Respect, Symbiosis, and Pluralism: Ideas of Ethics in Paradise
Lost and Klara and The Sun

Ziyan Zhou
School of Foreign Languages, Beijing Information Science and Technology University, Beijing
100000, China.
zzy1234561116@163.com

Abstract. Literary ethics criticism regards literature as the specific ethical expression of human society at a particular stage of history, regarding literature as “the art of Ethics”. Ethical Literary Criticism takes it as its duty to explain the ethical function of literature, aiming at explaining the ethical phenomena in literature and making value judgments on them. In his Paradise Lost, which is regarded as “a monument in the history of European literature”, Milton explores ethical issues and considers the boundaries between good and evil in the classic Genesis stories of Satan’s failure to rebel and Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise after stealing the forbidden fruit. As the edifying significance of literature gradually diminishes, the ethical thoughts embodied in literary works change with the times and break through the limitations of the times at intervals; in contemporary times, Kazuo Ishiguro, a Japanese writer with a “dual identity”, observes and participates in the life of Josie’s family from the perspective of the AI in his novel Klara and The Sun, recounting insights into love and humanity and reflecting abundant ethical reflections on identity and moral goodness and evil, which shares some similarities with Paradise Lost written in the 17th century. Therefore, the thesis focuses on the three dimensions of self-internal, self and other, and self and morality attempting to show the ethical reflections on self-identity cognition, the relationship between man and other, the boundary between good and evil, and rationality and irrationality in Paradise Lost and Klara and The Sun, in order to reveal ethical changes of the times and explore the ethical ideals shared by Milton and Kazuo Ishiguro.

Keywords: Milton; Kazuo Ishiguro; Paradise Lost; Klara and The Sun; Literary Ethics.

1. Introduction

To assert Eternal providence and justify the ways of God to men, Milton developed his argument in the form of poetry and wrote the long poem Paradise Lost. The poem centers on Satan, God, Adam and Eve, etc. It mainly narrates that Satan was expelled from Paradise because of his rebellion, and Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan to commit the original sin and leave the Garden of Eden. The creation of Paradise Lost accompanied the budding and development of the Age of Enlightenment, in which people began to question the reasonableness of the moral order in which they were born. In this case, western society faced a major turning point. The creation of Paradise Lost can be described as the poet’s effort to trace the origins of his beliefs and to find out where the initial spiritual failure began. Although Paradise Lost was written in the 17th century, Milton interprets human nature in terms of “free will”. Furthermore, the relationship between the self and the natural and supernatural worlds is elucidated in terms of reason and equality. In the contemporary era, with the advent of artificial intelligence, the relationship between human beings and machines has given rise to many thoughts. Amid the tension between tradition, reality, and the future, Kazuo Ishiguro tells the story of Klara, an artificially intelligent friend (AF), who comes to human society, lives in human society, and is finally abandoned by the human beings. The work observes human life through Klara's eyes, reflects on the relationship between human beings and AI, and explores ethical issues in the post-human era. The narration contains insights into the natural man, superhuman, and humanoid robots in the post-human era and Kazuo Ishiguro’s realization of the common predicament of human beings in the future.

In Literary Ethical Criticism, human beings have to go through natural selection and ethical selection afterward becoming real “human beings”. Through natural selection, human beings evolve
from apes to human beings, acquiring the human form and inevitably retaining the animal nature. The so-called “ethical selection” refers to the process by which human beings, after acquiring human form through natural selection, obtain the concepts of good and evil and the essence of human nature through learning. As far as ethics is concerned, the basic attributes of human beings are embodied by the ethical characteristic of being able to distinguish between good and evil. The Sphinx factor is an apt explanation of the coexistence of rationality and bestiality in human beings, and it is also the core of ethical expressions in literary works. With the development of human civilization, postmodern ethics believes that “reason” is no longer the only criterion for judging the morality of human beings. It gradually advocates the plurality and difference of human beings, allowing non-uniform and diversified ethical and moral views to exist at the same time. According to Zygmunt Bauman, there is no such thing as a completely good or completely evil ethical and moral situation[1]. Morality has an a priori nature, which determines that postmodern ethics is full of uncertainty and ambiguity, indicating that any ethics is only a specific thought and behavior at a specific time, which cannot be universalized. Therefore, the ethical standards should remain pluralistic. With the advancement of artificial intelligence and robotics, the relationship between the self and non-human life forms has become the focus of the issue, which highlights the ethical issues related to the cognition of identity, dealing with the relationship with the other, and the boundaries of good and evil that are worth exploring. This paper, therefore, approaches the comparative study of Paradise Lost and Klara and The Sun from the perspective of literary Ethical Literary Criticism, examining the exploration and scrutiny of the two works on the major issues of identity, the relationship between human beings and the other, and the boundary between good and evil.

