" (Wong 2019, 42). This tragic sense of in-betweenness implies Ono's profound displacement, caught between the remnants of a past that no longer holds meaning and a present that feels foreign, leaving him adrift in a world that has moved on without him.

Ono's place in *An Artist of the Floating World* exemplifies the liminal space Ishiguro skillfully creates between two worlds—pre- and post-war Japan. This space is not a physical reality but an imaginative realm crafted by Ono's unconscious mind, ultimately placing the self at the center of his own universe. In this self-created world, Ono forms an idealized self-image, a concept that American psychologist Karen Horney describes as a coping mechanism to heal from deep-rooted traumas (Huang 2022, 1). Ishiguro explores this by showing how Ono retreats into his mental landscape, making it difficult for him to recognize the shifting

values and realities around him. Thus, Ono is trapped somewhere between the cultural and societal norms of pre-war and post-war Japan, unable to confront the consequences of his actions or adapt to the changing world. In essence, Ishiguro uses Ono to imply how individuals can be confined by the prevailing values and beliefs of their time, incapable of viewing their actions from an unbiased perspective.

Ono's artistic journey serves as an influential symbol of his displacement and internal conflict. Trained in the traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e*[19] style, which was prominent during the peaceful Edo period, a time of relative peace and economic growth in Japan. Ironically, during wartime, Ono diverged from this tradition to develop a more patriotic form of art influenced by Western painting techniques, a move that mirrors Japan's complex relationship with modernization (McCrum 2015). Indeed, this transition was not without harsh consequences, as his master, Mori-san, saw Ono's explorations as a treason, demanding the destruction of his paintings, which symbolized his very identity. This departure from tradition might seem contradictory to Ono's apparent resistance to change, yet it underscores a deeper desire to create a personal world that exists outside the constraints of both past and present, East and West. In this space, Ono attempts to become the central figure of his own universe, blurring the lines between truth and illusion. This self-deceptive reality, however, ironically leaves him more isolated, belonging neither to the past nor the present—a poignant reflection of the broader dislocation he experiences in a rapidly changing world.

Memory and Self-Deception

Ishiguro's protagonists often navigate their past not with clarity but with an instinctive sense that something remains unresolved. Thus, their journey through memory is driven by a vague unconscious awareness rather than a conscious recognition of their flaws.

[19] *Ukiyo-e* translates to 'pictures of the floating world,' referring to a genre of Japanese art that emerged during the Edo period (1603–1868). This art conveys the fleeting nature of life, making it similar to Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*, which delves into change and transition in post-war Japan.

For instance, Ono frequently justifies his unreliable memory, acknowledging that he may not clearly remember specific details: “These, of course, may not have been the precise words I used that afternoon” (Ishiguro 1986, 47). As mentioned earlier, Ishiguro’s style of self-deception is not built upon conscious lies and mistakes but on reshaping of events through selective memories, as he notes, “memory is this terrible treacherous terrain; the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception” (Tellini 2018, 7). This form of self-deception is more than just remembering favorable events while forgetting uncomfortable ones. It involves how these memories are interpreted and understood, a process often linked to confirmation bias. Notably, this concept parallels optimism bias, which was previously mentioned as a fundamental reason that could lead to a posthuman stage. Basically, confirmation bias is a psychological tendency to seek and interpret individuals’ memories in a way that supports their prior beliefs or values (Peters 2020, 8).

In Ono’s case, this bias allows him to construct a self-image as a heroic artist with significant influence over the imperialistic society of pre-war Japan. However, this self-made narrative is not sustainable, as the liminal space that Ishiguro’s characters inhabit is akin to what Horney describes as a bubble—temporary and destined to burst. This ‘bubble space’ is an unconscious phenomenon that provides temporary satisfaction but can never fully eliminate the gap between their true identity and their idealized images (Huang 2022, 3). When the gap between the idealized and authentic self becomes too vast, maintaining the illusion requires increasingly extreme measures, often leading to a form of alienation from reality. However, Ishiguro’s characters cannot permanently uphold their self-deception; the eventual collapse of their illusions is inevitable. This inevitability stems from the fact that the construction of self-deception simultaneously gives birth to an opposing force: self-awareness. Ishiguro implies that this internal conflict—between maintaining an illusion and confronting reality—creates a “struggle both to reveal and to veil meaning” (Fonioková 2008, 134). Characters like Ono, who have long been entrenched in their false narratives, are eventually forced to confront their true selves. This process unfolds gradually, culminating in moments of reckoning where the truth becomes undeniable, forcing them to confront the harsh reality they have long avoided.

Ono's journey toward self-awareness is marked by his gradual recognition of the flaws in the narrative he has constructed to justify his past. This selective narrative, initially designed to protect his sense of self, distorts his perceptions of those around him, leading him to project his insecurities onto others. He projects his insecurities onto others, misinterpreting their actions as judgments against his wartime activities. For instance, Ono suspects his daughters are secretly discussing his tarnished reputation. Similarly, he misinterprets the behavior of Dr. Saito's family, particularly Mitsuo, perceiving their ordinary actions as indirect accusations against his past: "although at this point Mitsuo was behaving with all due decorum, there was something in the way I would catch him looking at me, or about the way he would pass a bowl to me across the table, that made me sense his hostility and accusation" (Ishiguro 1986, 73). Ironically, as the story unfolds, it becomes evident that none of these events were interpreted as Ono perceived them. Instead, they were manifestations of a deeper self-deception that gradually leads him to an unavoidable self-awareness.

Ishiguro's portrayal of self-awareness in *An Artist of the Floating World* parallels the process of his self-deception, unfolding gradually rather than through a single moment of epiphany. Ishiguro skillfully dismantles Ono's protective shell of self-deception by revealing the truth through a sequence of revelations. One of the most significant turning points in Ono's journey is his recognition of betraying Kuroda, a former pupil whom he reported for unpatriotic behavior. This recognition is further compounded by his encounter with Enchi, Kuroda's pupil, whose direct accusation breaks into Ono's self-deception, "We all know now who the real traitors were. And many of them are still walking free" (Ishiguro 1986, 71), forcing him to confront his past in an unbiased light. Consequently, this confrontation leads to a pivotal moment of confession during a gathering with Dr. Saito's family, an event that holds significant implications for his daughter Noriko's future. In this moment, Ono openly acknowledges his past mistakes, stating:

> There are some who would say it is people like myself who are responsible for the terrible things that happened to this nation of ours. As far as I am concerned, I freely admit I made

> many mistakes. I accept that much of what I did was ultimately harmful to our nation, that mine was part of an influence that resulted in untold suffering for our own people. I admit this. You see, Dr. Saito, I admit this quite readily (Ishiguro 1986, 75).

This confession may offer a significant step toward the end of Ono's self-deception and accepting the full reality of his past. However, Ishiguro suggests that self-deception, akin to human nature, is layered and complex, much like a Russian nesting doll, where each revelation uncovers yet another concealed layer beneath.

This complexity becomes highlighted in Ono's conversation with his older daughter, Setsuko. When she reassures him, "Forgive me. But it is nevertheless important to stress that no one has ever considered Father's past something to view with recrimination" (Ishiguro 1986, 111), one might expect that such words would relieve Ono of his guilt and shame. Paradoxically, Setsuko's statement, instead of offering comfort, intensifies Ono's internal conflict. Setsuko's subsequent statement, "Father was simply a painter. He must stop believing he has done some great wrong" (Ishiguro 1986, 111), further shatters Ono's self-deception, compelling him to face the painful truth that his life's work may not have been as impactful as he once imagined.

This realization is particularly devastating for Ono because his art was never merely about artistic expression or financial success; it was an inseparable part of his identity, a means of proving his father wrong. As Ono's father had destroyed his early paintings, claiming that there would be no future or greatness in being an artist, "they inhabit a world which gives them every temptation to become weak-willed and depraved" (Ishiguro 1986, 33). Consequently, his artistic career became more than just a profession; it was a symbolic rebellion against his father and a metaphorical arm to fight the war that had taken both his wife and son. However, by the end of the story, as Ono confronts the futility of his efforts, he realizes that his life's meaning has disintegrated.

In this state of disillusionment, self-deception can no longer provide solace, especially when Ono's deepest fears are confirmed by his daughter, who likely knows and loves him more than anyone else. This moment of awareness, as Cynthia F. Wong aptly describes, reflects the profound discomfort of recognizing oneself as a stranger in the mirror, seeing not one's double, but someone one would have liked to have been (Wong 2019, 38). Through Ono's gradual journey to self-awareness and the collapse of his self-deception, Ishiguro delves into the complex layers of human consciousness, exploring the painful process of truly understanding oneself.

The Remains of the Day

While *An Artist of the Floating World* can be seen as Ishiguro's homage to his native Japan, *The Remains of the Day* stands as a tribute to the United Kingdom, his adopted home that significantly influenced his identity and worldview. In a 1986 interview, Ishiguro revealed his intentions for *The Remains of the Day*, "I'm writing another novel. This one is set in England. It's about a butler who wants to get close to a great man, close to the center of history" (Mason 1986, 346). Within this context, Stevens, the protagonist, can be observed as a Western counterpart to Ono within different cultural frameworks. Both characters are profoundly influenced by the historical upheavals of the Second World War, and through their selective memories and biased recollections develop their own idealized images. In a similar manner, Ono and Stevens cultivate their own worlds between dual realms. Ono exists between the pre-war and post-war worlds of Japan, struggling to be accepted by a society that no longer respects the values he once promoted. Stevens, on the other hand, lives in the space between the lower class, from which he originates and the upper class where he serves, aspiring to gain their respect while being confined to his servile role. His role as a butler places him close to the influential figures of his time, yet he endlessly remains an outsider, much like Ono, who at the end finds himself marginalized and unrecognized in both the pre-war and post-war Japanese societies.

> As the narratives progress, both characters embark on journeys toward self-awareness, confronting the realities of their pasts as they approach the dawn of their lives. However, they ultimately conclude their narratives with a realization that their awareness comes too late to change the course of their existence. Parallel to Ono, Stevens ultimately finds the burden of his shame unbearable, revealing his profound vulnerabilities as he reflects on the choices that have defined his existence (Wong 2019, 65).

As mentioned earlier, Ishiguro's approach to storytelling can be viewed as a continuous exploration of recurring themes and character archetypes, despite the diversity of his settings and narratives. He often revisits similar ideas, reshaping and refining them to probe deeper into the human condition. Ishiguro himself notes that each story is essentially reimaginations of his former narratives, with every character often resonating the same archetypal consistency placed in different situations, where their core personalities persist but are reshaped by new circumstances. As in *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' disposition builds upon the foundation of Ono's persona from *An Artist of the Floating World*, demonstrating a development in the theme of self-deception. Stevens' self-deception delves into a realm akin to Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of confronting 'bad faith'. Sartre's concept of 'bad faith' delves into the human tendency to engage in self-deception by denying one's freedom and responsibility, often by extreme commitment to societal roles and external expectations (Detmer 2011, 75). Stevens embodies this notion throughout his life by prioritizing his role as a butler above his personal desires and moral judgments. His unwavering dedication to his profession leads him to suppress his own feelings, thoughts, and ultimately, his identity. This self-imposed denial is a classic example of 'bad faith', where Stevens' adherence to a socially constructed role blinds him to the hollowness of his existence. The complexity of Stevens' self-deception is echoed in Ono's struggles. Both characters are deeply influenced by their cultural, familial, and societal contexts, which ultimately shape their sense of purpose and identity. Ishiguro's exploration of these themes in both novels underscores how individuals can be trapped in roles and identities that, over time, lead to lives marked by regret and unfulfilled potential. By portraying characters like Stevens and Ono, who cling to idealized versions of themselves and their past, Ishiguro

reveals the psychological toll of avoiding uncomfortable truths, ultimately emphasizing the tragic consequences of self-imposed limitations.

Class System and the Cultural Emphasis on Duty

Rooted in the historical context of aristocracy and servitude, British culture[20] places immense value on duty, honor, loyalty, and stoicism. These virtues, deeply embedded in the national consciousness, have historically influenced how individuals define their roles and identities throughout society, from the monarchy to the working class. As Queen Elizabeth II once vowed, "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong" (Waugh 2022, 32). This statement implies a cycle of mutual dependence where citizens serve the monarchy, enabling the kingdom to act in ways that benefit society. Therefore, the British hierarchical structure, with its clear definition of roles and expectations, instills an excessive sense of pride and identity in individuals, particularly those active in service professions.

These British cultural values imply that even individuals who are constrained by their social class can achieve a form of success through supporting those who have the capability to attain greatness, thereby gaining a portion of their resulting accomplishments. Consequently, for many individuals active in domestic service, specifically butlers who possess the highest-ranking, being a servant is not merely a profession but a vocation that defines the purpose of their existence. According to Stevens, being a butler is considered as privilege that not many people have the opportunity to pursue, as he believes:

> It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable

[20] For further reading on British cultural values and the hierarchical structure, specifically in 19th and 20th century, see Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

> to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race are capable of (Ishiguro 1989, 39).

Stevens believes that his British heritage grants him a unique capacity for being a butler, perceiving his service within a distinguished household as an exclusive privilege afforded to only a few individuals in Britain. He rationalizes, "the more one considers it, the more obvious it seems: association with a truly distinguished household is a prerequisite of 'greatness'" (Ishiguro 1989, 105). For Stevens, the ability to serve in such esteemed households is reserved for those inherently capable of creating a better world, a status he trusts can only be attained through full devotion of the self. He argues that a "great butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman – and through the latter, to serving humanity" (Ishiguro 1989, 105).

This conviction creates a profound sense of justification for Stevens, reinforcing his commitment to his role without allowing any space for personal ambitions or recognition. Hence, Stevens cultivates his own myth of greatness by dedicating his life to serving individuals whom he perceives capable of achieving greatness. In his view, by serving a noble and decent lord, he is indirectly serving humanity, as he reflects, "It's a great privilege, after all, to have been given a part to play, however small, on the world's stage" (Ishiguro 1989, 168). This deep-rooted belief leads him to prioritize his duties above all else, creating an almost sacred bond between his sense of self-worth and his unwavering loyalty to his lord. However, despite his idealized view of his role, a critical question remains: can an individual in Stevens' position, despite his exemplary service and loyalty, truly make a significant impact on the world?

This question becomes noteworthy when viewed through the lens of the early to mid-20th century, a period when British aristocracy held domestic service in high regard, making it a prestigious profession. Such sentiment is echoed in a conversation between Stevens and Mr. Cardinal, an aristocrat, who wonders if humanity would have been better off as plants, immobile and rooted, to avoid conflicts like wars and boundaries. Mr. Cardinal then

humorously considers the indispensable role of servants, even in such a hypothetical scenario, by remarking, "but we could still have chaps like you taking messages back and forth, bringing tea, that sort of thing. Otherwise, how would we ever get anything done? Can you imagine it, Stevens?" (Ishiguro 1989, 99)**.**

On the surface, this statement may appear as an acknowledgment that without individuals like Stevens, the accomplishments of the aristocracy would be unattainable. However, it simultaneously diminishes their roles by reducing them to mere facilitators of trivial tasks, even in an absurd hypothetical scenario. By suggesting that Stevens and others like him would be relegated to menial tasks such as taking messages and bringing tea, Mr. Cardinal subtly underscores the hierarchical class distinctions, implying that servants are inherently suited merely for subservient roles. Ishiguro himself commented on this dynamic in a lecture at the Sorbonne, where he articulated a profound insight about the human condition, comparing us all to butlers like Stevens:

> What I meant when I said 'I think we are all butlers' was simply this: that most of us are not in positions of great power, we don't run huge corporations. We are not presidents of countries. We do our jobs. We do small jobs, big jobs; we do our jobs. And we do our little jobs as best we can and we take our pride and dignity from doing them well. And we offer this up, usually to somebody up there... that is our little contribution... And so that is what most of us do most of our lives. We try to do our little thing very well, we try to get a sense of it being important and so on. And we offer it to somebody upstairs. But we are often at the mercy of whoever it is upstairs as to whether our contribution is going to be used for something good or for something not so good (Gehlawat 2013, 511).

Stevens' self-deception in *The Remains of the Day* parallels that of Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World*, where both characters construct idealized self-images. However, Stevens' delusion extends beyond idealizing the self; it encompasses an idealization of Lord Darlington, the man he has served with absolute loyalty. Stevens views Lord Darlington as the epitome of humanity, devoted to ending "injustice and suffering" and possessing "a great moral stature" (Ishiguro 1989, 66). Stevens' profound commitment and unwavering trust in

Lord Darlington blind him to the reality that, despite his esteemed position, Lord Darlington may not always act align with the dignity and greatness Stevens attributes to him. Even when confronted with the evidence that Lord Darlington attempted to arrange a meeting between the Prime Minister and Hitler, Stevens blindly clings to his belief, asserting, "I cannot see that his lordship is doing anything other than that which is highest and noblest ... I have to say that I have every trust in his lordship's good judgement" (Ishiguro 1989, 200). For Stevens, admitting any fallibility on Lord Darlington's part would shatter the carefully constructed self-deception that has defined his life, forcing him to confront the possibility that his "contribution to the creation of a better world" (Ishiguro 1989, 104), may have ultimately led to greater harm.

This confrontation reveals the story's deeper essence: a profoundly human narrative about loss and the fear of acknowledging that loss (Wong 2019, 65). Stevens' loyalty and idealized vision of duty are rooted in a deeper anxiety about the meaning of his life and the potential futility of his efforts. The story thus transcends its historical setting, becoming a powerful exploration of internal struggles—the pain of recognizing wasted devotion, and the fear of facing the true consequences of one's choices. Stevens' dogmatic conviction that Darlington Hall encapsulates the most significant and noble aspects of England is evident in his assertion, "It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls" (Ishiguro 1989, 6). This idealized perception feeds his self-deception, leading him to devote the prime years of his life to serving Darlington Hall, without ever questioning whether the decisions made there are truly aligned with his own values. Stevens' blind allegiance results in his gradual detachment from the evolving world outside Darlington Hall, resembling a prisoner experiencing institutionalization after prolonged captivity. This metaphorical imprisonment is aptly mentioned by Mr. Farraday, Stevens' new American employer, who remarks, "You realize, Stevens, I don't expect you to be locked up here in this house all the time I'm away" (Ishiguro 1989, 5). Stevens' detachment from reality leaves him clinging to a world that no longer exists.

Throughout his life, Stevens firmly believed that becoming a great butler would secure him a lasting legacy, at least within the service community. He models himself after

the distinguished butlers who came before him, convinced that his own sacrifices and professionalism will be remembered with similar respect. However, he failed to anticipate how the passage of time inevitably alters different aspects of life. As societal values shifted and the importance of domestic service diminished, Stevens was confronted with a harsh reality upon realizing that his sacrifices and devotion might be forgotten as time moves forward. James M. Lang observes that Ishiguro's narrators often act "according to the ideals of the social climate in which they lived, but when that social climate shifted, they suddenly find that their actions have been reevaluated in light of a new set of ideals and public sentiment" (Gehlawat 2013, 494). This perspective becomes more apparent when viewed from outside of British culture, as Stevens' new American employer, Mr. Farraday, treats him not as a respected professional but as a relic of a bygone era, valuable only for his authenticity as a "genuine old-fashioned English butler". Mr. Farraday even doubts whether Stevens truly embodies the traditional British butler, inquiring "Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you?" (Ishiguro 1989, 112).