There is no lack of scholars to explore the ethical thoughts of the two works from the perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism. For instance, Shang Biwu analyzes the ethical epiphany of Klara and The Sun and the ethical choices faced by human beings in the era of artificial intelligence[2]; Lili Huang returns to the current ethical environment, and deconstructs the ethical identities and ethical relationships of the novel's characters[3]; Jingjing Miao examines the state of human-machine symbiosis from the perspective of machine ethics, and reflects on “human nature”[4]. Regarding the ethical discussion of Paradise Lost, there is Luo Shimin cutting into the study of Paradise Lost from the perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism, and studying the ethical exploration and ethical expression therein in China[5]. It can be seen that it is not uncommon to analyze the two works from the perspective of literary ethics, yet few scholars pay attention to the commonality and transcendence of the ethical thoughts of Paradise Lost and Klara and The Sun in the realms of identity, man and the other, and the boundary between good and evil. Hence, based on previous studies, this thesis uses literary ethics theory to elaborate on Paradise Lost and Klara and The Sun, trying to find out the ethical pulse of the writer's era, observe ethical changes of the times, and realize the ethical ideals shared by Milton and Kazuo Ishiguro.

2. The “I” in identity perception

Ethical Literary Criticism believes that human beings have human form after natural selection, which solves the problem of human identity formally. Furthermore, human beings have “nature” after ethical selection, which answers the problem of human identity ethically. Thus, in terms of origin and formation process, human identity is the result of birth and choice. Once a person has an identity, it means pursuing a continuity and wholeness of the self, as well as seeking a balance between identity and difference. Moreover, “the value claim of constructing identity lies in constructing the integrity of the human being”[2]. Identity integrity has been described by Ellen Willers as “a sense of completeness, of wholeness, of knowing what is right and what is wrong, and of being able to choose.”[6] Adam in Paradise Lost possesses a sense of wholeness in his self-identity perception, and he can perceive the external world and make ethical choices. Based on the complete self-identity perception, people can further get the identity of others and establish emotional connections. On the contrary, when the integrity of identity is lost, people's emotions are in turmoil, such as in Klara and The Sun,
where Josie gradually grows to dislike Klara, whose identity is inhuman and drifts away. by connecting emotional interactions between individuals and the outside world, one could continue to recognize and identify with self-worth as well as other-worth, thus shaping the identity of the self and the other. Amongst types of interactions, love, in the broadest sense, as a special type of interaction, bears on the relationship between human beings and others, and is more concerned with the perception of self-identity, which has a particularly significant impact on ethical identity. According to Erich Fromm, “Love is an attitude, a disposition of character that determines one's relation to the world as a whole rather than to an 'object' of love” [6]. This is neither symbiotic attachment nor extended egoism. Adam's respect for, and recognition of, Eve's identity produces love; Eve feels happiness and fulfillment in Adam's love and fulfills her self-identity. In the interaction of loving and being loved, the identities of others and the self are constantly chosen and shaped.

2.1 The irreplaceability of love

In *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve's self-awareness is made possible by nature, and their identities are made complete by the interaction of love. The search for self-awareness began when Adam, the first human being, was born. He recognized his self-identity in this way: “Myself I then perused, and Limb by Limb/Surveyed, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran/With supple joints, as lively vigour led” [7]. At the birth of consciousness, Adam recognized his basic form through initial observation: hands, feet, and joints. Observation of his body is the cornerstone from which he begins to explore his self-identity and obtain a full ethical identity. Doubts about where he comes from and what it means are the landing point and goal of his continued search for the meaning of identity. Through visual experience and observation, Adam understands and identifies himself as a human being, ultimately tracing himself back to a "supremely good and mighty, superior Creator." [5] Looking back at Eve, like Adam, she initially felt the need for self-knowledge: “Under a shade on flowers, much wondering where And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.” [7] 241 Likewise, she is curious about where she comes from, however, she is told, “God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more/Is woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise.” [7] 243 Her knowledge of self-identity is confined to the teachings and laws, and her imprisoned inquisitiveness and limited knowledge create a crippling of Eve's identity.

Soon after his birth, Adam felt the loneliness of being God's vicegerent and prayed to God to give him a partner. Regarding the difference in the identity of the partner, he said: “but in disparity/The one intense, the other still remiss/Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove/Tedious alike” [7]260. It can be seen that complete self-identity and the identity of others are the basis for obtaining love. He goes on to state, “Of fellowship, I speak/Such as I seek, fit to participate/All rational delight, wherein the brute/Cannot be human consort” [7]233. The love Adam seeks is based on equality and mutual identity, and its form should be compatible with reason. By “Love” Adam gains pleasure, when it can be pleasurable, further shaping self-perception. Although Adam was not able to witness his creation, he witnessed Eve's creation. When he first meets Eve, he first realizes the gender differences between her body and his own. Later on, he quickly identifies with and respects these differences: Eve's beauty makes him “Far otherwise, transported I behold,/Transported touch, here passion first I felt” [7]216. He praises Eve as “My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,/Heaven's last best gift, my ever-new delight” [7]245. In his interactions with Eve, the heavenly Creator fades away, no longer appearing to Adam as a radiant figure, guided only by his voice. In love, he gradually realizes the limitations of reason, the limits of self-knowledge – “Not proof enough such Object to sustain.” [7]267 At the same time Adam does not negate the value of sensual perception, “Variously representing: yet still free/Approve the best, and follow what I approve.” [7]267 In love, the “whole” Adam is formed, who has the consciousness and action of autonomous choice and becomes a human being with a complete identity in the true sense of the word. Eve is passive in love, yet “With that thy gentle hand/Seized mine: I yielded” [7]266. As Eve acquires knowledge of the world from Adam, she understands the structure of the universe and the light and goodness of God. She feels contentment and happiness due
to the rich knowledge she acquires, and devotes gratitude and love to Adam, thus compensating for the lack of identity perception.

“……for love, thou sayest/Leads up to Heaven, is both the way and guide;”[7]269 Owing to the respect and appreciation of his beloved, Adam realizes the virtue of Eve and his worth. Understanding and identifying with the unique personality of his beloved motivates Adam to further shape and refine his self-perception of his identity, which enables the development of his ethical consciousness; the same is true for Eve, for whom love enables her to reach the goal of Identity. In the process of exploring identity, love plays an irreplaceable role: bridging identity differences with others and contributing to the perfection of self-identity. Simultaneously, the relatively complete self-identity of Adam and Eve at birth sets the stage for the subsequent identification with others, which in turn leads to irreplaceable love.

2.2 Humanoid and Humanity

“The process of human society from natural selection to ethical selection to scientific selection is the logical process of the development of human civilization.” [8]Natural selection gives man the human form. Through the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, human beings observe the world and themselves, developing a preliminary sense of identity. Ethical selection solves the problem of the nature of man, giving him an ethical view to recognize good and evil so that he has an ethical identity. Scientific choice answers the question of the relationship between science and human beings and explores how human beings recognize and utilize science. Scientific choice is often intertwined with ethical choice, which constructs a complex issue of science and technology ethics in science fiction literature. In Klara and The Sun, Kazuo Ishiguro portrays Klara, as an artificially intelligent robot (AF) with basic human form. As an AF, she accompanies Josie as she grows up, participates in human life but is sometimes rejected by her neighbors, and faces an identity dilemma. What causes Klara's identity crisis lies not only in her self-identity perception but also in others' perception of the robot. In the novel, Klara is a fourth-generation AF, an artificially intelligent robot facing elimination. She is directly endowed with the human form by crossing the long natural selection stage of human beings. Differing from the crowd of AFs, Klara is able to accept and integrate everything she sees around her, then possesses a mature understanding, insights into the changing emotions of humans, nay even possesses her own belief, the Sun. Perceiving herself as humanoid, not different from humans in appearance, and having the ability to learn as a human, she gradually blurs the boundaries between herself and humans. However, for human beings, their natural identity is “given” by human beings. Robots are created by human beings and given a human form out of the need to overcome human loneliness. It means, in other words, that robots are just a kind of intelligent dolls designed by human beings to escape from loneliness. The purpose inadvertently objectifies robots with human consciousness and establishes the subordinate relationship between AI and humans. In an unequal relationship, humans treat AI robots as objects rather than human beings. Without a complete identity, it is difficult for humans to respect the differences in consciousness and behavioral patterns between robots and humans, and thus they cannot identify with their human identity. Consequently, Klara's perception of her identity deviates from that of the people around her, and an identity crisis emerges.

While natural selection has laid the material foundation of human identity, it has also led to the inevitable retention of bestiality in human beings. The acquisition of a complete human identity also requires ethical selection to give human beings their humanity. In the process of ethical selection, since “man is a being of Sphinx factor, consisting of human and bestial factors”, man is always in the middle of the two choices of whether to be a beast or a human being, [9] there is no purely bestial man, nor is there a purely rational man. In Klara and The Sun, Klara, as a robot, is not ascribed a bestiality factor but is held to a very high humanistic expectation, that is, to always do her best to help human beings. Therefore, in Klara's identity perception, her behavior is based on “altruism” and she does not do anything to harm others. On the other hand, human beings' ethical ideals about themselves determine their corresponding identity pursuits. Landman points out that “in contrast to animals,
human beings are essentially indeterminate” \[10\]. Intrinsic uncertainty grants humans infinite possibilities. Whether it is Mama, Josie, or Mr. Capaldi, they are certainly loving mothers, understanding children, and superb scientists, but they also have more or less irrational animalistic elements such as selfishness, arrogance, and conceit. It is the contradiction and struggle between darkness and light in human hearts that shapes their unique identities and creates the distinctive qualities and colors of the human world. Without the weight of the beastly nature, all the noble “humanity” will become illusory and meaningless. From the perspective of ethical choice, the robot, which is based on the principle of absolute moral supremacy, is rejected by human beings because it makes a very different ethical choice from the human beings who are dominated by the flexible Sphinx factor on many issues, such as saving Josie's life. In terms of identity, Klara's inability to distinguish between good and evil due to the lack of bestiality in her self-identity results in an identity that cannot be recognized by humans. These factors determine that she will never be able to truly integrate into the complexity of human society, where good and evil are both present.