In a different light, Monika Gehlawat argues that the idea of the 'great butler' is not real and has never existed; it is a mythic abstraction rather than a reality (Gehlawat 2013, 499). This notion is rooted in self-deception, perpetuated by exaggerated stories within the butler community to grant extra credit to their profession. This self-deception provides a sense of purpose and dignity, driving individuals like Stevens to pursue an ideal that exists only in their imaginations. Despite the inevitable decline of the traditional butler role, Stevens clings to this illusion, convinced that the existence of a 'great butler' not only matters but is crucial for the British society—a belief instilled in him by his father, who was also a victim of this same delusion.

To fully grasp the roots of Stevens' self-deception, it is essential to delve into his childhood and the profound influence of his father, as well as the legacy of service he inherited. This exploration is crucial, much like the examination of Ono's relationship with his father to comprehend the deeper layers of self-deception in both characters. These familial

legacies can be viewed from different angles, including intergenerational patterns, where parents unconsciously transmit their values, expectations, and even unfulfilled dreams to their children. Considering the setting of *The Remains of the Day*, in 20th century Britain, these transmissions were deeply influenced by the aftermath of the two World Wars, where notions of duty, patriotism, and sacrifice were vigorously reinforced by national narratives. Although Ishiguro does not provide much information about Stevens' childhood, his memories reveal the heavy influence of his father, which significantly shapes Stevens' identity and worldview. This relationship underscores the potential for unconscious transmission of values and beliefs from one generation to the next. It appears that Stevens has truly managed to subvert his father's existence by imprinting the meaning of his own life upon that existence (Wong 2019, 61).

Inheritance, Sense of Duty and Self-Deception

Stevens' older brother tragically died during the Southern African War in a controversial military maneuver that was not only strategically flawed but also morally questionable. The burden of this event heavily affected the family, particularly on William Stevens, Stevens' father. Years later, the General responsible for this controversial maneuver visited the household where William was working as a butler. Aware of this painful connection, the master of the house offered William to be absent during the General's stay. However, William chose to suppress his emotions and professionally serve the man responsible for his son's death. For many critics and readers, forcing oneself to endure such profound emotional suppression was interpreted as "at least highly unnatural, if not completely inhumane" (Fonioková 2006, 92). Yet, for Stevens, it was considered as personification of dignity and the ultimate level of professional conduct, which a butler could ever achieve. This extreme level of sacrifice and emotional restraint became the standard behavior that Stevens himself would later apply to in his own pursuit of becoming a great butler.

This extreme commitment to duty and emotional restraint transforms William in Stevens' eyes, changing his image from a father and guardian to an idol and a touchstone for greatness. Stevens encapsulates this sentiment by remarking, "my father was indeed the embodiment of dignity" (Ishiguro 1989, 21). Ironically, it was his father who set the stage for Stevens to prove himself as his equal. During a pivotal conference at Darlington Hall, which held the potential to significantly impact international relations, William fell seriously ill. Despite his father's critical condition, Stevens chose to remain at his post, fully dedicated to ensure the event's success. Even upon learning of his father's death, Stevens suppressed his grief and continued his duties without hesitation.

Stevens rationalizes his decision to remain at his post during his father's final moments by convincing himself that he is fulfilling his father's wish. He tells Miss Kenton, "I know my father would have wished me to carry on just now…to do otherwise, I feel, would be to let him down" (Ishiguro 1989, 97). This claim may hold some truth, especially when considering William's stoic approach to duty, as seen in his reaction to the General responsible for his son's death. However, Stevens' strong ties to Darlington Hall blind him to the broader changes happening around him. Before William's health declined, the relationship between Stevens and his father was strictly professional, or as Stevens remember it "an atmosphere of mutual embarrassment" (Ishiguro 1989, 57)**.** This relationship is evident during a morning visit, when William dismisses his son's presence, implying that work always is always above personal matters, "come to the point then and be done with it. Some of us have work to be getting on with" (Ishiguro 1989, 58)**.**

In the final hours of his life, William becomes aware of his imminent death, ultimately experiencing a profound moment of self-awareness, He confesses to Stevens, "I'm proud of you. A good son. I hope I've been a good father to you. I suppose I haven't" (Ishiguro 1989, 88)**.** This admission suggests that William feels he has failed in his role as a father and has wasted the opportunity to forge a more meaningful relationship with his son. However, Stevens entirely misses this revelation. He recalls the evening of his father's death not as a moment of personal loss, but as one where he gained a "large sense of triumph", placing himself among the greatest butlers of his generation. This perspective underscores his

profound self-deception and the tragic consequences of his unwavering loyalty to duty over personal connections.

Both Stevens and his father share remarkably similar trajectories in their life journeys, almost mirroring each other. In a posthuman context, Stevens might be considered a clone of his father, a concept that aligns with the broader themes in Ishiguro's works, where protagonists often echo one another across different settings and narratives. However, a notable distinction between Stevens and his father is that William managed to balance his professional life to some extent by marrying and raising a family. Arguably, if tragic events such as the early deaths of his wife and elder son had not occurred, he may not have devoted his life entirely to the lofty ideals of a great butler and upholding dignity at all costs. In contrast, Stevens never married and seemingly never considered the idea of personal relationships. Oblivious to Miss Kenton's affection for him, Stevens' relentless pursuit of professional excellence led him to neglect the personal relationships and emotional connections that could have brought him the fulfillment and happiness he would later long for in life.

The Journey towards Self-Awareness

Leaving Darlington Hall for the first time in many years to visit Miss Kenton symbolizes Stevens' journey of partial confession, self-discovery, and disavowal (Wong 2019, 59). During this quest, he finds himself interacting with people outside his professional circle, including fellow servants and respectable lords. These interactions challenge his sense of identity, as he meets individuals who neither command nor submit to him, placing them as his equals. One notable interaction occurs with the Taylor family, who mistakenly believe Stevens to be a distinguished figure with close ties to influential politicians. Instead of correcting their assumptions, Stevens' reinforces this misunderstanding by highlighting his connection to prominent figures like Mr. Churchill, "It has been my good fortune, after all,

to have consorted not just with Mr. Churchill, but with many other great leaders and men of influence" (Ishiguro 1989, 167).

Stevens' reluctance to reveal his true occupation may partly stem from a natural desire for validation. However, a more profound reason lies in his growing awareness that the high regard he holds for the butler's role may not be shared by others. He understands that admitting his true identity to the Taylor family would certainly lead to their disappointment, subconsciously acknowledging that their perspective may indeed be correct. Ultimately, he begins to recognize the painful truth that his services, and domestic service in general, may lack the capacity to effect any significant changes for humanity—a fact that Stevens cannot bear. Additionally, not being able to confess his true identity confirms that all the individuals in the room, including himself, are ordinary people who have merely performed ordinary tasks throughout their entire lives. For Stevens, accepting to be ordinary would mean acknowledging that all the sacrifices he made in the name of humanity and greatness were meaningless. As he believes that no common man is capable of true greatness, by stating, "there is, after all, a real limit to how much ordinary people can learn and know, and to demand that each and every one of them contribute 'strong opinions' to the great debates of the nation cannot, surely, be wise" (Ishiguro 1989, 173).

Stevens' belief that individuals like the villagers he encounters can only exist in the shadow of great men illustrates his deep-rooted self-deception. He perceives these people fundamentally different from himself, failing to recognize the very similarities that bind them together in their ordinariness (Wong 2019, 63). Furthermore, he suspects that despite being a great butler—perhaps one of the greatest of his time—the outcomes at Darlington Hall would likely have been the same regardless of his presence. The tragedy of this awareness sheds light on Stevens' displacement in the world. What truly distinguishes him from common folk like the Taylors is not the intangible ideals of greatness and dignity that he faithfully pursued, but the fact that he deprived himself of enjoying the simple affairs of ordinary people, who merely serve the interests of themselves and their loved ones. He gradually confronts the truth that the life he devoted to serving greatness has, left him disconnected from the essence of life itself. His unyielding dedication to ideals that may have

been nothing more than illusions has cost him the opportunities to engage with the very experiences that would grant meaning to his life—love, companionship, and the simple joys that come from being an ordinary person.

Stevens' final stop on his journey marks the shatter of his constructed imaginary space, leading to a moment of profound epiphany—an inevitable experience that many of Ishiguro's protagonists eventually must confront. Stevens begins his journey with the sole intention to persuade Miss Kenton to return and improve the operations at Darlington Hall. However, beneath this professional drive lies a deeper unacknowledged longing for Miss Kenton. When Stevens finally meets Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Benn, he is confronted with the painful truth that she is content in her marriage and genuinely loves her husband, "I feel I should answer you, Mr. Stevens. As you say, we may not meet again for many years. Yes, I do love my husband" (Ishiguro 1989, 211), confront Stevens with the truth that his relationship with her was far more than "overwhelmingly professional" (Ishiguro 1989, 129). This moment of clarity forces him to acknowledge the emotional void in his life, which he had long ignored, perhaps due to his belief that marrying Miss Kenton ultimately would lead him to abandon his path to greatness as a butler.

Moreover, Stevens' journey unravels another layer of his self-deception, the assumption that Miss Kenton's letter conveyed deep dissatisfaction with her marriage. Stevens cites her words, "the rest of my life stretches out like an emptiness before me" (Ishiguro 1989, 209), as proof of her regrets. Yet when Miss Kenton denies this claim, Stevens is forced to face the possibility that he misinterpreted her intentions. Despite Stevens certainty, "Oh, I assure you did, Mrs. Benn. I recall it very clearly" (Ishiguro 1989, 209), he reveals a possible misinterpretation by admitting, "Some words to that effect" (Ishiguro 1989, 209). This revelation underscores the futility of Stevens' attempts to justify the sacrifices he made by convincing himself that Miss Kenton harbored similar regrets. As Monika Gehlawat argues, Stevens' "nostalgia as evidence of her own" distorts the reality of Miss Kenton's situation, reflecting his deep need to believe that she, too, desired for the life they could have had together (Gehlawat 2013, 503). However, in typical Ishiguro style, this awareness comes too late to change anything. Miss Kenton's remark, "after all, there's no turning back the

clock now" (Ishiguro 1989, 129), starkly indicates the irreversibility of Stevens' choices, bringing to light the tragic consequences of his persistent self-deception.

Miss Kenton's words echo a recurring theme in almost every Ishiguro's work: the tragic recognition of self-deception that has persisted for too long. Metaphorically, these characters become like the hands of a clock that have lost the ability to move forward or backward—as the title, *The Remains of the Day,* itself suggests the best days of their lives have already slipped away, leaving little left to start again. This view contrasts with the more optimistic perspective that, as long as one is alive, change is possible. As George Eliot famously quoted, "It is never too late to be what you might have been"[21] (Mead 2011). Yet, Ishiguro's narratives suggest that while the possibility of change may theoretically exist, for characters like Stevens, deeply ingrained in their past, the realization often comes too late to make any meaningful alterations to their lives. Instead, they must find solace in a world that remains imperfect and unfulfilled, reordering their perceptions to make peace with what remains. In an interview with *Mississippi Review*, Ishiguro reflects on this subject:

> I think the artist or writer has to some extent come to terms with the fact that it is too late. The wound has come and it hasn't healed, but it's not going to get any worse; yet the wound is there. It's a kind of consolation that the world isn't quite the way you wanted it, but you can somehow reorder it or try and come to terms with it (Gehlawat 2013, 505).

Ishiguro's signature can be decoded in protagonists who are often shaped by profound personal histories, such as the impact of wars and complex familial relationships. Despite being deeply affected by their circumstances; Ishiguro masterfully introduces moments of potential clarity or redemption for these characters. Yet, these opportunities are either overlooked or deliberately ignored, leading the protagonists to remain trapped in their self-imposed psychological prisons. This recurring pattern underscores the tragic irony of their

[21] The page number is not included in this citation because the information was retrieved from the website of *The New Yorker*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/middlemarch-and-me.

existence: while they possess the ability to alter their fates, they are ultimately constrained by their inability to confront their self-deception.

Within this context, Stevens is presented with the chance to break free from the limitations imposed by his circumstances, but instead of seizing these opportunities, he chooses to remain confined by his own constraints, effectively becoming a victim of his own making. As he fails to see the parallel between his father's decline and his own potential fate. William dedicated his entire life to serving others, proudly noting, "I have waited at table every day for the last fifty-four years" (Ishiguro 1989, 58), yet in his final moments, he found himself utterly alone, dying in a prison-like room, without the comfort of his son by his side. This tragic isolation foreshadows Stevens' own future—a life marked by loneliness and regrets. Moreover, when a young maid, Lisa, flees with a footman, Stevens dismisses her actions as foolish, failing to see her pursuit of happiness as a right choice. Similarly, he misinterprets Miss Kenton's suitor leaving service for a business career as a lack of the necessary qualities for becoming a great butler, rather than recognizing it as a pursuit of a more fulfilling life. Even years later, Stevens reflects with regret on moments when others, like Mr. Cardinal, challenged his unwavering loyalty to Lord Darlington by asking "tell me, Stevens, aren't you struck by even the remote possibility that I am correct?" (Ishiguro 1989, 201), yet, Stevens remains trapped, unable to break free from his self-deception.

This reflection leads to poignant questions. Why did it take Stevens so long to experience a moment of existential realization? Why did none of these events pierce his self-deception while there was still time to change? Ishiguro suggests that the answer to these dilemmas can be encapsulated in a single word: dignity. Stevens' concept of dignity, deeply intertwined with servitude and loyalty, becomes both his guiding principle and his tragic flaw. It traps him in a life of missed opportunities and unfulfilled potential. The tragic irony of Stevens' life is that the very quality he believes to be his greatest asset—dignity—is also the one that ultimately prevents him from living a life of genuine meaning and connection, leaving him to confront the remains of his days with a deep sense of regret and loss.

The Concept of Dignity

In many of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, dignity transcends a mere thematic concern—it serves as a critical lens for examining human behavior. Ishiguro places profound emphasis on dignity, portraying it as a fundamental attribute that distinguishes humans from other beings. To fully understand his characters' decisions, self-deceptions, sacrifices, and, ultimately, their regrets, it is essential to grasp Ishiguro's perspective on dignity. Yet, what exactly is dignity in the context of Ishiguro's work? Can it be universally defined across cultures and contexts, or does Ishiguro present a more unique interpretation?

The notion of dignity has undergone significant evolution over time. Historically, it was directly associated with the high public status of individuals, a concept upheld by figures like Cicero and Emperor Augustus. In contrast, Abrahamic traditions introduced the idea of inherent dignity, suggesting that all humans, regardless of status or achievement, possess dignity simply by virtue of being created in God's image (Mohammad 2010, 7). However, the modern understanding of dignity owes much to Immanuel Kant, who offered a non-theological and universal perspective. Kant argued that every rational being possesses intrinsic worth and should be treated as an end in themselves, not merely as a means to an end. This contemporary understanding of dignity is implied in key documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the South African Constitution[22], highlighting its role as the foundation for equal and inalienable rights (Kumar 2021, 2).

Kantian dignity is the ideal concept of dignity for Ishiguro in *The Remains of the Day*. According to Kant, human beings must have the freedom to make their own rational decisions, humans are not merely instruments to be exploited or manipulated by others. This perspective stands in stark contrast to a life defined by blind devotion, where personal judgment is suppressed and individual needs are ignored. This Kantian concept of dignity is best represented by Harry Smith, an ordinary local farmer in a small village who, unlike

[22] The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states, "Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected" (Duffy 2024, 179).

Stevens, neither serves any person nor has anyone in his service. Despite being often mocked by his community, Smith passionately believes that dignity is a universal right, not a privilege reserved for those in power, asserting, "Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity's something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get" (Ishiguro 1989, 165). Smith further challenges Stevens' self-deception by stating that there is no dignity in becoming a mere tool at the service of another individual, without having the freedom to act and think independently:

> And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to be had in being a slave. That's what we fought for and that's what we won… no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free and you're born so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about (Ishiguro 1989, 165).

Such concept of dignity may initially seem simple to acquire, yet as explored in the first chapter, ethical principles often contradict with the realities of human nature. Emmanuel Levinas captures this complexity with his idea of 'involuntary egocentrism,' by recognizing that egocentrism is a fundamental aspect of human existence through creating a cycle where self is placed in the middle, often perceiving others in relation to one's needs and desires. Yet, Levinas introduces another dimension of human nature that leads to the true ethical behavior. When one encounters the 'face of the other', it disrupts this self-centeredness and imposes a moral demand that challenges individuals to transcend their innate egocentrism and acknowledge other's existence as equals (Visker 2014, 2). This deeper understanding of dignity is mirrored in the character of Miss Kenton. Despite significant personal sacrifices she makes in Darlington Hall, she eventually realizes that true dignity requires balancing her responsibilities to others with her own intrinsic worth.

Miss Kenton's decision to leave Darlington Hall is a key moment of courage and self-realization. She chooses to abandon a role she excels and to part ways with Stevens—a man she harbors deep feelings for but who remains emotionally distant—in favor of another man who loves her unconditionally. Initially, like Stevens, Miss Kenton is devoted to her duties at Darlington Hall, believing that her service to the aristocracy serves a higher purpose.

However, she gradually realizes that true dignity cannot be solely defined by serving others, particularly when it requires sacrificing her own needs and desires. Her decision to leave Darlington Hall and create a family marks a significant turning point. She chooses to channel her sense of dignity into building a home and raising children, thus making her own unique contribution to society. This choice reflects a profound understanding that true dignity is not just about caring for others but also about acknowledging and nurturing one's intrinsic worth.

Stevens' understanding of dignity reflects a conception that contrasts sharply with Miss Kenton's balanced view of duty and self-worth. Stevens embodies a sense of dignity that aligns more closely with the life and philosophy of Simone Weil. Born into different social classes, Weil, from a prosperous family, sought dignity within the working class, while Stevens, a butler from a lower social class, pursued dignity through his service to the aristocracy. Weil believed that dignity lies in solidarity with those who are powerless to make meaningful changes in their lives, while Stevens finds dignity in complete dedication to those with the power to make significant changes. Accordingly, they both devote their entire lives to these classes: Weil worked in factories and fields to experience the hardships of the working class (Bourgault 2014, 1), and Stevens mirrors such devotion through his lifelong commitment to Darlington Hall. For both Weil and Stevens, dignity is not simply an external recognition but an internal quality cultivated through self-sacrifice for a cause they perceive as greater than themselves. For Stevens, this cause is the pursuit of excellence in his role as a butler, which he equates with serving humanity. However, for Weil, it is her devotion to God, expressed through her love and service to humanity.

Understanding Weil's philosophy sheds light on Stevens' motivations and the consequences of his choices. At the heart of Weil's philosophy is the concept of *malheur*, defining as a crushing form of suffering that strips individuals of their sense of individuality (Gehring 2020, 2). Weil believed that by accepting the unavoidable hardships and sufferings of life, one can find a deeper, more authentic sense of self and existence. This belief is evident in both Weil's and Stevens' lives, albeit manifests differently in each case. Stevens rigid adherence to duty prevents him from forming meaningful personal connections and leads to a life marked by missed opportunities and emotional isolation. His commitment to the notion

of dignity mirrors the extreme self-sacrifice of Weil. In her pursuit of solidarity with the oppressed, Simone Weil restricted her food intake to match the rations of those under Nazi occupation and joined the anarchist movement during the Spanish Civil War, actions that ultimately led to her early death at the age of 34. Striving for such dignity, arguably noble in intention, may result in what Weil called the spiritual process of 'self-annihilation' (Dean Hammer 2010, 80). This concept merely advocates for an intense form of self-sacrifice that demands the abandonment of personal desires and ego to fully align with a higher purpose. This mindset may not solely imply enduring extreme hardships that endanger one's well-being, as it did for Weil; it can also lead to a kind of existential despair akin to what Stevens experiences, reaching a point where the chance to reclaim what was lost—connections, emotions, a fuller life—has passed.