The rapid development of science and technology has changed human society as well as the ethical and moral concepts of human beings. The application and development of science and technology are accompanied by discussions on the ethical issues of science and technology. Jenzhao Nie points out that “the concept of ethics and morality is gradually replaced by scientific standards as people reproduced through gene technology are accepted and appear in large numbers.” \[9\]In Klara and The Sun, Kazuo Ishiguro also focuses on the scientific transformation of humans. Throughout the novel, most of the new generation of humans receive “enhancements.” Physical modification helps to raise the intellectual level of humans, making them into another kind of “scientific man”. Josie, the “scientific man”, is the representative of the new generation of human beings in the novel, who gradually use scientific standards to demand and evaluate human beings, and then many conflicts with Rick, the “ethical man”, break out. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the fact that scientific modification has also cost human beings a great deal: physically, Josie's health level declined, and her sister died because of the “enhancement”; ethically, the uniqueness of the human identity has been gradually neglected and erased, and Josie's mother and Mr. Capaldi believe that Josie can be “replaced” by Klara, who is similar in appearance. “replaced”. In the age of fast-developing science, human identity seems to be moving in the direction of suppressing individual humanity and increasing scientificity, yet artificial intelligence is called upon to possess the noblest of human virtues: unconditional caring and helping others. Differences in ethical ideals of human beings towards themselves and AI appear at the stage of scientific choice, thus affecting human self-identity perception and identity towards AI. Despite the fact that AI has human consciousness, it can never be treated as a real human being.

To establish a complete personal identity, whether in the Garden of Eden of Paradise Lost or the age of artificial intelligence of Klara and The Sun, it is indispensable to have the “human form” given to human beings by natural selection and the “human nature” given to human beings by ethical selection. With the human body, Adam and Eve were able to observe themselves, know others, and understand the world. Having human nature, sensibility and rationality coexist, so that Adam and Eve can respect the differences of the opposite sex and appreciate each other's beauty, and can perfect their own identity in the interaction of love and further improve their ethical identity. Klara possesses the “human form”, but she does not possess “human nature”. Although she has a keen observation and excellent understanding that enables her to recognize her own identity, her perception of her ethical identity is always deviated due to the lack of the animalistic factor. Not to mention the fact that the novel is set in the stage of the scientific choice of human beings, where the pursuit of science by human beings is contrary to the pursuit of sublime humanity by robots, and this difference in ethical ideals leads to an identity crisis.
Advances in Education, Humanities and Social Science Research
ICHEAS 2024
ISSN:2790-167X
Volume-11-(2024)

3. Opposition and Reconciliation of the “I” and the Other

Since the beginning of human civilization, out of the need to survive and reproduce, humankind has not existed in isolation but has constantly interacted with others, particularly nature. In essence, human beings are relational beings who have long existed in various relationships with the Other. [11] The others that exist alongside humans include both the mysterious natural and sacred supernatural, as well as non-human lifeforms such as artificial intelligence. In terms of identity, since non-human life forms do not possess human form and humanity, it is difficult for them to obtain human identity, and they are the absolute other in contrast to human beings, which human beings cannot fully understand or treat as equals. On the eve of modern society, Milton wrote Paradise Lost to reflect on the relationship between human beings and natural beings as well as supernatural deities, discussing the state of domination and domination between human beings and others after the establishment of self-identity. As modern society develops and anthropocentrism is established, the relationship between human beings and the natural world, supernatural world, and non-human life forms outside of rational cognition has gradually become unbalanced and even antagonistic. In the case of the relationship between non-human life forms such as artificial intelligence and human beings in Klara and The Sun, the two form an unstable equilibrium based on antagonism. That balance breaks down and collapses as the non-human other is gradually overshadowed and obscured by the magnified subjective consciousness of the “I”. Both works reveal the drawbacks of the excessively enlarged ego-subjective consciousness of human beings and illustrate the necessity for human beings to reconceptualize the identity of the Other, respect the differences of the Other, and move from reconciliation to harmonious coexistence.

3.1 Exceeding the “I” in the natural and supernatural worlds

In Paradise Lost, through the mouths of God and the angels, Milton can speak about his worldview and ethics. The worldview in Paradise Lost is that the supernatural God created and unified nature and mankind in the form of the patriarchs Adam and Eve while granting all things full freedom to live their own lives. “Each of them seems to be free and unrestrained, but there is an eternal contradiction between its “inviolable” character and the free will of the individual.” Firstly, this contradiction is reflected in the invisible domination of the supernatural world over human beings. At the beginning of Adam's birth, God told him:

“This Paradise I give thee..... Remember what I warn thee, shun to taste,/And shun the bitter consequence: for know,/The day thou eatest thereof, my sole command Transgrest, inevitably thou shalt die;/From that day mortal; and this happy State/Shalt lose, expelled from hence into a World/Of woe and sorrow.” [7]255

God gave Adam a wonderful existence and conditioned it on Adam's obedience to God's commands. Such top-down “bestowal” leads to an unequal relationship between human beings and the supernatural world on a material basis. Adam goes on to ask:

“O by what Name, for thou above all these, Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher, Surpassest far my naming, how may I/Adore thee, Author of this Universe” [7]243

Borrowing from the supernatural, Adam accomplishes in a very short time the ethical choice that what God represents is good. He identified with God as Creator and acquired the self-perception that the supernatural world was far superior to man. This perception is quickly contradicted by his disobedience to Raphael's advice, his obsession with Eve, and his affirmation of human sensibility, which leads to the forbidden fruit with Eve, his expulsion from Paradise, and his break with the supernatural.

After informing Adam of the supernaturally superior status and position, God also made clear the relationship between the natural world and mankind.

“Not only these fair bounds, but all the Earth/To thee and to thy Race I give...... In sign whereof each Bird and Beast behold After their kinds; I bring them to receive From thee their Names, and pay thee fealty With low subjection;”[7]221

It is thus clear that in Paradise Lost, the natural world is governed by humans, named by humans, and dominated by humans. Realizing this, Adam bluntly states “Among unequals what society/Can sort, what harmony or true delight?” [7]157 Identifying with the slightly lesser status of all things in nature than humans, and accepting himself as the vicarious ruler of all things on earth, Adam says,
"but in disparity/The one intense, the other still remiss/Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove/Tedious alike"[7]253 In Adam's perception, he is not able to identify with nature and human beings as completely equal, and even more so, he is not able to interact with nature on an equal footing, so he feels lonely and considers himself “alone.”

Whilst the supernatural confers a subordinate relationship between the natural world and mankind, it also affirms the identity of the natural world. After acquiring a basic sense of identity, Adam asks the angel Raphael questions about the workings of the earth and the universe. Here is how Raphael answered Adam's quandary:

“……for Heaven/Is as the Book of God before thee set,/Wherein to read his wonderous Works, and learn/His Seasons, Hours, or Days, or Months, or Years”[7]274

His teaching of Adam to observe nature with nature and to use human wisdom to recognize nature, exemplifies both the humanistic ideology and Epicurus's “interpretation of nature by nature” materialistic view of nature. Indirectly, this cognitive process embodies the relative equality of human beings and nature, and through human cognition, one can understand the laws of nature's operation. God similarly tells Adam, “They also know,/And reason not contemptibly; with these/Find pastime, and bear rule; thy Realm is large.”[7]219 Thus, the nature and value of nature are here prized, implying that man reclaims nature's identity and gives it recognition.

Supernatural and natural worlds, human nature, and animal nature, these two seemingly “opposing” unities embody the conflict between the pursuit of lofty spiritual values and realistic desires. The spiritual realm represented by God in the supernatural realm is defeated in Paradise Lost, while the “rationality” of the natural realm, that is, the “bestiality” as a natural attribute, is affirmed, and the “bestiality factor” of human beings is emphasized. The two pairs of opposing dominant relationships are reconciled. It is a further enhancement of Milton's thinking on the nature of human beings and a manifestation of his natural ethical view that human beings should identify with and respect the identity of “nature”.

3.2 Domination of non-human life forms by the “I”

In ancient mythological descriptions, man was a combination of beast and man. With the development of modern science, Darwin's theory of evolution explained the process of man's evolution from a beast, confirming that man is a being with a Sphinx factor that combines both “humanity” and “bestiality”. The development of civilization has led human beings to make ethical choices to further improve their self-identity and has prompted them to make scientific and technological choices to extend their humanoid identity to human creations-robots.

In Klara and The Sun, Klara, the artificial intelligence robot, represents a combination of man and technology. Non-human life forms such as artificial intelligence are indeed “belonging” to human beings, who follow God's example by giving them the human form of iron and steel and the purest and best of human nature; they are admonished to be altruistic in all things and to always smile when dealing with human beings. In the novel, humans treat Klara in roughly three ways. For first, such as Josie, who treats Klara like a friend at first, says to Klara:

“I think you’ll like my room, and that’s where you’ll be, not in some cupboard or anything. And we’ll do all these great things together all the time I’m growing up.”[12]27

Gradually, she came to see her as an “object,” placing her in the attic with only one window, and ultimately abandoning her in the landfill. Second, like Mom, the housekeeper, and most of the humans, they never treat Klara as a human being, either by treating her roughly, throwing her around in the air, or by using her as a replacement for Josie. Strands of the third, such as Rick and his father, initially see Klara as a machine and learn about Klara's inner workings later in their lives so that they treat her like a human being, carrying her on their backs across the fields, and driving her in their car in search of the Kuttins machine. Although the humans treat Klara differently, they start as well and end with self-interest. The common cause of both Rick's and his father's change in attitude is their simple desire to keep Josie alive. A robot who is directly given the results of human ethical choices and an absolute moral standard, her identity cannot truly be recognized by humans, nor can she gain their level gaze. Much like the supernatural world in Paradise Lost in general, the majority of humans believe
themselves to be superior to such non-human lifeforms and unapologetically dominate them, which is what drives the relationship between humans and non-human lifeforms to be antagonistic.