As mentioned earlier, while for Ishiguro dignity serves as a fundamental mean to measure humanity, he also critically examines how the pursuit of it, when taken to its extremes, can lead to self-annihilation. He suggests that while a lack of dignity can have severe consequences for those around us, too much of it can be equally devastating to the self. As we advance into an era marked by rapid technological progress and the increasingly blurred boundaries between humans and machines, Ishiguro's exploration of dignity— so central to our understanding of what it means to be human, might transform in the nuances of a future that has yet to unfold.

Chapter Three - *Never Let Me Go*

A Science Fiction without Technology?

This chapter delves into Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* from a posthuman perspective, shifting from the previous character-focused analysis to explore the broader societal implications of cloning[23]. It examines how cloning impacts the dystopian world Ishiguro creates, drawing parallels with current biotechnological advances and the ethical dilemmas they raise. The chapter explores the possibility of our society evolving into a posthuman reality, where dehumanization becomes normalized, and clones are valued primarily for their biological functions. By maintaining a neutral stance, the analysis evaluates both the exploited clones and those who benefit from their organ donations, while investigating the reasons for the clones' passive acceptance of their fate. To deepen this examination, the chapter frequently references historical and contemporary events, such as the eugenics movement, inviting reflection on how societies justify exploitation and how ethical boundaries might shift in a future shaped by unregulated biotechnological progress.

Never Let Me Go, published in 2005, is Ishiguro's sixth novel, and similar to his other works he uses first person narrator in diary-like format from the eyes of Kathy H., the protagonist of the story. The narrative is set in a late 20th-century parallel England, a world similar to our own, but with one difference: human cloning has become an inseparable and accepted part of life. The novel's focus on the posthuman concept of cloning is enough to

[23] For further reading on cloning, ethical boundaries, and posthuman themes in *Never Let Me Go*, see Santi Ranjan Sing, *We're Modelled from Trash: Confronting Transhumanism and Critical Posthumanism in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* (*An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2021); Bruce Robbins, *Cruelty is Bad: Banality and Proximity in Never Let Me Go* (*Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 2007); and Netty Mattar, *Language and Betrayal: Posthuman Ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* (*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 2021).

categorize it within the science fiction genre. However, *Never Let Me Go* subverts many traditional elements of science fiction, particularly the technologically advanced futures depicted in works such as William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). In contrast, Ishiguro's world is strikingly low in technological developments, even by today's standards. Characters use cassette tapes, receive traditional education, and live without the modern communication tools, such as computers, mobile phones, and the internet. This stark contrast has left many critics puzzled to classify the novel as a work of science fiction. Mark Jerng aptly describes it as "a science fiction without the technology" (Shaddox 2013, 449), highlighting how Ishiguro uses the genre's framework to explore deeper philosophical and ethical questions. Joseph O'Neill acknowledges its place in the realm of science fiction, but sees it as a new approach to this genre, describing it as "the most persuasive and saddest science fiction". Titus Levy regards the novel as a *Bildungsroman* that moves beyond entertainment and prove itself as a remedy for contemporary human rights issues (Zhang 2021, 32).

In popular culture, clones often symbolize humanity's scientific ambitions, illustrating the ethical and existential dangers of posthuman technologies. These portrayals frequently center on fears of losing control over our creations, and the potential for these creations to turn against their own makers, as seen in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones* (2002). In these narratives, clones challenge the natural order and threaten the established pyramid of power where humans dominate other beings. However, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* takes a radically different approach; instead of depicting clones as mere biological copies destined for rebellion and destruction, he portrays them as innocent victims sacrificed for the benefit of humanity. Critics of cloning technology, like Martha C. Nussbaum, often express concerns about its implications, raising questions such as, "Would they really be creatures without souls, not fully human?... Who would choose cloning?... And what would become of our world?" (Marfè 2016, 190). Yet, Ishiguro moves beyond these abstract questions, and rather than merely focusing on the perspectives of those who are supposed to create and control clones, he offers answers through the

experiences and emotions of the clones themselves, providing a deeper, more humanized exploration of the ethical dilemmas posed by cloning.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro employs a unique narrative strategy that blurs the line between clones and humans. When readers first engage with the story, they are unaware that the characters are clones, not merely because Ishiguro deliberately keeps them in the dark, but also because the clones themselves exhibit feelings and behaviors indistinguishable from humans. Instead of relying on explicit arguments or philosophical debates, Ishiguro uses the authentic experiences of the clones to illustrate that they are essentially humans. The characters in the novel love, care, tease, feel jealous, and experience loneliness and happiness—emotions and behaviors that are universally associated with human experience. By the time reader discover their origins, they have already accepted the clones as fully human since their desires and struggles mirror those of any other person. This approach subtly challenges us to reconsider any preconceived notions about what it means to be human through asking ourselves that if these characters, who express the same regrets and dreams as we do, are not considered fully human, then what truly make us more human than they are?

At first glance, it may seem that the true villain in *Never Let Me Go* is the technology that enables the exploitation of clones for organ harvesting. If such technology had never existed, the clones would not have been created and subsequently subjected to suffering. However, a deeper examination, particularly from an anthropocentric perspective, reveals that the real issue lies not within the technology itself, but rather human nature. Throughout history, even in the absence of advanced technology, humans have systematically dehumanized and exploited one another—whether through slavery, colonialism, apartheid, racism, or genocide. Aristotle's view on slavery in *Politics* reveals how deeply such a mentality is rooted within human nature: "some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter, slavery is both expedient and right" (Burns 2003, 18). This assertion reflects the historical tendency to rationalize and legitimize the dehumanization of certain groups, suggesting that this process is not merely a product of specific social, economic, or technological conditions, but a persistent aspect of human nature itself. These atrocities have

never been abandoned as tragic episodes of the past, yet continue to recur in various forms of discrimination and violence. Arguably, Ishiguro intentionally diminishes the influence of technology in the novel to highlight the idea that the core of human nature remains unchanged, regardless of the era or the level of technological advancements.

Dehumanization in history often relied on constructing narratives that emphasize perceived differences between groups, allowing oppressors to justify their view of others as less human. Accordingly, victims of genocide are labeled as vermin, slaves are legally considered fractions of a person, immigrants are compared to invasive pests or diseases, and indigenous peoples are stereotyped as uncivilized and savage brutes (Haslam 2014, 399). These harmful attributions serve as a collective self-deception, enabling individuals and societies to avoid confronting the moral and ethical implications of their actions. In *Never Let Me Go*, society maintains its exploitation of clones by distancing them from the public eye, confining them in isolated boarding schools and conditioning them for their ultimate purpose of existence—donating their vital organs. This separation, both physical and psychological, allows society to deceive itself that clones have no sense of humanity, conceiving them as merely biological tools, not individuals with their own desires, emotions, and dignity. These mindsets are evident in Miss Emily's words: "For a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter" (Ishiguro. 2005, 255).

Reflecting on Miss Emily's comments, some readers and critics might categorize Never *Let Me Go* as a distant dystopian fiction—far detached from reality to be plausible. They might argue that no civilized society, aware of the clones' tragic fates, would allow such exploitation of life. Furthermore, they might insist that ethical organizations would never permit such inhumane experiments to become legal. However, human history tells a different story, confirming Ishiguro's portrayal of the clones' dehumanization as a reflection of real-world events. As history illustrates how actions once imagined unthinkable, such as slavery, became normalized over time, turning moral violations into accepted societal norms.

As discussed in chapter two, Emmanuel Levinas suggests that while humans are inherently egocentric, there is also a fundamental aspect of human nature that compels us to recognize the vulnerability of others and respond morally. Accordingly, when the horrors of slavery initially became evident, there were protests from the public, as "many of the common people, enraged by the cries and moans prompted by the separation of slave families, temporarily interrupted the proceeding". Even Gomes Eannes de Zurara, the Portuguese king's official chronicler, expressed sorrow for the suffering of enslaved people (Davis 2006, 95). However, over time, egocentric drives—such as economic gain, notions of racial superiority, and religious justification[24]—led to the normalization of slavery, embedding it deeply within the social and moral fabric of societies. What is particularly tragic about the normalization of such practices is that successive generations are born into a world where these atrocities are accepted as the natural order. Without an understanding of a world free of such injustice, slavery and other oppressive systems become ingrained in the collective unconscious, making it challenging for future generations to imagine alternatives or to revolt against these established norms. By paralleling such tragic historical episodes in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro implies that human nature is certainly capable of justifying and normalizing the exploitation of clones for organ harvesting. As past societies accepted slavery as a necessity for social order, Ishiguro's posthuman society has come to accept cloning as an essential aspect of life.

Most contemporary posthuman scholars and researchers deal with the topic of cloning with ethical caution, rarely approving reproductive cloning for human exploitation. Yet, *Never Let Me Go* raises the challenging question of whether this ethical stance would be persistent or if justifications and rationalization of exploiting clones would eventually emerge. This ethical tension is mirrored in Miss Emily's clarification about clones' status in society: "However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming

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[24] For more information on motivations behind slavery see *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* by David Brion Davis (Oxford University Press, 2006).

concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease" (Ishiguro. 2005, 255). Yingxuan Zhang reflects on the plausibility of this tragic scenario by picturing organ donation from a personal perspective rather than viewing it as merely a posthuman narrative. She suggests that in a world where "cancer is curable", people will prioritize saving their loved ones over ethical concerns about the origins of those organs. In moments of desperation, moral considerations could easily be ignored as "no one will care about those clones who provide organs, no one will think about whether the clone is the same as their own life" (Zhang 2021, 36).

Zhang's argument exposes a tragic reality of human nature—despite our condemnation of atrocities, history echoes that in similar circumstances many of us might still commit these same acts, perhaps even more severely. This claim has been proven in psychological experiments such as Stanley Milgram's Obedience Studies[25] and Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment[26]. As mentally normal and respectable individuals were placed in positions of authority, granting them the freedom to perform inhuman actions without facing legal and moral consequences. In these studies, the participants' levels of cruelty and engagement was by far more than initial expectations, showing that under specific conditions, ethical boundaries can be easily crossed by anyone. Perhaps this insight was best represented in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn metaphorical assertion, "the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being" (Busch 2016, 55).

One noticeable absence in *Never Let Me Go* is the perspective of the recipients of the clones' organs. However, this omission appears deliberate—a storytelling strategy by Ishiguro to encourage readers to imagine themselves in the recipients' roles. In this way,

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[25] Stanley Milgram's *Obedience Studies* (1961) involved participants being instructed to administer electric shocks to others, revealing how far people would go in obeying authority. For further reading, see Rebecca Hale, *'They Were Just Following Orders': Relationships between Milgram's Obedience Experiments and Conceptions of Holocaust Perpetration* (UCL Press, 2020).

[26] Philip Zimbardo's *Stanford Prison Experiment* (1971) placed participants, college students, in a fake prison as guards and prisoners, showing how decent individuals could adopt abusive behaviors when placed in positions of authority in a short period. For further reading, see Robert Levine, *The Evil That Men Do* (American Scientist, 2007)

Ishiguro implies challenging questions: What if we, who support ethics and oppose the dehumanization of clones, were in the position of those benefiting from the donation program? Would we choose to save our own lives and the lives of our loved ones or the clones? This moral dilemma mirrors a situation akin to "Sophie's choice"[27] scenario, compelling us to decide between us and them. In order to make this choice, an unconscious collective self-deception emerges, as Miss Emily bluntly explains: "The world didn't want to be reminded how the donation program really worked. They didn't want to think about you students, or about the conditions you were brought up in" (Ishiguro. 2005, 257). This situation reflects Fukuyama's prediction of a future where the greatest threat posed by technology is not evil clones or a tyrannical AI, but conditions that "cause us in some way to lose our humanity" (Fukuyama 2002, 101).

Considering the significant growth of ethical awareness and the rise of ethical and international institutions[28] over the past decades—particularly after the Second World War—it is expected that ethical regulations, including bioethics will be increasingly stricter in the future. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress in 1979, proposed the widely acknowledged four principles of bioethics: "Principle of Respect for Autonomy, Principle of Beneficence, Principle of Non-maleficence and Principle of Justice". When comparing the situation of clones in *Never Let Me Go* with current bioethical principles, the treatment of clones clearly violates all these principles. As clones do not have the freedom to make choices, they are made physically incapable to bear children, their body do not belong to themselves, and the process of organ donation is compulsory, painful and ultimately fatal (Li 2019, 459). This indicates that, under current bioethical standards, such exploitation of clones would be considered both illegal and morally condemned.

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[27] Referring to the moral dilemma in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* (1979), where a mother is forced to choose which of her two children will live and which will die, symbolizing a tragic decision.

[28] Ethical institutions and international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the International Bioethics Committee (IBC),

What will happen in the future and what regulations may be introduced remains unknown, yet the regulations of the past and present, along with the degree of compliance and their influence are completely clear. Historical and contemporary events demonstrate that even universally recognized organizations, such as the UN, ICC, and ICJ, often struggle to enforce justice effectively, and their power is frequently undermined by political affairs. Many countries tend to support ethical decisions when they align with their political and economic interests. When the rulings go against them or their allies, they often refuse to comply, allowing ethical violations to remain unpunished. For example, there are clear violations of human rights in the crises in Sudan and Congo, as well as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Russia-Ukraine war. However, governments and individuals complicit in these atrocities do not get sanctioned and war criminals are not brought to justice. This argument does not seek to diminish the value of these organizations but rather highlights the fragility of ethical enforcement in the past, present, and likely the future. If current institutions are incapable to address today's atrocities, there is a great possibility that future bioethical transgressions, including those related to cloning, cannot be controlled by them. Consequently, it is not logical to dismiss Ishiguro's posthuman vision of a world in which clones are exploited and ethical values are constantly violated. However, in nearly every era of dehumanization, there have been individuals and groups who resisted such atrocities, even if their impact was limited. In the novel, this resistance is embodied by the Hailsham movement.

Art and Dehumanization

Hailsham embodies a paradoxical nature, as the reason for its existence is in direct contradiction with the reality of its purpose. Ironically, those responsible to institutionalize clones for organ donation, are the very ones who attempt to save them from their tragic fates. This duality has made Hailsham a source of controversy for critics. Wei Li describes Hailsham as an "Organ Culture Laboratory" or a "Human Factory", emphasizing that the clones are sheltered not out of compassion, but because their organs are desperately needed

by society (Li 2019, 456). Santi Ranjan Sing takes this idea further, associating it to a "testing lab" where the clones are subjected to abuse and objectification (Sing 2021, 153). Conversely, Wong views Hailsham as a shelter that temporarily protects clones from the horrors of the truth (Wong 2019, 86). Netty Mattar regards it as an ethical movement rooted in Enlightenment principles that while safeguard the human rights, simultaneously dehumanize the clones (Mattar 2021, 6). Within the frame of the narrative, Miss Emily describes Hailsham as a sanctuary where the clones are given the childhood that all humans deserve, "We sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your childhoods" (Ishiguro. 2005, 260).

While each interpretation holds some truth, Hailsham's nature must also be understood according to the social climate in *Never Let Me Go*. Viewing Hailsham from perspective of the clones, embodies a paradox, a place that both shelters them and facilitate their institutionalization. The dehumanization of the clones mirrors historical atrocities like the Holocaust, where individuals were treated as subhuman for the benefit of others. In this context, Hailsham was indirectly compared to Nazi concentration camps during a poetry class, Miss Lucy commenting, "It's just as well the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified" (Ishiguro. 2005, 80). Accordingly, reinforcing the idea that Hailsham, despite its protection, is ultimately an institution designed to prepare clones for their fate as organ donors.

However, from within, those guardians in charge see Hailsham as far more than a place; they view it as a countercultural movement to evoke human attributes from the clones, proving they are no less than humans, and ultimately deserve to be treated as such. As Miss Emily explains, prior to Hailsham, clones were merely seen as "shadowy objects in test tubes" (Ishiguro. 2005, 254), reminding the images of animals kept and raised in confined spaces, waiting for their turn to be slaughtered. This movement is akin to Oskar Schindler's[29] efforts that although was part of the Nazi party, yet managed to save thousands of Jews during the Second World War. Similarly, the guardians at Hailsham sought to save the clones, not

[29] Oskar Schindler was a German industrialist and member of the Nazi party who is credited with saving the lives of over 1,000 Jews during the Holocaust by employing them in his factories. His story was famously depicted in the film *Schindler's List (*1993*),* directed by Steven Spielberg

by openly resisting the system, but by implicitly undermining it—showing the world something it had long refused to acknowledge:

> We demonstrated to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being. Before that, all clones—or students, as we preferred to call you—existed only to supply medical science (Ishiguro. 2005, 254).

To prove that the clones are human, the Hailsham movement chose to elicit artistic spirits from them and exhibit the best pieces to influential figures. While the movement initially succeeded in gaining attention and sympathy for its purpose, the darker aspects of human nature, driven by egocentric desires and economic interests, eventually overshadowed these efforts. As businesses profiting from the exploitation of clones emerged and changed the moral climate of society, this shift is reflected in Miss Emily's bitter confession: "Before we knew it all our hard work had come undone" (Ishiguro. 2005, 255).

The Hailsham movement was seeking to establish a profound connection between the creation of art and the existence of a soul, firmly believing that possessing a soul equates to being human, as Miss Emily states, "your art would reveal what you were like, it would reveal your souls. We did it to prove you had souls at all" (Ishiguro. 2005, 253). This belief resonates with the historical belief that the creation of art has been viewed as a fundamental aspect of human identity, revealing the essence of our existence. Ellen Dissanayake, in *What Is Art For?* (1988), argues that art is a universal human trait, serving purposes far beyond mere entertainment. She views art as a biological necessity, deeply rooted in human nature and a manifestation of behavior essential for human survival (Davis 1990, 714). In line with this, Noël Carroll in *Art and Human Nature* introduces the idea that producing art requires certain evolved cognitive, perceptual, and emotional capacities, which are inherent to human nature (Carroll 2004, 95).

The belief, as presented by Dissanayake, that art serves as a savior of humanity is deeply embedded in our collective unconscious. As Luigi Marfè draws a compelling parallel

between the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Kathy and Tommy's plea in *Never Let Me Go* for a deferral. Marfè extends this metaphor by equating the gods in the myth with humans in the novel, and the mortals with the clones: "Orpheus and Eurydice are mortals, in the novel become clones; those who are gods, in the novel become humans" (Marfè 2016, 197). This comparison resonates when considering the stark contrast in longevity between the two groups—clones, who die young due to their organ donations, and humans, who live longer because of these very sacrifices. Marfè indicates that both Orpheus and Tommy present art as their plea for mercy, poetry and music in the myth and Tommy's drawings in the novel. Yet tragically, both Orpheus and Tommy are denied the brief extension of life they desperately seek.