In the fictional world of *Klara and The Sun*, the rapid development of gene enhancement technology has accelerated ethical choices and propelled human civilization into the stage of scientific choice. Scientific selection is a “longer process of changing, transforming, and creating human beings by science and technology” [8]. Modern ethical human beings are transformed into scientific human beings through the transformation of science and technology, and vice versa, they are eliminated by science. Identity, status, etc. of genetically modified human beings belongs to the issue of both scientific and ethical choices. Rick's learning ability is lower than that of his genetically enhanced peers, and he does not meet the “technological standard”; therefore, despite his integrity and goodness, he is still taunted and mocked in his peer group. In the perception of one's own identity, virtue is no longer valued as a human trait, and “ethical identity gradually gives way to scientific norms and technological standards” [8]. Instead, Klara, who is an artificial intelligence, is trying to awaken her self-awareness and make a new round of ethical choices. Not only are human and non-human lifeforms on different stages of civilization but more importantly, the scientifically oriented human and the humanly oriented Klara are on opposite paths of ethical ideals. Both are vastly different from each other in terms of the fundamentals of perfecting one's identity. That ultimately leads to contradictions and antagonisms in the relationship between human and non-human lifeforms, and ultimately to a breakdown.

Be it man and the supernatural, man and nature in *Paradise Lost*, or man and non-human life forms in *Klara and The Sun*, man and the Other are not in a harmonious symbiotic relationship. Once man's sense of self is too debilitated, he will be dominated by the gods and spirits of the supernatural world's beliefs. Too much amplified self-consciousness of man will choose to dominate all things natural as well as the non-human lifeforms created by man. True symbiosis, however, is not domination, mastery, or a slightly compromised equality of treatment. Milton's emphasis on human identity his inquiry into the laws governing the operation of all things, and Kazuo Ishiguro's concern for the human rights of robots and the complexity and variability of human nature all explore such an ideal ethical relationship - the return of human beings to a relationship with the Other, recognizing and respecting the differences of the Other while maintaining a purely egoic identity.

4. The “I” in Multiple Moral Value Judgments

In the view of Literary Literary Criticism, there are both human and bestial factors in human beings. Among them, the human factor is the dominant factor, which guides, restrains, and controls the free will of the bestial factor with the help of rational will, so that people can abandon evil and follow good, and avoid the irrational bestial factor from violating ethics. As soon as the human nature factor is lost, human beings only rely on their instincts to survive, unable to fulfill their ethical choices, without any ethical viewpoints, and unable to distinguish between good and evil. However, in *Paradise Lost* and *Klara and The Sun*, rationality and irrationality do not have a one-to-one relationship with good and evil. The “extreme goodness” of God brings about “evil”; Adam's recognition of irrational factors also reveals “goodness”. Reason requires human beings to maintain self-awareness and reject otherness, but the free and arbitrary proliferation of reason leads to the over-inflated self-consciousness of human beings, who become “machines” driven by interests. The rational side, represented by the mother and Mr. Capaldi in *Klara and The Sun*, is not kind in its contempt for Klara and its genetic modification of Josie. Given such circumstances, rationality itself is alienated, and human beings lose their human identity and dignity, making it impossible to discuss good and evil, which is what Foucault denied, “to make an either/or choice between the rational and the irrational”. The call for irrationality reflects the importance attached to the “heavy flesh” of human beings and is also an affirmation of the complexity and diversity of human desires. “The bestiality factor of irrationality is not useless; it can make a man wiser by giving him a counter-experience.”
Via the power of irrationality, human beings can recognize the lack of rationality, supplement it, make it complete, and thus accomplish the attainment of the good.

### 4.1 Ambiguous boundaries of good and evil

Prior to the Enlightenment, mankind was influenced by the theological notion that everything created by God was the best of the best, interpreting “evil” as a lack of good. By the time *Paradise Lost* was written, the rational will of mankind was emerging to break free from the control of the feudal monarchy and Christian theology. The boundaries of good and evil were no longer defined by the religious view of good and evil as absolute standards. As Milton sees good and evil in *Paradise Lost*, he views good and evil as choices and consequences of free will. The previously absolutely clear line between good and evil is gradually blurred and slides to the more “relative” end of the spectrum. Satan is the embodiment of “evil” in *Paradise Lost*. After he falls into hell, he threatens:

“…to do aught good never will be our task,/But ever to do ill our sole delight,/As being the contrary to his high will/Whom we resist. If then his providence/Out of our evil seek to bring forth good./Our labour must be to pervert that end,/And out of good still to find means of evil” [7] 244