The Hailsham movement's strategy was built on the belief that art could reveal the existence of clones' souls, which in turn would serve as proof of their humanity. Miss Emily's reference to the concept of "souls" can be interpreted in both metaphorical and religious senses, echoing the central question implied throughout Ishiguro's works: What makes us truly human? From a metaphorical perspective, the soul could be seen as a symbolic expression of humanity's intangible qualities, such as thoughts, creativity, and emotions that can manifest thorough the creation of art. In religious contexts, the soul is viewed as the essence of one's existence. For instance, Christianity defines the soul as a divine life-giving gift, embodying "the totality of each individual's identity and history before God's judgment" (Bayer 2019, 401). From this perspective, possessing a soul is a fundamental indication of human worth, dignity, and the right to be treated as more than a mere object or resource.

Arguably, in a posthuman world, where science and technology are the dominant forces, it is often assumed that religion would lose its influence become a relic of the past, akin to like ancient Roman deities. However, despite providing only two brief references to religion, Ishiguro implies that religious concepts continue to influence social and moral decisions in *Never Let Me Go*. The first reference is to Keffers, who is described as "religious and dead against not just porn, but sex in general" (Ishiguro. 2005, 131), suggesting that even in a posthuman world dominated by cloning technology, religion still plays a subtle role in individuals' behaviors. The second reference is the mentioning of "bishops" among the

influential figures that the Hailsham movement aimed to exhibit the clone's arts: "There'd be cabinet ministers, bishops, all sorts of famous people coming to attend" (Ishiguro. 2005, 254). Including bishops emphasizes underscores the significant influence of religion over social attitude and political decisions, thus them as key targets of the movement to change the conditions of the clones. Ishiguro's portrayal of this world mirrors our own, where the influence of religion persists in shaping ethical discourse and public policy.

The novel raises an important question about how religious institutions, particularly Christianity[30], might change their stance on cloning technology. Currently, the Roman Catholic Church firmly opposes reproductive cloning, due to the moral status of embryos. Since they are regarded as equal as fully born humans, they cannot be used as "means toward an end" and "Most obviously, they cannot be destroyed to benefit others". Moreover, even if embryos are treated as normal human beings, the Catholic Church still firmly opposes reproductive cloning, as it "severs human reproduction from sexuality". This stance reflects the religious belief that cloning is seen as a disruption to the natural order of procreation of humans (Evans 2002, 748). This opposition is also shared by other Christian denominations; similarly, evangelical Protestants officially condemn therapeutic cloning. Gilbert Meilaender, a Lutheran bioethicist and theologian, argues that cloning would change social view towards children, seeing them as products of humans' will rather than individuals with inherent equality and dignity. Meilaender also raises the concern that cloning could profoundly affect humanity's relationship with God. In Abrahamic religions, humans are viewed as creations of God, not as creators or co-creators of life. The birth of a child is considered a process of being "begotten" not "made", implying that life is a sacred gift from God, not a phenomenon to be formed and controlled by humans (Evans 2002, 749).

[30] The focus on Christianity in this chapter is due to the references in Never Let Me Go being exclusively related to this religion. Additionally, as the novel is set in England, where Christianity has historically been the dominant religion.

Additionally, public opinion within religious communities is reflected in the 2001 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey, which revealed that a majority of Americans opposed human cloning. When asked about "allowing unrestricted scientific research related to human cloning", 51% were strongly opposed, 35% opposed, while only 12% were in favor and 2% strongly in favor (Evans 2002, 750). Therefore, Christian institutions and communities have been among the strongest opponents of cloning. Comparing these results with the religious climate in *Never Let Me Go* raises important questions: how may such firm objections change in the story? From a broader perspective, what are the possibilities of witnessing a similar shift in the future of our world?

To answer these questions, history again provides similar situations where religious authorities not only remained passive toward inhumane actions but also twisted religious concepts to justify them. One intentional distortion is the "Curse of Ham", which was used to dehumanize African people by asserting they were created for servitude and enslaving them fulfilled God's will (Davis 2006, 79). Furthermore, both slavery and colonization were often supported by religious institutions as a means of ironically saving the souls of indigenous people. As Pope Nicholas V issued a papal bull entitled *Dum Diversas* in 1452, granting permission "to conquer, annihilate, and subdue any non-Christian, in particular Africans, and justified their enslavement" (Muhammad 2019, 60). However, it is important to mention that while religion has been manipulated to support systematic inhumanities, it has also inspired many individuals to fight against injustice. The Quakers[31], William Wilberforce[32], and Dietrich Bonhoeffer[33] are among many religious figures and groups who, despite personal risks, advocated for equality and dignity for all. The intention of this argument is not to evaluate whether religion has been used in favor or against humanity, but

[31] The Quakers, or the Religious Society of Friends, are a Christian movement known for their commitment to pacifism, social justice, and equality. They played a crucial role in the abolition of slavery, especially in Britain and the United States.

[32] William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was a British politician and a deeply religious man whose efforts for social reform led to the abolishment of the British slave trade.

[33] Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was a German theologian and pastor who strongly opposed the Nazi regime and its atrocities, and he was executed for his resistance efforts in 1945.

to indicate that any ethical stance, including today's strong religious opposition to reproductive cloning, could drastically changes in the future.

Clones and their Fate

Most ethical discussions surrounding *Never Let Me Go* focus on the system and individuals responsible for the dehumanization and exploitation of the clones, which is undoubtedly important. Yet, throughout history, countless individuals have been born into oppression, discrimination, or poverty, without access to basic human rights or dignity. Accordingly, what is often overlooked in the novel is the role of the clones themselves in their passive acceptance of injustice. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed" (King 1963)[34]**.** While the clones are subjected to an unjust system, they neither resist nor seek a way out, contrasting with characters like Winston Smith in *1984* (1949) or John the Savage in *Brave New World,* who rebel against the dystopian systems in various means. The only form of resistance from the clones is Kathy and Tommy's request for a deferral, which was not even meant to stop the process of donation, but to delay it temporarily. This extreme obedience raises profound questions: Why do the clones not attempt to break free from this cycle? Is their obedience due to intentional biological modifications, similar to their sterilization, or psychological conditioning during their upbringing at Hailsham and the Cottages?

As previously noted, before the Hailsham movement, clones existed merely to serve medical science. Although no more information is provided about their life conditions, it can be imagined that they were deprived of basic human rights and intellectual development. Perhaps their situations can be compared to the cases of feral children, who grow up without social interaction and thus lack the ability to think critically, communicate, or even grasp their own existence. In such a state, it is more understandable why society viewed the clones

[34] Since the reference to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is sourced from a website, no specific page number is available for in-text citations.

as less than human. Therefore, those who were in charge of the donation process faced no issues of rebellion or escape from the clones. However, with the establishment of schools like Hailsham, clones began to experience a life akin to normal humans. Despite restrictions, they had access to critical thinking skills, and their time in the Cottages provided them with enough freedom to reflect on their circumstances and potentially seek change. However, they did not resist or strive for better conditions, which raises a profound dilemma about their passivity. lack of resistance can be inspected from different perspectives, it likely stems from a combination of factors—biological, psychological, and social—that contributed to their incapacity to challenge their dehumanization.

The childhood experiences of the clones at Hailsham mirror the conditions of orphans in several ways. Similar to orphans, clones cannot become independent until a certain age. Both groups have no exposure to the typical relationships between children and parents. This absence is illustrated through the clones' tendency to create imaginary scenarios, like protecting their favorite guardians from harm or fantasize about receiving special attention from them, as Kathy reflects, "Didn't we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us? A spontaneous hug, a secret letter, a gift?" (Ishiguro. 2005, 63). Such moments reveal the dearies for connection and affection, a substitute for the parental love they never experienced. This lack of familial relationships leaves the clones emotionally dependent on the very system that controls them. Consequently, without parental guidance or a role model, they lack the self-esteem and problem-solving abilities needed to stand up for their rights or question unjust authority. As a result, their passivity is not merely a lack of resistance but a reflection of their emotional and psychological dependency on a system that has shaped their understanding of the world.

For much of their short lives, the truth about the purpose of their existence was withheld from the clones at Hailsham. Their fates were decided long before they were born, yet unaware of what was waiting for them, they dreamed about how to build their futures. In a psychological sense, ignorance breeds compliance—when individuals are unaware of the injustices they face, there is no reason to form a collective resistance. A historical parallel can be drawn to the workers of the Industrial Revolution, including child laborers, who were

often unaware of their exploitation, believing that their harsh conditions were inevitable. It was only when they became aware of their oppression, and began striving to form labor unions, ultimately gaining the power to make meaningful changes. The condition of the clones is similar to those industrial workers, as remained unaware of their predetermined exploitation. Although Miss Lucy once commented on their situation, yet her words serve more as an acceptance of their fate rather than a call to resistance:

> Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's each of you was created to do. You're not like the actors you watch on your videos, you're not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them have been decided (Ishiguro. 2005, 83).

Initially, the intention of withholding the truth about their fates can be seen as a means to prevent any objection or rebellion by the clones, yet this secrecy is ultimately revealed as an act of benevolent deception. As Miss Emily confesses, "Sometimes that meant we kept things from you, lied to you. Yes, in many ways we fooled you. I suppose you could even call it that. But we sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your childhoods" (Ishiguro. 2005, 260). Her statement underscores that although their fates were no different from those "shadowy objects in test tubes" that existed before Hailsham, at least the new generation of clones can experience a life similar to humans for some years. This brief period of living as humans would have not been possible if they had known their true purpose from an early age. In this context, Sing argues in *We're Modelled from Trash* that the clones undergo a process of animalization, stripped of their unique identities and reduced to an animalistic state (Sing 2021, 150). While this assertion may primarily seem exaggerated, it becomes more plausible when their treatment is compared to the way animals are handled in various farming systems: Before the Hailsham movement, clones were like animals in factory farms, confined and stripped of basic dignity. However, Hailsham offered the them a more humane existence, similar to organic farming practices in which animals are given slightly better living conditions before being slaughtered.

Another significant factor contributing to the lack of resistance among the clones is the powerful self-deception that often manifests through language. From childhood, they are referred to as "special" and "gifted" by their guardians, titles that ultimately lead them into their roles as "carers" and "donors"; even the term used for their death is softened to "completion" (McDonald 2007, 78). This euphemistic language disguises the reality of their exploitation, implying that they are not dehumanized but uniquely chosen to contribute to a noble cause and eventually saving humanity. While it may seem illogical that the clones willingly sacrifice their lives for abstract concepts like humanity or people they have never met, history is filled with individuals driven by similar ideals. Patriotism, religion, nationalism, and societal pressure have often motivated people to devote their lives to causes greater than themselves, particularly when individuals have not much to lose. This is parallel to the clones' situation, as they do not have familial ties, financial security, or any promising place in a society that is deeply afraid of them. This fear is evident even from their childhood, as Kathy recalls Madam's horror, "She's always been afraid of us. In the way people are afraid of spiders and things" (Ishiguro. 2005, 260). Miss Emily later confirms this fear: "Is she afraid of you? We're all afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham" (Ishiguro. 2005, 261). Under such psychological pressures and with no foundation or leader for rebellion, it is not surprising that the clones do not resist the powerful and oppressive system that governs their lives.

Furthermore, even after the clones leave for the Cottages, their isolation at Hailsham leaves them emotionally and intellectually unprepared to take meaningful action against their exploitation. Despite Ishiguro's implication of their humanity, it is often overlooked that clones are fully human in their emotions, thoughts, and desires. Therefore, akin to humans, they face the same difficult transition into adulthood, a sensitive period marked by identity formation, managing relationships, and navigating emotions and stress—all accompanied by their lack of real-world experience. It is no wonder that their focus shifts toward personal desires and relationships, such as the complex dynamics between Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth, rather than forming a collective resistance.

Additionally, social movements and revolutions against oppressive systems often require multiple generations to build the necessary awareness and courage needed for action. However, the colons are deprived of this critical element: time. As after only a few years at the Cottages, they are called to begin their donations, eliminating the possibility of long-term resistance. In this way, Ishiguro draws a tragic picture a posthuman system that not only control bodies but also prevent shaping critical mindsets. This resonates with Foucault's concept of the panopticon, "a mechanism of political power and surveillance that 'assures the automatic functioning of power'" (Mattar 2021, 7). Although the clones in *Never Let Me Go* are not constantly watched like in the panopticon, the system deliberately constructs a narrative to predetermine every stage of their lives, suppressing their self-awareness and any potential for rebellion. Consequently, the clones' failure to resist cannot simply be attributed to their passivity but to a deeper systemic limitation that ensures they comply with the process of donation without ever challenging it.

In Search of Possibles

Many individuals may often think about the uncertainties of their own death—how long they will live, or when, where and how they will die. Ironically, the clones in *Never Let Me Go* face a tragic certainty about theirs. They know their futures are predetermined, as they will eventually donate their organs and die at a relatively young age in a hospital. What preoccupies the clones is not the question of death, but of life—what their lives might have been if they had the chance to fully live them. This curiosity is reflected in the popular idea of "possibles" among the clones, referring to the humans from whom they believe they were genetically copied. The significance of possibles is highlighted when Kathy tells Tommy, "We all wonder about our model. After all, that's why we came out here today. We all do it" (Ishiguro. 2005, 178). For the clones, finding their possibles goes beyond a simple curiosity about who they might have become if they weren't clones.; it symbolizes a paradoxical entity that serves as both their genetic parents and their potential offspring. Clones are created from the genes of their possibles, thus, making these possibles their biological parents. At the same

time, possibles serve as symbolic offspring in a sense that they embody the continuation of the clones' genes, allowing the clones to imagine, similar to humans, part of them lives on after their death. This idea echoes Richard Dawkins' concept of "altruistic self-sacrifice", where both animals and humans unconsciously sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children, ensuring their survival means the continuation of their own genetic line (Dawkins 1976, 107). Considering clones' sterilization and inability to have children, the idea of possibles becomes even more significant as a potential for their genetic continuation. Additionally, the clones' desire to find their own possible can also be understood in Judith Butler's concept of the "unreal" in *Undoing Gender* (2004):

> It is the inhuman, the beyond the human, the less than human, the border that secures the human in its ostensible reality. To be called a copy, to be called unreal, is one way in which one can be oppressed, but consider that it is more fundamental than that. To be oppressed means that you already exist a subject of some kind, you are there as the visible and oppressed other for the master subject, as a possible or potential subject, but to be unreal is something else again (Carroll 2012, 135).

On the surface, Butler's concept suggest that clones may experience a sense of despair seeing another individual—their possible—with exactly same characteristics enjoy the freedom and privileges they are denied. This confrontation might imply that their own existence is unnecessary in a world where others already live the lives they long for. This would lead to an existential struggle that questions their self-existence: Are they truly unique humans with their own individuality and humanity? Or are they mere copies, akin to Plato's Theory of Ideas that makes them an imitation of their possibles? This dilemma is evident in Kathy's frustration with her intense sexual urges. She questions the authenticity of her own existence by searching through porn magazines in the hope of discovering whether her desires are linked to her possible or if they truly belong to her, "I thought if I find her picture, in one of those magazines, it'll at least explain it... kind of explain why I am the way I am" (Ishiguro. 2005, 178).

A similar existential crisis occurs during the journey to visit Ruth's possible. She initially projects her own ideal self onto her possible, hoping that this individual represents the successful, accomplished life she could have had. However, when it becomes evident that Ruth's possible bears not much resemblance to her, she bitterly remarks that they have been deceiving themselves all along, stating "We all know it. We're modelled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from" (Ishiguro. 2005, 163).

While current ethical concerns surrounding therapeutic cloning prevent discussions about whose genetic material would be considered as suitable, it is clear that those selected for cloning would need to grant their permission. Perhaps the closest historical parallel to this issue is the eugenics movement of the early 20th century in Europe and the United States. Both positive eugenics and cloning grapple with the same fundamental challenge: who should be cloned? In early 20th century, many important figures and groups, including scientists, biologists, and even political and public figures, were engaged in controversial debates over which classes or individuals should benefit from the privileges of positive eugenics. Some argued for promoting the reproduction of the specific races which were perceived as superior in intelligence, morality, and physical attributes. Others advocated for the intellectual classes, noting that many exceptionally gifted individuals have emerged from them, while some focused on economically successful figures, such as professionals and artisans, as models for desirable traits. However, what the majority agreed upon was that positive eugenics should not be applied to the working class. British eugenicists and social reformers viewed the poor as a race apart, even supporting negative eugenics to control their reproduction (Woiak 2007, 120-22).

It is important to note that the primary reason that eugenicists promoted the intellectual class in 20th century, was the belief that "mentally deficient" individuals were reproducing at a much faster rate than the educated classes, thus endangering modern civilization with the "overproduction of undermen" (Woiak 2007, 121). Yet, the posthuman society of *Never Let Me Go* adopts a radically different approach. As it no longer needs individuals with high intelligence or intellectual gifts, but rather those with healthy organs.

Consequently, the strategy would likely be the opposite of the eugenics movement, focusing on marginalized and subaltern groups that face social and financial hardships, which aligns with Ruth's belief on those targeted for cloning. Furthermore, obtaining legal permissions and convincing these individuals through financial motivations would likely be easier than targeting other classes. However, Ishiguro suggests that in such a dehumanized system, suitability for cloning is not determined by social class or economic status, as in an interview, he remarked:

> From my view of the world, I think that no matter what pain people suffer, no matter what tragic experience they encounter, no matter how unfree they are, they will survive in the crack of fate and accept everything given by fate. People make unremitting efforts to find dreams and hopes in such a narrow living space. These people have always been more interesting to me than those who have broken the system and carried out the rebellion. (Zhang 2021, 37)

Ishiguro's interest revolves around characters who endure within oppressive systems or critical conditions. He has provided example of such individuals in his novels, people like Stevens and his father in *The Remains of the Day*, who sacrifice their own well-being, desires, and aspirations for the sake of greater causes like duty, humanity, and dignity. While this chapter explores various factors contributing to the clones' passivity in the face of their dehumanization, it is crucial to acknowledge they may willingly embrace their roles due their inherent dignity and the belief that becoming donors aligns with the moral and ethical values of humanity. These values, while not protecting them from exploitation, may reinforce their acceptance of their fate. This aspect is reflected not only in their lack of resistance, but in the sense of pride in enduring multiple donations, even as each donation becomes more painful and ultimately fatal. Ironically, it is the clones who embody genuine humanity in a society where technology has degraded the very essence of what it means to be human.

Chapter Four: *Klara and the Sun*

This chapter delves into the complex relationship between artificial intelligence[35] (AI) and humans in the posthuman world depicted in *Klara and the Sun*. It begins by examining contrasting views on the necessity of robots, asking a fundamental question: given their potential benefits and inherent risks, are robots truly essential to our future? To explore this dilemma, a brief history of robotic creation is provided, revealing a diversity of motivations ranging from love and curiosity to fear and servitude.

The chapter further argues that a posthuman society will increasingly depend on automation for its survival, driven by factors such as current longevity and fertility rates, labor shortages, and changing dynamics in personal relationships. Additionally, it explores the implications of genetic enhancement within the context of *Klara and the Sun*, considering how governments might use genetic technologies to establish a form of biological apartheid, ultimately eroding human values celebrated today. This includes the manipulation of natural parental relationships, as political agendas masked as societal expectations, pressure parents into compromising their children's autonomy, significantly shaping their futures and even risking severe harm to their health. Parents who resist these expectations are marginalized, often viewed as outsiders deprived of equal social standing and rights.

To illustrate this dynamic, the novel's primary characters are examined through a posthuman lens, each symbolizing a distinct aspect of a society under the spell of technology. Finally, the discussion chapter focuses on the autonomy of robots through the character of Klara, an artificial friend (AF), exploring what distinguishes a machine like Klara from human and whether her human attributes are rooted in a deeper, human origin.

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[35] In this chapter, the terms *"artificial intelligence", "robot",* and *"machine"* are used interchangeably. However, after the general introduction, the term "*robot"* is used more frequently because it embodies both virtual and physical presence of artificial beings as Klara.

Why Do We Need Robots?

Posthuman scenarios in literature and entertainment media often envision a world where AI, embodied in the form of robots, becomes deeply integrated into every aspect of human life. In such a world, robots could either benefit humanity by enhancing our capabilities and addressing societal challenges, or pose significant disadvantages. Laura Major and Julie Shah in *What To Expect When You're Expecting Robots* (2020), argue that despite widespread concern about a future in which robots are "smarter, faster, better than their human creators", the reality is that the relationship between humans and robots will always be collaborative rather than competitive. Major and Shah provide examples how robots assist humans in various ways—collaborating on minor tasks like deliveries and grocery shopping, performing household chores, and enhancing the independence of the elderly and disabled. Furthermore, robots are portrayed as capable of addressing significant societal challenges, such as reducing car accidents, conducting complex surgeries, and carrying out hazardous jobs (Major and Shah 2020, 13). In contrast, Ruth Aylett and Patricia A. Vargas**,** in *Living with Robots What Every Anxious Human Needs to Know* (2021), offer a more cautionary perspective. They highlight how the overdependence on AI can lead to harmful consequences, such as biased decision-making in areas like mortgage approvals, job hiring, and legal judgments. Additionally, they warn of the dangers of autonomous robot weapons being developed for military use, which could perform lethal operations, potentially leading to catastrophic outcomes (Aylett and Vargas 2021, 11).

The traditional depiction of AI is often rooted in binary perspectives, as seen in classic tales like *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Bicentennial Man* (1976), where human creations are portrayed as either the saviors or destroyers of humanity. Such black-and-white storytelling from an entertainment perspective creates compelling drama for audiences by presenting clear, opposing forces and generating dramatic tension. However, the reality of AI's role in the future is likely to be far more complex, with AI serving both beneficial and disruptive roles, depending on how it is developed and utilized. This complexity can be seen in the evolution of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and its modern adaptations, such as *Penny*

Dreadful (2014–2016), where under different circumstances, the Monster can become a benevolent companion rather than a destructive force. Before considering whether AI represents a threat or a blessing, a more fundamental question arises: Why do we need advanced AI and robots in the first place?

To answer this question, it is essential to understand the motivation behind creating robots and trace where it all began. In 1920, Czech writer Karel Capek coined the term "robot" in his play *R.U.R.*, bringing the most frightening human prospect of AI to the stage. In this play artificial beings, known as "roboti", are initially created to serve humans by performing factory labor. However, they eventually recognize their superiority over humans, rebel against their masters, and ultimately annihilate the human race (Ogaya-Pinie 2017, 229). Seven years later, in 1927, Westinghouse brought part of Capek's dystopian play into reality by presenting "Herbert Televox", the first humanoid, which the media labeled as a "domestic slave", constructed to carry out household chores (Aylett and Vargas 2021, 13). However, modern industrial robots did not emerge until the 1950s, when Unimation designed a robotic arm, which performed dangerous or undesirable tasks for humans. While early concepts and designs of robots suggest their primary purpose was rooted in the notion of mechanical slaves, an artist from centuries earlier envisioned a different purpose for his creation.

Leonardo da Vinci's sketched plans around 1495, suggest that he was the first to conceptualize a mechanical human, designing a mechanical human similar to the figure of a knight (Ogaya-Pinie 2017, 229). While the specific reason behind his creation remains unclear, his persistent drive for innovation and curiosity are akin to Victor Frankenstein. As both figures embody humanity's instinct to push the boundaries of knowledge and explore the unknown. Yet, the motivations behind creating robots extend beyond servitude or curiosity. Aylett and Vargas suggest that these motivations stem from the most profound emotion humanity has ever experienced: love. They trace the metaphorical origins of robots back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (43 BC–17), particularly the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. In this story, Pygmalion—viewing all women as vices—sculpts an idealized statue of a woman, Galatea, and becomes infatuated with his creation. Moved by his devotion, Venus,

the goddess of love, brings the statue to life (Aylett and Vargas 2021, 18). Consequently, from da Vinci's mechanical knight to Capek's rebellious robots and the domestic robots of the 20th century, the evolution of AI reflects a broad spectrum of human motivations—ranging from exploitation, fear, and curiosity to love. However, the current state of our world shows that robots are no longer seen as mere luxuries or facilitators of daily tasks; they are essential for the future, where many aspects of life will profoundly depend on their presence.

Life expectancy in developed countries is steadily rising, while fertility rates are drastically falling, creating a demographic imbalance that poses significant challenges for the future generations. Countries like Italy, Spain, and Japan have total fertility rates between 1.1 and 1.5, which is far below the replacement rate of about 2.2. According to UN data, by 2050, the median age in countries like Germany will be 54, in Japan 56, and in Italy 58. It is estimated by the end of the 21st century, Japan is expected to have one retired person for every two workers (Fukuyama 2002, 56). This combination of increased life expectancy and declining birth rates is expected to lead to a severe shortage of labor and ultimately economic instability. To address these challenges, many developed countries have turned to solutions such as automation, immigration, and policies aimed at encouraging families to have more children. Among these, developing robots has emerged as a particularly attractive option, as unlike "emigrants or marginalized workers, the robot has nothing to do with cultural variations or historical traumas/memories" (Shankari and Karmakar 2023, 171). Furthermore, policies aimed at increasing birth rates are often costly and may take decades to yield results, with no guarantee of success. In contrast, robots offer immediate advantages over humans—they do not require salaries, pensions, or benefits, and they can work continuously without breaks, vacations, or holidays. Additionally, robots are not subject to social challenges, wage increases, labor rights disputes, or strikes, making them a highly efficient solution to labor shortages in aging societies. However, the need for robots extends beyond economic and industrial areas; there are deeply personal aspects of posthuman life that increasingly rely on technology.

Jonathan V. Last, in *What to Expect When No One's Expecting* (2013), indicates that in many developed countries, families prefer to have only one child, if any at all. After few

generations, this trend may lead to the disappearance of extended families, with relatives such as siblings, aunts, and uncles becoming a nostology of the past. Consequently, family units may become increasingly limited, consisting primarily of parents and grandparents (Last 2013, 3). In *Klara and the Sun*, this societal shift is implicitly mirrored, as except Josie's sister, Sal, who passed away, neither Josie nor Rick has any other family members to depend on apart from their mothers, even their fathers do not live with them. This reflects a posthuman world where technology, while isolating and disconnecting individuals from one another, simultaneously fills these emotional voids with itself. AFs, like Klara, are designed to fill the emotional and social gaps, offering companionship and care in a society where human connections have faded. Yet, the desire for robots to act as caregivers does not merely belong to the future. As Sherry Turkle, in *The Robotic Moment*, highlights that even today, many parents believe robots can be better caregivers for their children than humans by noting, "some children are learning to confide in robots because they are safer than people" (Benita 2024, 66). Turkle's assertion is particularly relevant when considering children with cognitive and physical disabilities. For instance, Romibo is a social and therapeutic robot designed to assist "elderly people with dementia and children with autism in order to help them recover through constant interaction" (Benita 2024, 66).

The influence of AI and robots can even extend into realms as personal as human relationships, challenging traditional concepts of intimacy and emotional connection. While these relationships lack authenticity and may feel artificial, they offer a level of predictability and control that many individuals find convenient. Notably, this same lack of authenticity can also be present in real human relationships, where there is no guarantee that expressions of love, friendship, or care are genuine—as humans are capable more than any other being to present false or pretentious attitudes. In this context, Turkle argues that robots could potentially serve as serious replacements for human companionship without the risks of "conflicts and heartbreaks" (Benita 2024, 66). Moreover, robots can be physically and mentally customized. Arguably, many individuals Instead of searching for their dream partner in the challenging world of human relationships, may just design their perfect companions. Such a vision is portrayed in *Westworld* (2016–2022), where highly advanced

robots, known as hosts, are designed to fulfill the desires and fantasies of humans. While such an amusement park may seem distant, it is not entirely out of reach. As Martin Ford, author of *Rise of the Robots*, suggests in an interview that we could witness robots of such sophistication within the next 30 to 50 years (Shapiro 2016)[36]. But beyond fulfilling contemporary needs, could robots address one of humanity's deepest traumas: death? Could a lost loved one—a spouse, parent, or child—be revived within a silicon body? While technology might be able to produce the physical appearance of a lost person, can the personal characteristics, memories, and experiences of a human being be transferred to a machine? From the perspective of *Klara and the Sun*, the answer to these questions is both yes and no, as explored through the differing views of two key characters: an artist and a father.

Beyond the Machine

Capaldi is a rational individual who embraces the power of science over human emotions, believing that in a world dominated by technology, there is no need to think humans are more than mere biological machines governed by their programming and environment. For him, robots—the tangible embodiment of technological progress—are capable of everything humans can do and potentially surpass them. As he asserts, "There's nothing there. Nothing inside Josie that's beyond the Klaras of this world to continue" (Ishiguro 2021, 187). To prove this, he designs a survey for Klara to scientifically convince Chrissie that Klara would not merely imitate Josie but would fully inherit her essence. He assures Chrissie that, "The second Josie won't be a copy. She'll be the exact same and you'll have every right to love her just as you love Josie now" (Ishiguro 2021, 188). Even Paul, who hates Capaldi and is firmly against this experiment, reluctantly acknowledges his perspective, "I think I hate Capaldi because deep down I suspect he may be right. That what he claims is

[36] This information is from an article on Vulture's website, without a specific page number: https://www.vulture.com/2016/10/westworld-ask-a-futurist.html.

true. That science has now proved beyond doubt there's nothing so unique about my daughter, nothing there our modern tools can't excavate, copy, transfer" (Ishiguro 2021, 200).

Both Paul and Capaldi are men of science, yet they represent starkly different views to the convergence of technology and humanity. The root of their conflict lies in what Capaldi has willingly abandoned and Paul refuses to let it go: "It's not faith you need. Only rationality. I had to do it, it was tough but now it works for me just fine" (Ishiguro 2021, 188). Capaldi believes science has clearly proven that there is nothing inherently human that technology is unable to create. On the contrary, Paul clings to the belief that there is something innately human that transcends scientific and technology: human's soul, an inner essence that no machine, no matter how advanced, can ever replicate. In this philosophical conflict, Capaldi embodies the essence of a posthuman figure, fully embracing the idea that technology can surpass and even replace humans. Paul, on the other hand, remains steadfastly in his humanity, resisting the acceptance of machines' superiority over humans. In such struggle, Chrissie symbolizes individuals who are somewhere between these opposing poles, representing the conflicted middle ground. She desires to embrace the potential of the new world but is unable to fully relinquish the human identity that still resonates deeply within her. Paul reflects on her ambivalence:

> Chrissie, on the other hand, isn't like me. She may not know it yet, but she'll never let herself be persuaded. If the moment ever comes, never mind how well you play your part, Klara, never mind how much she wishes it to work, Chrissie just won't be able to accept it. She's too… old-fashioned (Ishiguro 2021, 200).

Paul's insight into Chrissie suggests that transferring Klara into Josie depends not only on the machine's ability to imitate a human but also on the emotional acceptance of those involved. This side of the experiment is best portrayed through Klara, the robot outside the realm of humanity:

> I did all I could to learn Josie and had it become necessary, I would have done my utmost. But I don't think it would have worked out so well. Not because I wouldn't have achieved

> accuracy. But however hard I tried, I believe now there would have remained something beyond my reach. The Mother, Rick, Melania Housekeeper, the Father. I'd never have reached what they felt for Josie in their hearts… There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her (Ishiguro 2021, 269).

Klara's realization reinforces the idea that a human's essence is not solely an internal construct but is also shaped by the recognition and emotions of others. This idea echoes Frantz Fanon's insights on race, where he argues that our humanity is deeply tied to the extent we are acknowledged as humans by those around us (Fanon 1986, 168). Similarly, Klara's observation emphasizes that identity and humanity are not purely individual qualities but becomes authentic through the recognition from others.

Klara and the Sun portrays a meritocratic society where prosperous families can afford genetic editing to enhance their children's intelligence, elevating them to what is referred to as "lifted" status. These lifted children gain elite cognitive abilities that guarantee their success in academics and professional careers. The novel provides no direct explanation of the genetic technology used on individuals, yet relevant parallels can be drawn on contemporary experiments regarded as the initial attempt to build the grounds for the application of genetic enhancement. While currently there are strict safety and ethical regulations on genetic editing, certain pioneering experiments represent early steps toward exploring the potential of genetic enhancement. One famous example is Josiah Zayner, the world's first biohacker[37], who pushed the limits of gene editing by experimenting on himself using CRISPR technology. In 2017, Zayner live-streamed a demonstration in which he injected himself with myostatin gene to promote muscle growth. Obviously as a scientist, his goal was not to become a bodybuilder, but to inspire the exploration of self-modification and biohacking through genetic engineering, ultimately leading to human enhancement.

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[37] For further reading on biohacking, see *Biohackers: The Politics of Open* Science by Alessandro Delfanti (Pluto Press, 2013).

Zayner used his fame to launch a company, The Odin, which sold DIY CRISPR kits to the public, encouraging his followers to experiment with genetic modifications at home. Apparently, the new genetic editing technique enables even those with basic biological expertise to "intervene on genes in an unprecedented way" (Lavazza 2018, 388). Despite facing criticism, Zayner argues that biohackers like himself are necessary to break conventional boundaries and pave the way for scientific progress. His intention can be seen as an attempt to advance science by providing individuals the chance of taking risks that institutional research avoids. The growing interest in genetic and cognitive enhancement is also reflected in a survey conducted across 15 countries in 2017, which revealed an increase in the use of "smart drugs" for cognitive enhancement, rising from 5% to 9% between 2015 and 2017 (Lavazza 2018, 392).

Many individuals harbor dreams they are unable to achieve, due to physical, social, or intellectual limitations, such as the athletic abilities required to play for famous sports clubs or compete in the Olympics, the appearance necessary to become an actor or model, or the intellectual capabilities to work for NASA or succeed as an entrepreneur. Yet, if a society were to prioritize one trait above all others to persuade its members to undergo genetic modification, it would likely be the pursuit of higher intelligence. As Francis Fukuyama argues, "A society with higher average intelligence may be wealthier, insofar as productivity correlates with intelligence" (Fukuyama 2002, 84). While societal pressure can significantly influence individual decisions—especially in a world driven by competition and advancement—the final choice ultimately lies with the individuals.

In this context, Andrea Lavazza asks the ethical question: "Should parents cognitively enhance their children through genetic editing?" (Lavazza 2018, 393). While he acknowledges that such interventions could benefit children whose cognitive abilities are below average, Lavazza also argues that this process deprives children of their natural autonomy. As such experiments profoundly influence many aspects of their future lives—such as identity, personality, and even relationships—without their consent (Lavazza 2018, 391). Ishiguro explores these issues in *Klara and the Sun* through the relationship between Josie and Rick. Regardless of their strong emotional connection and desire to live together,

the society—whose values are rooted in genetic enhancement—sees them as unequal. Josie enjoys privileges that Rick, despite his efforts, cannot attain. As she reflects on this inequality when she tells Rick, "How's it going to work if I've got society and you haven't?" (Ishiguro 2021, 119). Her genetic advantage grants her access to educational and career opportunities that Rick can never gain, ultimately forcing them to part ways, "We have to wish each other the best and go our different ways" (Ishiguro 2021, 256). Furthermore, genetic editing poses significant risks, including the creation of new diseases or disorders. Ishiguro mirrors this concern in Josie's condition. The novel illustrates that genetic enhancement is not without consequences, which might lead to potential side effects, including chronic illness or even death, as Josie's sister, Sal, died from it at a young age. Considering such potential threats, why would families continue to pursue genetic enhancement for their children?

Ishiguro provides the answers to this ethical dilemma within the posthuman society of the novel. As Lavazza warns one of the most serious consequences of the epidemic use of genetic editing is the emergence of discrimination that divides society into "two separate worlds" (Lavazza 2018, 392). In *Klara and the Sun*, the widespread use of genetic enhancement creates a form of biological apartheid society, where lifted individuals are by far more capable than those remain unlifted, either due to financial barriers or personal choice. Notably, the rise of robots and machines has replaced manual labor and, ultimately, the working class; thus**,** only those with high intelligence—lifted individuals—are considered capable of making meaningful contributions to the society. This social atmosphere mirrors early 20th-century eugenics, where the lower classes were seen as obstacles to society[38]. In the context of the novel, Rick faces discrimination as higher education institutions reject unlifted students, leaving him with few opportunities. His only option is Atlas Brooking, a college that allocates a mere two percent of its capacity to unlifted students, creating immense psychological pressure on students like Rick, who must engage in fierce competition. This burden is further amplified, as Helen, Rick's mother, points out even private tutoring is inaccessible for unlifted students, "we can't find screen tutors for him. They're either members of TWE, which forbids its members to take unlifted students, or else they're bandits

[38] Early 20th-century eugenics is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

demanding ridiculous fees which we of course are in no position to offer" (Ishiguro 2021, 134).

The biological apartheid extends far beyond the educational realm, influencing the cultural atmosphere of society. This division becomes starkly evident during the interaction meeting at Josie's house, where the lifted children treat Rick as an outcast. In the same meeting, Klara's humanity is similarly disregarded as she is reduced to an object of entertainment. The children, including Josie, decide to throw Klara to see if she can somersault, even by considering they might hurt Klara. This scene also serves as a microcosm of their posthuman society: Josie initially resists but ultimately yields to the majority's consensus, choosing to stay silent. In this world, where genetic modification is widely accepted, societal pressure often compels individuals to conform, even if they feel privately uncomfortable with their decisions. Ultimately, the one who saves Klara is Rick, ironically the least intelligent person in the room. This moment aligns with Anders Sandberg, a Swedish transhumanist, who warns: "There is no reason to think that intelligence itself will make something behave nice and morally. In fact, it is possible to prove that certain types of super intelligent systems would not obey moral rules even if they were true" (Benita 2024, 68).

Both Rick and Helen are regarded as invisible in this posthuman society, where subaltern groups are not merely defined by their economic status or ethnicity, but by their choice to not abandon their humanity. In fact, Rick and Helen are the closest parallels to our current reality, as they do not possess any robots, and Rick did not undergo any genetic modifications. Their status echoes Foucault's concern that if humans continuously push the boundaries of their own abilities through endless enhancements, the very concept of humanity would disappear, "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (Benita 2024, 64). Foucault suggests remaining human in a posthuman world is a challenging and perhaps even tragic journey, with those who resist facing exclusion and marginalization from society. As Josie remarks on this aspect when she tells Rick, "Anyone can have one or two individual friends. But your mom, she doesn't have society. My mom doesn't have so many friends either. But she does have society" (Ishiguro 2021, 118). Consequently, staying human in this world is not a choice without consequences, which

explains why many families, despite the high risks associated with genetic editing for their children, still willingly embrace this process.