His purpose in doing evil is only to subvert the way of heaven; his motive for doing evil is dissatisfaction with the tyranny of God. Amplified self-consciousness motivates the individual to make an extreme choice of free will: Satan “……with ambitious aim/ Against the throne and Monarchy of God/Raised impious War in Heaven……” [7] to gain his freedom. Robust self-awareness also allows individuals to retain determination and perseverance in the face of frustrating trials and tribulations. Satan remains indomitable even in the face of the harshness of hell: “A mind not to be changed by place or time./the mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.” [7] Inflationary self-consciousness also has great negative consequences. It turns the freedom of “reason” into the freedom to act arbitrarily, the freedom of lawlessness: Satan will stop at nothing to achieve his “evil” goals, and uses slaughter as a means of vengeance. What “rationality” should play to control the “irrational” factor to realize “goodness” is completely ineffective, and on the contrary, it makes the individual's identity fall more and more in the direction of “evil”. Rather, the individual's identity descends more and more in the direction of “evil”.

In contrast to Satan's supreme evil is God's supreme goodness. Such “ultimate goodness” transcends the dimensions of time and space, and is absolute, eternal, metaphysical “goodness” and “rationality”. In God's absolute rationality, he created the divine order of the universe created man, and gave him free will. However, absolute rationality also brings with it the violence of reason: God, who holds the truth in his hands, imposes his thoughts, preferences, and dislikes on the ruled using authoritarian rule. Suppression of a single standard of goodness ultimately led Satan to rebel; the prohibition of human desire for knowledge ultimately induced Adam and Eve to taste the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. It can be seen that the individual's wanton rationality is a greater irrationality to others; the unlimited expansion of “goodness” will eventually lead to a more fatal “evil”.

In opposition to the eternal and unchanging “ultimate good” is the flexible and pluralistic “good” brought about by the free will of mankind. Adamic “goodness” is different from God's ultimate goodness, but is a limited goodness, which is determined by the Sphinx factor of both “rationality” and “irrationality” in Adam. The reason, constrained by irrationality, enriched the uniqueness of Adam's identity and shaped his multi-faceted nature as a “human being”. Upon meeting Eve for the first time and falling in love with her, Adam expresses his admiration for her: “Superiour and unmove, here only weak/Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance” [7] The angel Raphael, seeing Adam's intoxication with love, warns him: “In loving thou dost well, in passion not,/Wherein true Love consists not” [7] however, Adam did not fully agree with the angel, but spoke according to his self-will, Variousy representing: “yet still free,/Approve the best, and follow what I approve./To love thou blamest me not” [7] Adam affirms the irrational element in human beings, and it is precisely this kind of sensual, “bestial”, primitive need that allows one to always judge the independence and integrity of one’s identity. Adam and Eve were eventually driven out of Paradise by their self-will to
eat the forbidden fruit. It seems to be an evil consequence, but in fact, they realized ethical goodness: they finally got rid of the “rationality” imposed by God, gained freedom, and harvested “goodness”. This is exactly what Foucault emphasizes: “The irrational is not the opposite or the antithesis of the rational, but the complement and warning of the rational”.

Good and evil do not correspond to rationality and irrationality in Paradise Lost. A complete “irrationality” makes the individual obey only instincts; a complete “rationality” will cause the individual to fall from “supreme good” to “supreme evil”. The “irrational”, which is subject to “rationality”, enriches the individual's sensual experience. Meanwhile, from the point of view of ethical choice, the contradiction and reconciliation of rationality and irrationality prompts the individual to continuously make ethical choices, and to continuously improve the practice of “goodness”. The practice of “goodness” is continuously improved. Even though the boundaries between good and evil are vaguely defined in Paradise Lost, Milton, bound by the context of his time, still gives great goodness to the absolute rationality represented by God, who is the “Parent of Goodness”, and clearly defines the evil of Satan: He is full of wickedness, and his sins are too numerous to be recounted, and he ought to be punished in hell. He deserves to be punished in hell.

4.2 Beyond the Boundary of Good and Evil

After entering the 20th century, confronted with the proliferation of rationalism and the ethical problems brought about by the rapid development of science, human beings hold a prudent and hesitant attitude towards the issue of moral value judgment, and the old dichotomy of good and evil is gradually deconstructed. The uncertainty of the ethical view of the moral field has intensified man's skepticism and exploration of the nature of the self. Foucault argues that the modern self has no inherent nature, but is a self that is constantly invented and created. Also in Klara and The Sun, from the mouths of the manager and Rick, there are repeated references to the “change” of human beings. Intuitively, the inner “change” is a person's response to social consciousness and the requirements of the times, making appropriate choices, but in essence, it is a person's conscious transcendence of the boundaries of good and evil. Either Klara, Josie, or the mother in the novel, the battle between rationality and irrationality in the heart gives them the ability to recognize good and evil again, and then transcend the shackles of good and evil standards.