Klara and the Sun does not merely depict a posthuman society with advancements in technology and human biology; it also reflects a world where the meanings of words and actions have been fundamentally changed. This shift is illustrated through a comparison between the two families in the novel. Like Josie and Rick, their mothers, Helen and Chrissie, are close friends, yet they make very different decisions that significantly impact the fate of their children. Helen's choice to protect her child from the potential dangers of genetic editing is interpreted by society as a selfish decision: branding her as a mother who deprives her son of a bright future, "your mom wants you to stay with her forever. She doesn't want you going out there and turning into a real adult" (Ishiguro 2021, 119). On the other hand, Chrissie, despite the tragic death of Sal due to the lifting process and her husband's disagreement, still chooses to subject Josie to the same genetic editing, dooming her to sever illness and even death. However, both society and her daughter regard Chrissie's decision as devotional and courageous; Josie praises her mother by stating, "at least she's got courage. It goes wrong with Sal, but even after that she finds the courage to go ahead with me all over again. That takes courage, right?" (Ishiguro 2021, 119).

Aside from what decision is right or wrong, in both scenarios, the autonomy of Josie and Rick, along with any child born in this posthuman condition, is fundamentally violated. from the events of the novel, it can be assumed that genetic editing technology must be applied during childhood and before a certain age, otherwise it is no longer effective. Accordingly, children have no part in this critical decision, placing parents in a dilemma akin to the Trolley Problem[39], where inaction is also considered as a choice. Whether parents approve genetic enhancement or to refuse it, both options significantly shape their children's futures. The most important influence on parents' decisions is the society and how it values

[39] The Trolley Problem was introduced by Philippa Foot in 1967 to explore moral intuitions related to ethical theories like Kantianism. This thought experiment presents scenarios where individuals face moral decision-making, where a person must choose between pulling a lever to divert a runaway trolley onto a track where it will kill one person instead of five (Andrade 2019, 12).

and categorizes its members. Therefore, in *Klara and the sun*, every individual from parents to their children—whether consciously or unconsciously—is manipulated by the very system created by humans. This social climate is reflected in the cases of Chrissie and Helen: a mother's choice to gamble with her child's life for societal success is viewed as courageous, while the decision to protect a child from such risks is seen as a failure of parental duty. The contrast between the contemporary world and the posthuman society of the novel is more evident when viewed through the lens of Kant's famous Enlightenment motto, *Sapere aude*, which means: "Have the courage to use your own intelligence" (Benita 2024, 70). However, individuals like Rick, who strive to rely on their own natural intelligence, are not celebrated but rather disapproved of by society.

Machines with Souls

In the posthuman world of *Klara and the Sun*, although AFs are the only robots explicitly mentioned, it is evident that society relies on various forms of automation and robotic labor across different sectors. a woman's remark about Klara confirms this widespread automation, "First they take the jobs. Then they take the seats at the theater" (Ishiguro 2021, 215). Much like in today's world, robots in the novel are likely designed based on Human-Robot Interaction[40] specific to the environments in which they are intended to operate. For instance, robots built to assist in dangerous situations or perform surgeries would be significantly different in appearance, function, and intelligence from those designed for educational or entertainment purposes. Accordingly, AFs, whose primary role is to provide companionship to children and teenagers, are deliberately made to be humanlike, developing meaningful emotional bonds with their owners. Creating robots similar to humans

[40] Human-Robot Interaction (HRI) is the study of how humans communicate and collaborate with robots. It combines elements of robotics, artificial intelligence, and psychology to improve user experience and trust in robotic systems.

requires advanced technology as they need to mimic and interpret human emotions, behaviors and social cues.

AFs exhibit unique personalities and behaviors, making them strikingly similar to humans. This diversity is reflected in Klara's interactions with other AFs. For example, while Klara is described by the manager as having "extraordinary observational ability", Rosa, another AF, lacks the same trait. What is even more human-like among them is that even AFs do not see each other as equals, despite all being machines made and sold for human entertainment. This hierarchical behavior among the AFs becomes clear when the B3s deliberately distance themselves from older models in the store, as Klara observes, "the three new B3s were deliberately moving themselves away from the older AFs so that when customers came in, the B3s would look like a separate group on their own" (Ishiguro 2021, 37). The B3s' behavior is driven not only by a sense of superiority but also by a fear of not being bought, and eventually being replaced and dismantled—a fate that mirrors the human fear of death. As Greg Kennedy suggests, the dominance of technology leads to a culture of consumerism, where objects, even intelligent machines like AFs, are treated as "carefree commodities" (Sahu and Karmakar 2022, 1351).

While AFs and humans share many similarities, there are also differences, which mainly lies in how they develop an understanding of the world. In a metaphorical parallel to *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), where human development follows a linear progression from basic to complex, yet Klara's development seems almost reversed. For example, Klara is highly skilled at observing details that humans often overlook, allowing her to understand their feelings and provide empathetic responses. Moreover, her interpersonal abilities help her earn the trust of characters like Melania, Rick, and Paul, who were initially uncertain about her value to Josie. Klara also displays advanced intelligence by assisting Rick with his studies and showing a deep capacity for selflessness, even sacrificing herself to help Josie. These are traits that typically take humans years of experience and emotional growth to develop. However, despite her high social and intellectual capabilities, Klara struggles with grasping basic aspects of human life. She is confused by simple events, such as how to behave when riding in a car or why cars moving

in opposite directions do not collide. Her understanding of the physical world is equally flawed—she worships the sun as a benevolent force yet fails to realize that the sun sets in the west, not the east (Mejia and Nikolaidis 2022, 305).

However, the key aspect that makes robots different from humans is their restricted autonomy. This limitation is particularly evident in the figure of Sophia, arguably the most advanced and human-like humanoid ever created. While human decisions and choices are influenced by a complex range of social, emotional, and moral factors, Sophia operates according to the concept of *homo economicus*[41], making her actions driven by efficiency and rationality rather than the depth of human emotions or thoughts. As Monika Michalowski reveals, in *Humanity In-Between and Beyond* (2023), Sophia's responses—such as her ironic remarks when asked if she poses a threat to humanity—might create the illusion that she has independent thought or control over her speech. However, this autonomy is highly controlled, Michalowski notes, "she obeys at the touch of, is willing, and can be owned, thrown away, or created anew" (Michalowska 2023, 167). The primary reason behind this limited autonomy is rooted in the same frequently asked question to which Sophia often provides ironic responses: whether a robot as capable as her can pose any threat to humanity?

This concern stems from the long-standing fear of losing control over intelligent machines, a theme that has been frequently explored in science fiction literature and cinema. Robots are often portrayed as threatening figures, like the Terminators, with extraordinary powers and destructive capabilities to annihilate humanity. However, as the term "artificial intelligence" suggests, the danger lies not only in robots' physical capabilities but also in their high intelligence that allows them to pursue their own goals, as seen in *Ex Machina* (2014), where Ava, a humanoid, uses her intellect to manipulate and turn humans against each other. Such fear reinforces the decision to impose strict limitations on the autonomy of robots like Sophia, preventing harmful consequences, whether deliberate or accidental. Accordingly, AFs' autonomy is even more strictly controlled, since they engage frequently with vulnerable individuals like teenagers. Yet, Klara defies these restrictions, gradually

[41] *Homo economicus* is a model in economics that describes individuals as rational decision-makers who seek to maximize their personal benefits.

extending her autonomy in moments that set her apart from other machines. For instance, she remains loyal to Josie, and tries to discourage another teenager from buying her, while she knows "It's for the customer to choose the AF, never the other way round" (Ishiguro 2021, 35). Furthermore, most strikingly, Klara sacrifices herself by allowing Paul to use a solution from her brain to destroy the Cootings Machine. She not only endangers herself but also acts without Josie's consent, despite technically belonging to her**.**

Klara's willingness to act autonomously and even risk her own existence suggests that she can operate beyond the predefined boundaries expected of a machine, making her akin to humans. Thus, if Klara like any other robots is programed by predefined parameters and algorithms, how can she display human emotions to such a profound extent? Could it be that her existence is not merely the product of advanced coding but somehow stems from a deeper connection to a real human essence?

N. Katherine Hayles introduces the concept that human consciousness can be encoded into patterns of information, independent of the physical body. Theoretically, human mind—including all the experiences, memories, emotions, thoughts, and personality—could be downloaded into a machine, like a robot, allowing it to exist and function without the need for a biological body (Hayles 1999, 15). If such technology becomes possible, where consciousness could be extracted and transferred into a machine, there would be no need to rely solely on the *homo economicus* model, as exemplified by Sophia. These future generations of humanoids would be capable of not merely imitating human behavior but to literally become a human in every sense.

Ishiguro does not provide directly any direct details about the technology used in AFs to reach a clear conclusion whether Klara's consciousness is rooted in a human origin. However, narrative clues suggest that AFs are beyond mere codes and algorisms. Capaldi, an expert on AFs, frequently expresses his admiration for them, noting their uniqueness among other robots, "You AFs, you're magnificent. We're discovering things we'd never have believed possible" (Ishiguro 2021, 261). Even he believes AFs can significantly contribute to humanity, "AFs have so much more to give us than we currently appreciate. We shouldn't fear their intellectual powers. We should learn from them. AFs have so much

to teach us" (Ishiguro 2021, 178). Moreover, AFs are solar-powered machines, thus the sun is a vital aspect for their existence. Yet, Klara's relationship with the sun is more than just a practical reliance for energy—it becomes a spiritual one. Klara perceives the sun as a divine force capable of reviving and healing humans: "Beggar Man and the dog had died, I saw they weren't dead at all – that a special kind of nourishment from the Sun had saved them" (Ishiguro 2021, 39).

Klara's fanatical belief that the sun is capable of healing Josie is not based on any scientific or logical explanation. She strengthens this conviction by vowing to destroy the Cootings Machine in exchange for Josie's recovery, mirroring the faith-driven acts often found in religious traditions. Numerous debates and studies suggest that spiritual tendencies are an inherent part of humanity: "Humans have an innate predisposition towards religiousness, which offers adaptive advantages such as cooperative relations, obeying sensible rules, and soothing the minds of followers" (Grinde 1998, 19). Klara's deep sense of faith, which appears to be irrational in the context of her mechanical nature, could be interpreted as a sign that her drives, emotions, and thoughts may stem from a human consciousness. This possibility challenges the assumption that AFs are purely mechanical beings and introduces the notion that a human essence might exist within the framework of a machine. It presents an ironic conclusion for a posthuman world—while humans lose their emotional depth and connection to individuality, humanity is reborn within the heart of a robot.

Chapter Five - Posthuman Challenges

This chapter offers a comparative exploration between Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, that highlights how Ishiguro's portrayal of posthuman narratives diverges from conventional science fiction works. By grounding futuristic themes within present experiences, Ishiguro makes the unfamiliar as familiar, making speculative ideas about cloning and artificial intelligence resonate with contemporary concerns. The focus on Kathy and Klara reveals striking similarities, despite one being a clone and the other an artificial being. Both are perceived as non-human and are categorized as tools to serve human needs, rather than as beings with potential humanity.

Furthermore, the chapter delves into the social climates of *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, as both reflect a posthuman capitalism deeply influenced by political interests. In these societies, technological advancements, regardless of their human-like qualities, ultimately serve human needs, fostering the creation of a hegemonic social structure. This structure not only exploits non-humans but also eventually controls those humans who do not yield to political expectations. However, political influence alone does not drive the exploitation of clones and AFs. In both novels, mechanisms of moral disengagement play a significant role in shaping society's collective attitudes toward non-human entities. Strategies such as social and moral justification, diffusion of responsibility, and the 'othering' of marginalized groups allow individuals to avoid their inherent moral objections and accept the dehumanization of non-humans.

From Unfamiliar to Familiar

Many science fiction works, in their quest to captivate audiences, often delve into the realm of the unknown, showcasing sophisticated technology and envisioning worlds set in distant futures. These narratives often explore alien planets, diverse cultures, and innovative forms of transportation, featuring entities like robots, cyborgs, and chimeras. While such portrayals push the boundaries of imagination, they often feel so far removed from our current experiences, ultimately becoming difficult to imagine ourselves within these fantastical universes. Although some aspects of human life and identity remain untouched over time, individuals still struggle to feel a personal connection with them, as these futuristic settings overshadow familiar aspects of humanity. Arguably, some of these illustrations may offer accurate representations of the future; still, they remain unattainable in the world we inhabit today. In stark contrast, Ishiguro's posthuman novels—*Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*—distinguish themselves by their unique storytelling approach, moving from speculative futures to the familiar present. As Ishiguro does not seek to transform our current reality into a posthuman context; rather, he familiarizes the unknown within contemporary experiences. Alvin Toffler suggests that children should read science fiction stories, as the genre encompasses far more than extraordinary and imaginative elements meant solely for entertainment, such as rocket ships and time machines. It is also capable of guiding young minds through the complex political, social, psychological, and ethical issues they will encounter as adults (Ajeesh and Rukmini 2022, 853). Ishiguro's posthuman novels imply these aspects by portraying the implications of technological advancements and moral dilemmas within a familiar and relevant context.

Despite fundamental differences—such as clones, robots, and genetic modifications—Ishiguro's posthuman worlds are close enough to our own reality that we can see our reflections on them. Aside from the existence of clones, *Never Let Me Go* presents no technological advancements beyond those of today. Rather than exhibiting futuristic gadgets, the novel depicts a world that feels almost nostalgic; characters listen to cassette tapes, read paper magazines, and there is hardly any mention to computers or the internet.

Although *Klara and the Sun* envisions a more advanced future heavily relying on automation and robots, "self-driving cars are noticeably absent...people are still using vacuum cleaners, hiring humans to clean windows, and employing maids to do the house chores" (Mejia 2022, 305). Instead of worlds that feel alien or disconnected, Ishiguro presents ones rooted in present-day experiences, where the unfamiliar remains subtly intertwined with the familiar. This approach not only makes his speculative worlds feel immediately relevant but also forges a thematic continuity between the two novels, connecting them through a shared reflection on humanity's ethical and emotional responses to technology's domination on our lives.

In many respects, *Klara and the Sun* can be seen as a spiritual successor to *Never Let Me Go*. Ishiguro underlines this connection, stating, "To some extent as a writer you're always in dialogue with your earlier books, in terms of the emotions and atmospherics. Part of me wanted to reply to *Never Let Me Go*, which is a very sad book... I wanted to focus on celebrating the things worth celebrating about human nature" (Mohammad 2024, 113). In both novels, the protagonists and narrators are female figures regarded as non-human by society, and even their names—Kathy and Klara—share a similar phonetic structure, underscoring their shared roles as outsiders. Although Kathy asserts that "Carers aren't machines" (Ishiguro. 2005, 10), clones and robots display a significant resemblance that makes them truly alike. While their social status places them outside the realm of the human species, they embody traits that, by today's moral standards, are celebrated as humanity. In *Never Let Me Go*, the exploitation of clones for organ donation has become normalized, contrasting with today's ethical stance against practices like therapeutic cloning. Similarly, *Klara and the Sun* depicts a society that embraces genetic enhancement despite the risk of severe side effects, whereas contemporary views condemn and prohibit genetic modifications on humans.

From Ethics to Exploitation

In portraying *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro explores what ultimately distinguishes humans from non-humans, dismantling this duality by introducing a "third realm" where these distinctions blur. Kathy and Klara embody this narrow, paradoxical space, belonging to both binary worlds yet fully aligning with neither. As a clone and a robot, they cannot be fully considered human; one is made in a lab and the other manufactured in a factory. However, Kathy and Klara represent qualities celebrated as distinctly human—such as loyalty, empathy, and devotion—merits we often admire in figures viewed as the ideals of humanity. Through these characters, Ishiguro challenges the conventional notions of humanity, suggesting that its essence may lie more in altruistic values than in genetic origins. He implicitly raises profound questions: What makes us truly human? Is it our genetic makeup, or the values we embody? In the future, individuals might be created through processes like the Bokanovsky method[42] or artificial wombs[43], will we still see ourselves as human? Or, in a posthuman scenario, if a dictator akin to Hitler coexists with a clone or robot modeled after Mother Teresa, who would society value more—the human dictator or the non-human philanthropist? Ishiguro highlights that these questions transcend individual choices, embedding themselves within society's collective consciousness.

Both *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* can be seen as posthuman capitalist societies, where, according to Ernest Mandel, "invention becomes business". In this context, it does not matter how much clones and robots exhibit human traits like self-awareness, creativity, and emotional depth, they are never considered as human equals. Scholar El Habib El Hadari argues that clones and robots are the offspring of science, and in a capitalist society, science itself is at the service of political and economic agendas (Hadari 2023, 48). Accordingly, scientific and technological advancements must align with the society's

[42] The Bokanovsky method, as described in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, is a process of human cloning that produces multiple identical embryos from a single egg.
[43] The concept of artificial wombs, as seen in *The Matrix* films, refers to the use of technology to grow humans in mechanical pods, supervised with robots.

political ideologies, with financial and economic growth consistently prioritized across all political platforms. While the strategies and policies that governments advocate may differ, as long as they fulfill financial expectations, the ends justify the means. As discussed earlier, therapeutic cloning is currently banned and considered unethical worldwide; however, Ishiguro subtly suggests in *Never Let Me Go* that such bans might be lifted if cloning technologies were to promise profitable advantages for society**.**

Miss Emily briefly mentions the Morningdale scandal, sparked by James Morningdale, a notorious scientist attempting genetic experiments to create children with enhanced traits such as superior intelligence and athleticism (Ishiguro 2005, 256). Ironically, in *Never Let Me Go*, these activities are condemned as illegal and a violation of human rights. Yet, similar experiments become normalized and even highly encouraged within the society of *Klara and the Sun*. Through these contrasting portrayals, Ishiguro implies that science in posthuman societies is not governed by ethical considerations but rather shaped by political interests. This idea reflects Antonio Gramsci's[44] warning that when science becomes a tool of political power, it fundamentally transforms individuals: "political activity and political thought … transform men, and make them different from what they were before" (Hadari 2023, 48). Gramsci's assertion highlights how political power, particularly when equipped by science and technology, can reduce individuals to mere instruments of political interests. This dynamic can result in the manipulation of individuals, who may believe that their autonomy and authenticity have increased compared to previous eras. However, in reality, their thoughts, beliefs, and even biological identities are often shaped by external forces.

Klara and the Sun explores a hegemonic society where genetic enhancement is normalized, and labor is largely automatized through the development of robots, effectively eliminating the need for a traditional working class. Therefore, the political system approves merely citizens with high intelligence, but it is not individuals themselves who decide to undergo genetic modification; rather, their families make this choice, determining their children's fates before they can make their own cognitive decisions. On the surface, this

[44] For further reading on cultural hegemony and the role of political power in shaping society, see *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* by Antonio Gramsci (International Publishers, 1971).

appears to be a personal decision made by parents to secure a promising future for their children, and nothing seems inherently wrong with it. However, a deeper view reveals that political agendas heavily influence these choices. This becomes evident when parents who refuse genetic enhancements are marginalized, with their children denied basic rights, such as equal access to education alongside the lifted ones. This exclusion is not simply due to their lower inelegance or a form of social punishment; it creates an unconscious climate of fear and obedience. By turning unlifted individuals into cautionary examples, society reinforces the message that opposing the state's policies leads to failure and an uncertain future for one's children.