Josie's “change” begins at the exchange party, her first step into the real world. At the party, Klara is treated as a plaything, and her coordination is “tested” by the violent behavior of the children. Initially, Josie affirms Klara's worth, thinking “she's the best”; gradually, however, she says nothing and remains silent about the children's disdain for Klara's behavior. The disdain, disparagement, and teasing at this party, and the “malice” that coalesces into society's prevailing view of AI, causes Josie to waver and question her perception of Klara's identity. Eventually, she submits to the mainstream will of society and treats Klara like a machine with a gaze that transcends good and evil. On Josie's part, she transcend the standard of “good and evil” and blurs the line between morality and immorality. From the angle of value judgment, Josie is “good”; she has a heart of gold and meets Klara with a childlike levelheadedness. At the same time, her “goodness” is compromised. “The interweaving of “good” and “evil” shapes the whole of Josie, and her so-called “evil” helps her to better adapt to society, which is one of the strengths that sustains her life. As she learns more about the world, she stops clinging to the ancient moral code and blends moral standards with social practices. By making choices that meet the requirements of society and the times, she brings into play the uniqueness of her life, transcending the boundaries of good and evil and manifesting the subjectivity of human life.

The struggle and oscillation of the mother's heart, as opposed to the drastic change in Josie's spiritual world, shows more of a journey from the opposition of good and evil to the transcendence of good and evil. Ever since the moment she first met Klara, the mother was hesitant to let Klara continue Josie's life. During the first days of Klara's life at home, the mother is still warm to Klara, but after the trip to Morgan's Falls, the mother sees the great possibility of Klara replacing Josie, so her feelings towards Klara become complicated again, filled with sadness, joy, regret, guilt and so on.
The worst sin in the mother's mind would be the genetic modification that led to Sal's death and Josie's illness. Seeing in Klara the altruism of the “best of the best”, she is constantly shaken and struggling. The replacement of Josie by Klara is the best option for the mother to keep Josie alive at that moment. By the standards of past morality, this may have been unethical and ignored the uniqueness of Klara and Josie, but from the perspective of life, the mother made the most appropriate choice. Since existence precedes essence, what is good and evil, and what is rationality, without life?

In *Klara and The Sun*, good and evil are gradually transcended, and the value of life is emphasized. The “evil” in human nature is no longer regarded as taboo, and the value of irrationality is embodied in the reshaping of human identity in the process of adapting to society. Besides, the novel's limitations of “goodness” can also be seen. In addition to realizing altruism on the moral level, flawless “goodness” also creates a limitation in the individual's perception of identity and the world. The limitations lead to the individual's view of good and evil tends to be antagonistic, and the individual can only be tolerant of “evil”, however, tolerance can only reconcile the relationship between good and evil but cannot solve the antagonistic relationship. Therefore, the individual shows the powerlessness to make ethical choices and moral value judgments under the premise of incomplete identity, which affirms the value of human “irrationality”.

Ancient philosophers emphasized the dichotomy between good and evil, valuing goodness to its fullest extent and viewing evil as the antithesis of goodness. Both Milton and Kazuo Ishiguro in *Paradise Lost* and *Klara and The Sun* revisit the definition of “evil,” the value of “evil,” and by extension, the value of “rationality” and “irrationality”. Satan's rebellion against “goodness” questions the correctness of extreme goodness; Adam's affirmation of irrationality blurs the line between good and evil. Josie's “change” reflects the indispensable role of “evil” as a life force; Klara's despairing end demonstrates the antagonism between the flaws of “good” and the antagonism it brings. Whereas the discussion of “evil” in *Paradise Lost* partially dissolves the dichotomy between good and evil, the complex human-machine relationship portrayed in *Klara and The Sun* deconstructs the value of good and evil to a great extent. Seeking evil in good, seeking irrational values in rationality, from reversing the traditional will to pursue the best “spirit” to seeking the will to serve the value of “life”, the so-called “there is a right within the right”. It is said that “it is right and wrong in the midst of right and wrong, and it is good and evil in the midst of good”, and this is Milton's unfinished task, which was accomplished by Kazuo Ishiguro, of transcending right and wrong, good and evil.

5. Conclusion

The fundamental purpose of literature is to provide moral paradigms for human beings to understand others and life from an ethical perspective. In *Paradise Lost* and *Klara and The Sun*, Milton and Kazuo Ishiguro jointly touch upon the serious ethical issues of identity, man's relationship with the other, and the boundaries between good and evil, delving deeply into the disturbances of man's self-spiritual world as well as man's conflict and détente with the external and moral worlds, such as Adam's constant questioning of his self-identity, Klara's puzzlement over human behaviors; Adam and Eve's love's birth and continuation of Adam and Eve’s love, Josie's dependence on and abandonment of Klara; Satan's renunciation of God’s supreme goodness, and the mother's inner struggle between good and evil. Even though Milton, due to the limitations of his time, fails to realize the transcendence of good and evil as Kazuo Ishiguro did, both of them show the challenge and questioning of the traditional dichotomy. In this thesis, Milton and Ishiguro share the same ethical ideals under the perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism, which is an attempt to shed new light on the relationship between human beings, the self, the other, and morality in the present time.

References