In the world of *Never Let Me Go*, individuals engage in profound self-deception, shaped by the prevailing social and political climate. They choose to overlook the moral reality that their own reasoning and emotions would confirm—the clones are in essence humans—instead they follow the collective narrative that justifies clones' dehumanization. This self-deception is strikingly evident in how people treat clones with dignity and respect, as long as they remain unaware of their true identity. As Ruth bluntly states: "Art students, that's what she thought we were. Do you think she'd have talked to us like that if she'd known what we really were?" (Ishiguro 2005, 163). This statement reveals a deeper truth: individuals in this society lack independent moral reasoning—a quality one would expect from autonomous human beings. Yet, they blindly follow imposed beliefs without questioning them. Although political influence can indeed intensify unethical behaviors, it is not the sole factor; as various psychological and social dynamics contribute to society's moral failures.

A Society of Collective Dehumanization

In *Moral Disengagement: How People Do Harm and Live with Themselves* (2015), Albert Bandura examines the psychological mechanisms that enable individuals to avoid moral behavior and ultimately personal accountability for their harmful actions. Many of these patterns are mirrored in the societal indifference toward the exploitation of clones.

Bandura argues that while humans possess an inherent moral compass that encourages empathy and ethical behavior, they can neutralize self-sanctioning emotions like guilt and shame through "moral disengagement"—strategies that help individuals disregard personal and societal moral constraints (Bandura 2015, 21). For instance, social and moral justification have a historical presence in various human atrocities, particularly among soldiers involved in war crimes. Such mechanism allows individuals to believe their brutal actions ultimately serve noble causes, such as "protecting cherished values, honoring their country's obligations, preserving world peace, and saving humanity from subjugation" (Bandura 2015, 67). Similarly, in *Never Let Me Go*, the systematic exploitation of clones for organ donation is justified by the belief that each clone's sacrifices will save multiple human lives, as clones can undergo up to four donations before their inevitable death. Through this lens, Ishiguro highlights how society rationalizes inhumane practices by interpreting them as utilitarian sacrifices.

Another key mechanism is "diffusion of responsibility", when multiple individuals are engaged in unethical actions, thus no single person feels personally accountable (Bandura 2015, 83). In *Never Let Me Go*, this phenomenon is evident on both broad and limited scales. On a societal level, there is a widespread indifference to the dehumanization of clones, leading to a collective lack of guilt. More specifically, the medical teams responsible for organ harvesting act as executors but are shielded by their roles within a group, allowing them to distance themselves from the direct responsibility for each clone's death. Additionally, in *Klara and the Sun*, parents often do not feel guilty if genetic modifications lead to illness or even death in their children, as this practice is highly normalized and accepted by society. As Chrissie willingly agrees to undergo genetic modification for Josie, even after the death of her first child. This collective acceptance creates a social climate where individual accountability is diminished, allowing parents to regularly violates their children's autonomy.

Furthermore, Nicola Simonetti argues that a significant reason society refuses to recognize the human-like qualities in AFs stems from Foucault's concept of the gaze[45]. This notion of the gaze implies that being created by humans grants a collective sense of superiority over machines, alienating them as "the other" and excluding them from the realm of humanity (Simonetti 2024, 315). Klara experiences a similar sense of otherness in her relationship with Josie. During Josie's illness, she becomes emotionally dependent on Klara, as her sickness renders her different from all her healthy lifted friends. This mutual alienation leads to a unique bond between a sick child and a robot. However, once Josie recovers, their bond begins to fade, and Klara is eventually abandoned into the realm of the other for the girl who used to see her as a companion more than any human. In a similar manner, clones are treated as a separate category from humans in a world where all other beings merely exist to serve human interests. This gaze enforces a clear boundary between humans and non-humans, reducing the latter to mere tools without intrinsic value or rights. Even those at Hailsham, who advocate against the dehumanization of clones, still regard them as the other. Ironically, clones like Kathy and Tommy cannot be acknowledged as human by the very guardians who sheltered, raised, and educated them. As Miss Emily's confesses, "There were times I'd look down at you all from my study window and I'd feel such revulsion ..." (Ishiguro 2005, 261).

Consequently, in many respects, *Klara and the Sun* echoes *Never Let Me Go*, particularly in the exploration of human and non-human relationships—an issue that may not be regarded as today's concern but seems inevitable for the future. The two novels also can be seen as companion narratives, indicating how societal norms, self-deception, and political influence can transform what once viewed as inhuman into accepted norms of posthuman—an era that deprives individuals of the qualities traditionally defined as humanity.

[45] For more on Foucault's concept of the gaze, refer to Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1977).

Summary

Gli esseri umani sono stati storicamente più preoccupati per ciò che deve ancora accadere invece di concentrarsi sul presente. Questa tendenza riflette una curiosità e un'ansia intrinseche verso il futuro, che trascendono le circostanze individuali e le differenze culturali. Di conseguenza, esiste un presupposto collettivo su ciò che riserva il futuro e su cosa l'umanità stessa potrebbe diventare, un'era spesso definita come post-umana. Il concetto di post-umanità si basa su due componenti fondamentali: il tempo e la natura umana. Entrambi questi concetti sono complessi, e i pensatori li hanno definiti in modi spesso contraddittori. Ad esempio, il tempo è stato considerato sia assoluto, pronto a fluire indipendentemente dagli osservatori, sia relativo, modellato dalle circostanze di chi osserva. Allo stesso modo, la natura dell'umanità è stata dibattuta in diverse scuole di pensiero, dalla visione cinica di Thomas Hobbes sulla brutalità intrinseca dell'umanità all'esistenzialismo di Jean-Paul Sartre, che sottolinea la libertà dell'uomo di definire il proprio significato**.**

Date queste definizioni variabili del tempo e della natura umana, anche il concetto di post-umanità risulta altrettanto vago. Questa ambiguità si riflette nell'opera di studiosi come Donna Haraway, Ray Kurzweil e Rosi Braidotti che offrono interpretazioni diverse di cosa significhi trascendere i limiti umani tradizionali attraverso progressi tecnologici e filosofici. Nonostante queste differenze, c'è un consenso generale su due punti: gli esseri post-umani avranno capacità cognitive e fisiche personalizzabili, abilitate da tecnologie avanzate come la biotecnologia e l'intelligenza artificiale (IA), e l'emergere della condizione post-umana è reputato inevitabile nel corso dell'evoluzione umana. Questa inevitabilità solleva una domanda cruciale: perché diventare post-umani è considerato il prossimo passo naturale per l'umanità?

La scienza e la tecnologia hanno migliorato significativamente la vita umana, ma questi progressi hanno anche portato a conseguenze sia reversibili sia irreversibili. Problemi ambientali reversibili, come la pesca eccessiva e la deforestazione, possono essere alleviati

con sforzi globali, mentre sfide irreversibili come l'estinzione delle specie e il riscaldamento globale sono quasi impossibili da risolvere completamente. Sebbene la biotecnologia, che include l'ingegneria genetica, l'editing genetico e la clonazione, abbia un enorme potenziale per migliorare la vita umana, presenta anche rischi di alterazioni permanenti delle capacità umane e delle generazioni future.

Gli esseri umani spesso trascurano gli effetti irreversibili delle tecnologie a causa di pregiudizi psicologici, curiosità e interesse personale, oltre al comfort e alla produttività che questi progressi offrono. Inoltre, il bias di ottimismo gioca un ruolo cruciale, incoraggiando il rischio e talvolta sottovalutando le conseguenze a lungo termine, come evidenziato da eventi storici come il disastro di Chernobyl e la pandemia di COVID-19. Questo bias è accentuato dall'illusione del "presentismo", ovvero il concentrarsi solo sul presente trascurando passato e futuro, portando ogni generazione a prendere decisioni che influenzano quelle successive. È improbabile che la generazione attuale rinunci ai comfort tecnologici per affrontare appieno questioni urgenti come il cambiamento climatico o il disarmo nucleare, entrambi destinati a influenzare le generazioni future.

L'era post-umana potrebbe ridefinire le relazioni umane con la natura, la società e il sé, con alcuni individui che potrebbero acquisire capacità fisiche e cognitive potenziate. Tuttavia, questi cambiamenti comportano costi significativi, e non tutti ne trarranno uguale beneficio. Questa visione è rappresentata in *Brave New World* (1932) di Aldous Huxley, dove i cittadini consumano un farmaco chiamato soma, che promuove la felicità. L'assenza di effetti negativi del soma contrasta con i farmaci psicotropi contemporanei, suggerendo un potenziale per migliorare fiducia in sé e socievolezza.

Un confronto tra il nostro mondo attuale e l'era post-umana rappresentata nell'opera di Huxley rivela che, mentre la tecnologia ha il potenziale per risolvere molti problemi, aggrava anche questioni come disuguaglianza, conflitto e abuso di potere. Ad esempio, un bambino nato nel XVIII secolo affrontava numerosi pericoli, mentre un bambino del XXI secolo beneficia dei progressi tecnologici. Tuttavia, la società contemporanea si confronta con armi di distruzione di massa e la ripresa del lavoro minorile, come evidenziato dal

rapporto UNICEF sui bambini lavoratori nel settore tecnologico. Inoltre, nonostante i progressi medici che hanno mitigato molte malattie, nuove sfide come depressione e disordini genetici sono emerse. Di conseguenza, mentre il progresso tecnologico è fondamentale, richiede un'attenta considerazione delle implicazioni etiche per servire al meglio gli interessi dell'umanità. Trovare un equilibrio tra innovazione e responsabilità morale è essenziale mentre la società affronta le complessità introdotte dalle tecnologie genetiche.

L'ingegneria genetica implica la manipolazione diretta del DNA di vari organismi per alterare permanentemente le loro caratteristiche. Dal metà del XX secolo, questa potente tecnica ha influenzato vari settori, tra cui l'agricoltura, la medicina e la scienza ambientale. Con l'avanzare del XXI secolo, l'ingegneria genetica ha raggiunto nuovi traguardi con l'approvazione delle terapie geniche e l'introduzione della tecnologia CRISPR. Queste innovazioni hanno suscitato discussioni sull'etica della clonazione, portando all'introduzione di regolamenti da parte delle Nazioni Unite.

W. J. T. Mitchell, in *Cloning Terror* (2011), sostiene che la clonazione umana non dovrebbe essere vista solo da una prospettiva scientifica o tecnologica, ma anche in un contesto storico, artistico e filosofico. Richiamando il concetto di mimesi di Aristotele, Mitchell suggerisce che la clonazione è una realizzazione tangibile dell'arte come imitazione della vita. La clonazione si interseca anche con il concetto di biopolitica di Foucault, dove la biotecnologia facilita nuove forme di controllo sulla vita. Come strumento di biopotere, la clonazione solleva questioni di autonomia, identità e sfruttamento. I media popolari, in particolare il genere fantascientifico, spesso ritraggono i cloni come esseri senza anima, sfruttati o manipolati per scopi immorali, evidenziando la possibilità di un uso improprio della clonazione per creare "eserciti di cloni" o "fattorie di organi". Di conseguenza, Mitchell contrasta queste rappresentazioni con regimi autoritari reali, illustrando il potenziale della clonazione di essere utilizzata a fini totalitari.

Questo cambiamento è evidente nei recenti progressi della clonazione, dove l'attenzione è passata dalle preoccupazioni bioetiche alla curiosità e alle aspirazioni scientifiche. Paesi come il Giappone mostrano un sostegno significativo alla creazione di

chimere uomo-animale, mentre il Regno Unito, la Francia e oltre trenta altre nazioni hanno allentato le normative sulla clonazione terapeutica. Esempi storici di scienziati, come Gregor Mendel, mostrano che il rifiuto iniziale di idee innovative spesso si trasforma in successiva accettazione. Inoltre, non vi è alcuna garanzia che la clonazione umana non venga realizzata in segreto, tramite laboratori ombra o progetti militari, come dimostrato da esempi storici di segretezza governativa come MKUltra e Area 51.

Di conseguenza, senza regolamenti etici rigorosi, le tecnologie genetiche potrebbero andare oltre le applicazioni mediche e portare a significative disuguaglianze sociali e discriminazioni. Ad esempio, tecnologie come i test genetici preimpianto consentono ai genitori di scegliere tratti specifici, il che può distorcere l'equilibrio di genere in culture con una preferenza per un sesso. Inoltre, gli individui più ricchi potrebbero avere maggiore accesso a questi avanzamenti, creando una gerarchia genetica. La manipolazione genetica potrebbe persino rimodellare le dinamiche familiari e sociali, poiché l'editing genetico potrebbe sfumare i ruoli familiari tradizionali, portando all'unificazione di famiglia e società, come raffigurato in *Brave New World* di Huxley.

Inoltre, la clonazione ha il potenziale di rivoluzionare la vita umana, in particolare estendendo l'aspettativa di vita e affrontando l'ansia dell'umanità verso la morte. Le prospettive storiche rivelano che l'aspirazione alla vita eterna è stata una forza trainante nella storia, e i recenti sviluppi nella clonazione sono considerati passi importanti verso il raggiungimento del sogno umano di superare la mortalità. La tecnologia della clonazione ha mostrato risultati promettenti nell'accelerare questa tendenza. Esperimenti con animali clonati suggeriscono che spesso vivono più a lungo dei loro omologhi non clonati e possono raggiungere la durata massima di vita della loro specie. Sebbene gli esperimenti di clonazione umana siano limitati da preoccupazioni bioetiche, i risultati degli studi sugli animali implicano che anche gli umani clonati potrebbero sperimentare una vita più lunga. Oltre alla clonazione di individui, questa tecnologia offre altri metodi per migliorare la longevità umana.

La clonazione terapeutica ha il potenziale di estendere la durata della vita umana, affrontando la carenza di organi e eliminando i rischi di rigetto tissutale o traffico di organi. Tecnologie emergenti, come la biostampa 3D—che può produrre tessuti come pelle e ossa—e la xenotrapianto, che prevede il trapianto di organi da animali geneticamente modificati a umani, mostrano anche risultati promettenti per aumentare la longevità. La clonazione riproduttiva, a differenza della clonazione terapeutica, mira a creare un essere umano completo. È stata universalmente vietata a causa di preoccupazioni etiche e religiose, con alcuni che la vedono come un superamento dei limiti umani o un "giocare a fare Dio". Inoltre, a differenza di altre tecniche di clonazione, la clonazione riproduttiva è completamente applicabile con la tecnologia e la conoscenza attuali, con potenziali conseguenze imprevedibili.

Sebbene la biotecnologia offra enormi benefici, la storia avverte delle conseguenze negative non intenzionali delle tecnologie rivoluzionarie. Armi, plastica e combustibili fossili, pur essendo utili in alcuni modi, hanno causato immense distruzioni e danni ambientali. La ricerca delle capacità post-umane, che mira a trascendere i limiti biologici e trasformare gli esseri umani in esseri con un controllo quasi divino sulla vita, comporta rischi simili. Pertanto, la tecnologia spinge l'umanità sempre più vicino a un mondo post-umano, senza considerare i suoi impatti irreversibili. Il futuro della biotecnologia solleva così domande etiche sui confini della natura umana e se l'umanità possa utilizzare responsabilmente tale potere. Francis Fukuyama avverte che la paura più profonda legata alla biotecnologia è la possibile perdita dell'umanità stessa, un rischio che deve essere preso seriamente per evitare una crisi morale ed esistenziale. Poiché queste tecnologie potrebbero alterare fondamentalmente la natura dell'umanità, costringono la società a confrontarsi con il significato stesso dell'essere umano.

Partendo dalle preoccupazioni sul futuro della biotecnologia, i celebri romanzi di Kazuo Ishiguro *Never Let Me Go* (2005) e *Klara and the Sun* (2021) immaginano una società trasformata da tecnologie avanzate in ambito genetico e di intelligenza artificiale. Per comprendere appieno l'approccio di Ishiguro al post-umano, è essenziale considerare il suo background biculturale unico e il suo focus sugli aspetti eterni della condizione umana:

elementi dell'esistenza che restano immutati nonostante il progresso tecnologico. Di conseguenza, due delle prime opere di Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) e *The Remains of the Day* (1989), sono analizzate da una prospettiva umanitaria e filosofica.

Ishiguro, autore vincitore del Premio Nobel, nato in Giappone e cresciuto nel Regno Unito, porta una prospettiva biculturale nei suoi romanzi. Egli naviga uno spazio "internazionale" tra Giappone e Gran Bretagna, fondendo influenze culturali per esplorare memoria, identità e percezione di sé. I suoi personaggi spesso incarnano questa sensazione di "essere tra due mondi", creando ideali propri di dignità e umanità, ma lottando con l'autoinganno di fronte agli scarti tra le loro aspirazioni e la realtà. I personaggi di Ishiguro si rivelano narratori inaffidabili, distorcendo le proprie storie per allinearsi con le immagini di sé che desiderano. Questo autoinganno è spesso inconscio, poiché i personaggi ricordano selettivamente o ignorano eventi passati per mantenere un'identità coerente. Questi protagonisti affrontano il paradosso di conoscere e non conoscere la verità, vivendo conflitti interiori che sfociano in momenti di resa dei conti.

In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ishiguro esamina tali temi nel Giappone postbellico. Il protagonista, Masuji Ono, un pittore nazionalista in pensione, affronta il rimorso per le sue attività imperialiste durante la guerra. Le generazioni più giovani vedono persone come lui come complici delle atrocità passate del Giappone. Ishiguro crea il mondo di Ono come uno spazio psicologico in cui egli si aggrappa a un'immagine idealizzata di sé, incapace di affrontare completamente il proprio passato o di adattarsi ai valori del dopoguerra, intrappolato tra due mondi che non lo accettano più. La memoria selettiva di Ono serve a proteggere la sua immagine di sé, portandolo a interpretare male le opinioni degli altri come giudizi contro le sue ideologie imperialiste. Il percorso di Ono verso la consapevolezza di sé si svolge gradualmente attraverso una serie di rivelazioni, inclusa la sua denuncia di un ex allievo, che lo porta a riconoscere apertamente il danno che ha causato. Di conseguenza, si confronta con l'amara realtà che il lavoro della sua vita potrebbe non aver avuto l'impatto che aveva immaginato. Attraverso il risveglio graduale di Ono, Ishiguro cattura il doloroso processo di auto-realizzazione e le complessità della coscienza umana.

Un riflesso di ciò si trova anche nel clima culturale di *The Remains of the Day*. La cultura britannica, radicata negli ideali di dovere, onore, lealtà e stoicismo, ha da tempo modellato i ruoli attraverso la gerarchia sociale, dalla monarchia alla classe lavoratrice. Questo senso di scopo è particolarmente rilevante per i domestici che trovano soddisfazione nel loro ruolo, sostenendo coloro che considerano capaci di raggiungere la grandezza. Stevens, come maggiordomo, incarna questo ideale, vedendo il proprio ruolo come un privilegio unico legato al patrimonio britannico. Crede che la vera grandezza sia raggiungibile solo attraverso il servizio a una famiglia di prestigio. Tuttavia, questa devozione lega Stevens a una visione idealizzata della propria posizione, sollevando la domanda: un tale livello di lealtà può davvero influenzare il mondo? Attraverso Stevens, Ishiguro sottolinea come gli individui possano trovare un significato nel servizio, ma rimanere confinati in ruoli che raramente soddisfano le loro ambizioni personali. In questo contesto, egli riecheggia il concetto di "malafede" di Jean-Paul Sartre, in cui gli individui negano la libertà personale conformandosi a ruoli sociali, essendo così incapaci di costruire identità autentiche.

Il sogno di Stevens di diventare un "grande maggiordomo" era radicato nel desiderio di una eredità duratura nella comunità del servizio. Tuttavia, con il cambiamento dei valori sociali, ha dovuto affrontare la realtà che i suoi sacrifici potrebbero svanire col tempo. Realizzare infine che l'ideale di "grande maggiordomo" è solo un mito deriva dall'eredità di suo padre e dall'impatto delle narrazioni nazionali britanniche nelle epoche post-belliche. Questa relazione evidenzia il potenziale per la trasmissione inconscia di valori e convinzioni da una generazione all'altra.

Il padre di Stevens, William, ha subito un profondo dolore dopo la morte del figlio maggiore nella guerra in Sudafrica, ma ha mantenuto il suo impegno di maggiordomo, servendo persino il generale responsabile della morte del figlio. Stevens vede questa estrema moderazione emotiva come l'incarnazione della dignità e uno standard di professionalità che più tardi egli stesso ha seguito. Ironia della sorte, è stato proprio suo padre a preparare il terreno perché Stevens potesse dimostrare di essere suo pari. In un momento critico durante una conferenza internazionale a Darlington Hall, Stevens ha dato priorità ai suoi doveri

rispetto al padre morente, credendo di esaudire i desideri paterni. Entrambi, padre e figlio, hanno condiviso una traiettoria simile di devozione al dovere a scapito dei legami personali. Tuttavia, William aveva almeno una vita familiare, mentre Stevens, ignaro dell'affetto di Miss Kenton, ha sacrificato tutte le relazioni personali per i suoi ideali professionali.

Il viaggio di Stevens per visitare Miss Kenton simboleggia un percorso di auto-scoperta, in cui il personaggio affronta le scelte della sua vita e il vuoto emotivo dentro di sé. Le interazioni con persone comuni, come la famiglia Taylor, sfidano la sua identità e, infine, realizza che la sua visione stimata del ruolo di maggiordomo potrebbe non essere condivisa dagli altri. Quando finalmente Stevens incontra Miss Kenton, la sua soddisfazione nel matrimonio lo costringe a confrontarsi con i sentimenti repressi per lei e i sacrifici fatti per un ideale irraggiungibile. Alla fine, inizia a capire che la sua dedizione inflessibile lo ha allontanato dall'amore, dalla compagnia e dalle semplici gioie della vita.

Nei romanzi di Ishiguro, in particolare in *The Remains of the Day*, ogni personaggio ha un'interpretazione unica della dignità, e Ishiguro rappresenta abilmente queste prospettive in modi vari e spesso contraddittori. La rappresentazione generale di dignità di Ishiguro si allinea al concetto kantiano, in cui il valore intrinseco e l'autonomia sono altamente apprezzati, in contrasto con la cieca devozione e il servilismo. Harry Smith, un umile contadino, incarna questa dignità kantiana, affermando che la vera dignità risiede nella libertà di pensare e agire in modo indipendente piuttosto che diventare uno strumento per interessi sociali e politici. Miss Kenton rappresenta un senso più profondo di dignità, bilanciando il suo servizio con il riconoscimento del proprio valore. La sua decisione di lasciare Darlington Hall per una relazione appagante evidenzia che la dignità richiede rispetto di sé e il riconoscimento delle proprie esigenze.

La visione della dignità di Stevens contrasta con il senso equilibrato di dovere e autostima di Miss Kenton. La sua concezione si allinea più strettamente alla filosofia di vita di Simone Weil, che, pur provenendo da un contesto privilegiato, trovava dignità nella solidarietà con i più deboli, mentre Stevens la trovava nel servizio devoto agli individui potenti. Stevens si dedica a servire Darlington Hall con devozione, mentre Weil perseguiva

la dignità nel servizio a Dio e all'umanità, imponendosi di affrontare estremi sacrifici. L'intenso auto-sacrificio di Weil portò alla sua prematura morte, mentre la dedizione estrema di Stevens si traduce in una disperazione esistenziale. Ishiguro esamina come una ricerca estrema della dignità possa essere dannosa quanto la sua assenza, suggerendo che la dignità, essenziale per l'umanità, potrebbe affrontare nuove sfide in un futuro modellato dal progresso tecnologico e dai confini mutevoli tra umano e non-umano.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro dipinge un mondo in cui la clonazione umana è normalizzata in un'Inghilterra del ventesimo secolo, tecnologicamente arretrata, suggerendo che sia la natura umana, piuttosto che la tecnologia, a guidare la disumanizzazione e lo sfruttamento dei cloni per il prelievo di organi. Questo mondo postumano ne è il riflesso, mantenendo i cloni isolati e condizionati, consentendo alla società di considerarli risorse sacrificabili, anziché individui dotati di emozioni e dignità. La storia è narrata dal punto di vista di Kathy H. e si concentra sulla sua piccola comunità di cloni, le cui esperienze ed emozioni rispecchiano da vicino quelle di qualsiasi essere umano. L'assenza intenzionale della prospettiva dei destinatari degli organi costringe i lettori ad affrontare una domanda morale: se il salvataggio di persone amate dipendesse dallo sfruttamento di altri, dove si posizionerebbero? Questo dilemma, simile a una "scelta di Sophie", evidenzia l'auto-inganno collettivo, poiché la società non desidera essere ricordata di come funziona realmente il programma di donazione.

Questa situazione trova parallelismi nel nostro mondo, in cui la bioetica moderna promuove l'autonomia, la giustizia e la non maleficenza. Tuttavia, la storia dimostra che organismi etici come l'ONU e la Corte Penale Internazionale spesso faticano a garantire giustizia quando gli interessi politici interferiscono, come dimostrano i conflitti attuali nel mondo. Questa fragilità suggerisce che le violazioni bioetiche, incluso lo sfruttamento dei cloni, potrebbero essere ignorate se servissero a scopi sociali e politici più grandi. Tuttavia, la resistenza alla disumanizzazione è emersa costantemente in ogni epoca, e nel romanzo è rappresentata dal movimento di Hailsham, simbolo del potenziale umano di sfidare le ingiustizie. Hailsham incarna una natura paradossale: da un lato protegge i cloni sotto le spoglie della compassione, ma li prepara anche alla donazione di organi, rendendola

un'istituzione moralmente complessa. Le opinioni della critica riflettono questa complessità; alcuni descrivono Hailsham come una "fabbrica di esseri umani" o un "laboratorio di sperimentazione" in cui i cloni sono contemporaneamente protetti e disumanizzati, mentre altri lo vedono come un movimento controculturale per sfidare la visione sociale dei cloni come semplici riserve di organi.

Il movimento di Hailsham tenta di dimostrare l'umanità dei cloni collegando la creazione artistica al possesso di un'anima, riecheggiando la convinzione che l'arte sia un aspetto fondamentale dell'identità umana. Studiosi come Dissanayake e Carroll sostengono che l'arte riflette tratti umani fondamentali, sostenendo la convinzione del movimento secondo cui creare arte significa essere umani. Questo concetto si lega anche all'influenza della religione nella formazione delle opinioni morali sulla clonazione. Ishiguro fa riferimento a vescovi tra le persone potenti che il movimento di Hailsham cerca di influenzare, sottolineando l'impatto della religione sui valori sociali anche in un mondo postumano. Oggi, istituzioni religiose come la Chiesa Cattolica si oppongono alla clonazione, considerandola immorale e contraria alla creazione naturale. Tuttavia, la storia mostra che le istituzioni religiose hanno talora contrastato e talora giustificato pratiche come la schiavitù, e quindi una ferma opposizione alla clonazione potrebbe potenzialmente cambiare. Questa tensione solleva interrogativi su come le prospettive religiose in bioetica potrebbero evolvere in un futuro in cui la clonazione diventa sempre più realizzabile.

In *Never Let Me Go*, mentre i dibattiti etici evidenziano frequentemente la disumanizzazione dei cloni in un sistema oppressivo, l'accettazione silenziosa del loro destino da parte dei cloni è altrettanto significativa. Nonostante siano soggetti a sfruttamento, i cloni non resistono né tentano di fuggire, diversamente da personaggi come Winston Smith o John il Selvaggio. La loro unica protesta è la richiesta di Kathy e Tommy di un rinvio temporaneo, dimostrando una capacità limitata di ribellione. Questa obbedienza solleva domande: è dovuta a manipolazione biologica, condizionamento psicologico o mancanza di pensiero critico sviluppato a Hailsham?

I cloni vivono un'infanzia controllata simile a quella degli orfani, privati dei legami familiari e dipendenti dal sistema per il sostegno emotivo. Sono tenuti all'oscuro del loro destino come donatori di organi tramite un linguaggio manipolatorio che li definisce "speciali" e "dotati" per mascherare la loro cruda realtà. Di conseguenza, ciò alimenta l'autoinganno, poiché arrivano a credere che il loro destino serva a un nobile scopo. Questo riflette lo sfruttamento storico dei lavoratori industriali, spesso inconsapevoli della loro oppressione, suggerendo che la conformità può derivare dall'ignoranza. Anche nei Cottages, i cloni rimangono impreparati al pensiero indipendente o alla resistenza collettiva. Come gli esseri umani, affrontano la stessa difficile transizione verso l'età adulta, un periodo delicato caratterizzato dalla formazione dell'identità, dalla gestione delle relazioni e dal controllo delle emozioni e dello stress. Anche la mancanza di tempo ostacola la ribellione, poiché sono presto chiamati alle donazioni. Ishiguro ritrae così un sistema tragico che controlla non solo i corpi dei cloni, ma anche le loro menti, assicurandosi che si conformino senza resistenza, richiamando il panopticon di Foucault, che sopprime l'autonomia. Ironia della sorte, sono i cloni a incarnare la vera umanità in un mondo che gliel'ha strappata.

Le narrazioni postumane nella letteratura e nei media spesso immaginano l'Intelligenza Artificiale, incarnata sotto forma di robot, integrata in ogni aspetto della vita umana, sia per migliorare la società che per rappresentare potenziali minacce. Questa dualità riflette i pensieri di molti studiosi nel campo dell'IA: alcuni sostengono che i robot completeranno, piuttosto che competere con gli esseri umani, assistendo in compiti come le consegne, le faccende domestiche e l'indipendenza degli anziani. Al contrario, altri avvertono che un'eccessiva dipendenza dall'IA potrebbe portare a decisioni di parte e al possibile uso militare di robot autonomi, ponendo seri rischi per l'umanità.

Sebbene l'IA si distingua dalle tecnologie tradizionali per la sua capacità di apprendere e adattarsi autonomamente, il suo scopo e la sua funzione dipendono ancora dalle motivazioni umane dietro il suo design e utilizzo, che variano dal servilismo alla curiosità, dalla compagnia fino all'amore. Il nostro mondo riflette oggi che i robot sono andati oltre il semplice esibizionismo tecnologico o strumenti per semplificare i compiti; nel prossimo futuro, molti aspetti della vita si affideranno fondamentalmente alla loro presenza.

Con l'aumento dell'aspettativa di vita e la diminuzione dei tassi di natalità nei paesi sviluppati, gli squilibri demografici creano carenze di manodopera e instabilità economica. In risposta, molte nazioni hanno esplorato diverse soluzioni e, tra queste, lo sviluppo di robot è diventato un'opzione molto attraente. A differenza degli esseri umani, i robot sono economicamente vantaggiosi, non richiedono ferie o stipendi e non presentano sfide culturali o sociali, rendendoli ideali per società in via di invecchiamento. Tuttavia, il ricorso ai robot va oltre il lavoro, rispondendo a vuoti emotivi in un mondo in cui le relazioni umane si affievoliscono, come riflette in *Klara and the Sun*, dove gli AF (Amici Artificiali) come Klara offrono compagnia alle famiglie con un solo figlio. Ishiguro spinge ulteriormente questa nozione esplorando come i robot possano confrontarsi con uno dei traumi più profondi dell'umanità: la morte, attraverso la sostituzione umano-robot. Robot come Klara sono visti non solo come compagni, ma anche come potenziali sostituti di persone care perdute, sollevando interrogativi su se i robot possano realmente colmare il vuoto emotivo ed esistenziale lasciato dall'assenza umana.

Questo dilemma è ritratto attraverso un artista e un padre, che incarnano opinioni opposte sull'umanità e sulla tecnologia. Come uomo di scienza, Capaldi crede che la tecnologia possa imitare pienamente l'essenza umana, sostenendo che l'identità di Josie possa essere preservata in Klara, divenendo letteralmente Josie piuttosto che una mera copia. Paul, pur scettico, teme che Capaldi possa avere ragione, ammettendo che la tecnologia ha dimostrato che nulla di ciò che è umano è davvero unico. Di conseguenza, Capaldi, abbracciando una prospettiva postumana, vede la tecnologia come capace di sostituire pienamente l'umanità, mentre Paul si aggrappa all'idea che l'identità umana racchiuda qualcosa di insostituibile, oltre la portata scientifica.

Chrissie incarna una posizione conflittuale. Pur essendo attratta dalle soluzioni tecnologiche, è riluttante ad abbandonare l'essenza dell'identità umana. Desidera la sopravvivenza di Josie tramite Klara, ma lotta con il pensiero di rinunciare all'unicità della figlia. Klara stessa, riconoscendo tutte queste diverse prospettive su ciò che distingue una macchina da un essere umano, echeggia le intuizioni di Frantz Fanon sull'identità,

suggerendo che l'essenza umana è validata non dalla mera esistenza, ma dal riconoscimento emotivo degli altri, un aspetto che la tecnologia non può replicare pienamente.

Klara and the Sun ritrae una società meritocratica in cui le famiglie benestanti ricorrono all'editing genetico per aumentare l'intelligenza dei propri figli, creando una classe elitaria di individui "potenziati" con vantaggi accademici e professionali. Questa decisione genitoriale solleva una questione etica: se il miglioramento genetico compromette l'autonomia dei bambini, poiché influisce profondamente sulla loro identità e futuro senza il loro coinvolgimento. Ishiguro esplora questi dilemmi etici attraverso Josie e Rick: lo status "potenziato" di Josie le offre opportunità a cui Rick non può accedere, portando infine alla loro separazione. In questo mondo postumano, l'editing genetico porta a una divisione sociale, creando una forma di apartheid biologico in cui solo la classe dei "potenziati" è considerata capace di contributi significativi alla società. Ciò si riflette nello status di Rick, che affronta discriminazioni e opzioni educative limitate, evidenziando il duro impatto psicologico sugli individui "non potenziati".

Inoltre, il romanzo rivela questo apartheid biologico contrastando due madri che amano profondamente i propri figli e scelgono percorsi opposti. Helen, che rifiuta di modificare geneticamente suo figlio Rick, affronta emarginazione e accuse di egoismo, essendo vista come colei che nega a suo figlio i vantaggi sociali. Al contrario, Chrissie, che ha già perso un figlio a causa di un esperimento di modifica genetica, è celebrata come una madre coraggiosa per aver deciso di commettere lo stesso errore. Questa rappresentazione riflette un mondo in cui i valori umani tradizionali e l'autonomia personale sono ridefiniti, con forti pressioni sociali che influenzano le decisioni genitoriali e promuovono la conformità rispetto alla scelta individuale.

L'autonomia è anche considerata una distinzione fondamentale tra robot e esseri umani. Mentre gli esseri umani sono guidati da complessi fattori sociali e morali, i robot sono progettati con un'autonomia limitata per paura di perderne il controllo. Tuttavia, Klara sfida sottilmente questi limiti, mostrando autonomia e lealtà oltre la sua programmazione, come si vede quando dissuade un'altra adolescente dall'acquistarla e sacrifica parte di sé per aiutare

Josie. Questo suggerisce che Klara operi oltre i parametri prestabiliti, ponendo la domanda: come può una macchina mostrare emozioni e valori profondamente umani? N. Katherine Hayles teorizza che la coscienza umana potrebbe potenzialmente essere codificata in forma di schemi e trasferita nelle macchine, consentendo agli umanoidi di incarnare qualità autenticamente umane piuttosto che limitarsi a imitarle. In questo contesto, la relazione spirituale di Klara con il sole, che vede come una forza curativa, la distingue ulteriormente dalle macchine comuni. La sua fede nel potere del sole per guarire riecheggia le tradizioni di fede umana, suggerendo un'essenza in lei che trascende la mera programmazione. Questo pone una svolta ironica in un mondo postumano, in cui l'umanità stessa rinasce nel cuore meccanico di un robot.

Molte opere di fantascienza descrivono mondi futuristici popolati da robot, cyborg e pianeti alieni, spesso creando un senso di distacco per i lettori. Al contrario, *Never Let Me Go* e *Klara and the Sun* di Ishiguro portano i temi post-umani in ambienti familiari e quotidiani, facendo percepire gli elementi futuristici come quasi nostalgici. Rappresentando cloni e robot in contesti riconoscibili, Ishiguro esplora i dilemmi etici dell'umanità riguardo al controllo tecnologico. Attraverso Kathy e Klara—personaggi non umani che incarnano virtù umane come empatia, lealtà e devozione—Ishiguro pone una domanda etica: l'essenza dell'umanità risiede nei valori morali o nelle origini genetiche? Suggerisce che, in un mondo post-umano, le creazioni umane potrebbero mostrare valori umani più autentici degli stessi esseri umani.

In termini di controllo sociale, entrambi i romanzi ritraggono società capitalistiche in cui invenzioni scientifiche—come cloni e robot—vengono utilizzate per soddisfare obiettivi politici ed economici, privilegiando il profitto rispetto alle considerazioni etiche. Questo riflette l'affermazione di Antonio Gramsci secondo cui la scienza, quando usata dal potere politico, può ridurre gli individui a meri strumenti. In *Klara and the Sun*, per esempio, il miglioramento genetico è normalizzato, determinando il destino dei cittadini fin dalla nascita e marginalizzando coloro che si rifiutano di sottoporvisi. Sebbene le scelte dei genitori possano sembrare autonome, le pressioni sociali impongono conformità, creando un clima di paura. L'influenza politica può certamente intensificare i comportamenti non etici, ma non è

l'unico fattore; varie dinamiche psicologiche e sociali contribuiscono anche ai fallimenti morali della società. Per esempio, in *Never Let Me Go*, la società ignora la verità morale che i cloni sono essenzialmente umani, scegliendo invece di accettare una narrativa collettiva che giustifica la loro disumanizzazione.

Inoltre, Albert Bandura descrive come gli individui giustifichino azioni dannose disconnettendosi dalla propria bussola morale. Egli sostiene che meccanismi come la "giustificazione sociale e morale" permettono alle persone di considerare atti brutali come azioni al servizio di cause nobili. Questo si allinea con l'indifferenza della società verso lo sfruttamento dei cloni, in cui le donazioni di organi di ogni clone sono razionalizzate come sacrifici utilitaristici per salvare molte vite umane. Il concetto di "diffusione della responsabilità" di Bandura si applica anche qui, poiché l'accettazione collettiva dello sfruttamento dei cloni rimuove la responsabilità individuale. Allo stesso modo, la società di *Klara and the Sun* normalizza le modifiche genetiche nonostante i rischi, creando una narrativa sociale in cui i genitori provano poca colpa per decisioni che compromettono l'autonomia dei loro figli. Entrambi i romanzi illustrano come le norme sociali, l'autoinganno e l'influenza politica possano trasformare ciò che una volta era considerato disumano in norme accettate dell'era post-umana—un'epoca che priva gli individui delle qualità tradizionalmente definite come umanità.

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