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BETWEEN HUMANITY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE IDENTITY QUEST OF BICENTENNIAL MAN

İNSANLIK VE YAPAY ZEKÂ ARASINDA: BİCENTENNIAL MAN'İN KİMLİK ARAYIŞI

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Abstract
Bicentennial Man critically explores the boundaries between artificial intelligence and humanity from ethical, legal, and philosophical perspectives. Based on Isaac Asimov's short story, the film follows the 200-year journey of Andrew, an android experiencing individuation and humanization. This study examines Andrew's engagement with virtue, art, love, and justice, discussing the impact of artificial intelligence on human identity. It addresses the ethical and societal dimensions of AI-human interaction and opens new debates on human-robot relations through the film's portrayal of technology. Andrew's experiences serve as a lens to analyze the social acceptance of AI, its ethical responsibilities, and legal status, questioning the impact of technological advancements on human nature. The film was selected through purposive sampling by three experts in the field and analyzed using thematic analysis. Seven key themes were identified: Worker Robots, Machine Learning and Andrew, Andrew and Virtue, Andrew and the Process of Humanization, Andrew and Art, Andrew and Love, and Andrew and Justice. Ultimately, the film demonstrates that becoming human is not merely a biological process but a dynamic transformation shaped by social acceptance and ethical values. It contributes to AI and identity debates, raising crucial questions about the future of human-machine relations.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Communication and identity, Artificial intelligence and identity, Human-machine relationship, Film review.

Öz
Bicentennial Man filmi, yapay zekâ ve insanlık arasındaki sınırları etik, hukuki ve felsefi açılardan sorgulayan önemli bir anlatı sunmaktadır. Film, Isaac Asimov'un eserinden uyarlanarak, bireyselleşme ve insanlaşma sürecini deneyimleyen bir android olan Andrew'un 200 yıllık yolculuğunu konu almaktadır. Çalışma, Andrew'un erdem, sanat, aşk ve adalet kavramlarıyla ilişkisini ele alarak, yapay zekânın insan kimliği üzerindeki etkilerini tartışmaktadır. Andrew'un bireyselleşme süreci, yapay zekâ ve insan kimliği arasındaki etkileşimi etik ve toplumsal boyutlarıyla ele alırken, filmde sunulan teknoloji algısı üzerinden insan-robot ilişkilerine dair yeni tartışmalar açılmaktadır. Yapay zekâ ve robotların toplumsal kabulleri, etik sorumlulukları ve hukuki statüleri, Andrew'un deneyimleri üzerinden değerlendirilerek, teknolojik gelişmelerin insan doğası üzerindeki etkileri irdelenmektedir. Film, üç alan uzmanı tarafından amaçlı örneklem yöntemiyle seçilmiş ve tematik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında filmin anlatısında öne çıkan yedi ana tema "İşçi Robotlar", "Makine Öğrenmesi ve Andrew", "Andrew ve Erdem", "Andrew ve İnsanlaşma Süreci", "Andrew ve Sanat", "Andrew ve Aşk" ve "Andrew ve Adalet" olarak belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak film, insanlaşmanın yalnızca biyolojik bir süreç değil, toplumsal kabul ve etik değerlerle şekillenen dinamik bir dönüşüm olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, yapay zekâ ve kimlik tartışmalarına katkı sağlayarak, gelecekteki insan-makine ilişkilerine dair önemli sorular ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yapay zeka, İletişim ve kimlik, Yapay zekâ ve kimlik, İnsan-makine ilişkisi, Film incelemesi.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humanity has pursued the idea of immortality; however, as it gradually accepted its own mortality, this desire began to be projected onto other entities. In the modern world, one of the most tangible representations of this dream is the robot. Robots are not only products of technological advancement but also reflect the human aspiration to transcend its own limitations. In this context, science fiction cinema emerges not merely as an element of popular culture but also as a critical narrative space where social, ethical, and techno-logical debates are conducted.

Science fiction films typically portray robots through two primary lenses: as friendly entities that serve humans or as threats to humanity (Balcı, 2021). These representations leave profound traces in the public imagination as reflections of both trust in and anxiety toward technological progress. For instance, films like Wall-E and A.I. Artificial Intelligence highlight robots that can form emotional bonds and serve humanity, whereas Terminator and Ex Machina explore artificial intelligences that pose existential threats. During the Cold War era, robots were predominantly depicted as threats; however, in the 21st century, these representations have become more complex, incorporating emotionally rich and benevolent artificial intelligences (Hasdemir & Berk, 2024).

The way robots challenge the boundaries of humanity raises the question of whether they represent transhumanism's desire to overcome illness, aging, and death (Yeşilkaya & Umut, 2022). At this point, the character Andrew from the film Bicentennial Man, directed by Chris Columbus and adapted from Isaac Asimov's short story of the same name -which is it-self based on Asimov's "**Three Laws of Robotics**" (1942)- draws particular attention. Andrew is portrayed as an artificial intelligence model fundamentally programmed not to harm hu-mans. However, the film emphasizes that robots are not solely bound by ethical programming but may also possess the potential to develop free will. Andrew's self-identification as an in-dividual is closely related not only to technological advancement but also to social acceptance and ethical values (Torrance, 2008, p. 512). The question of when and how the artificial boundary between humans and robots will dissolve is one of the central themes of science fiction cinema. Whether this boundary disappears as robots become more humanlike or as humans become more robotic deepens the social and ethical dimensions of technology. In this regard, science fiction films offer not just entertainment, but also a critical intellectual ground for contemplating the impact of technology on humanity.

This study aims to explore the human-robot relationship and the process of becoming human through the film Bicentennial Man. Focusing on the 200-year journey of the android Andrew, who makes many sacrifices to become human, the film offers a critical discussion on the limits of human identity and the ethical status of artificial intelligence. Andrew's path to individuation is examined through his relationships with characters like Richard Martin, Amanda, Rupert, and Portia, while concepts such as "**virtue**," "**justice**," "**art**," "**love**," and "**individuality**" serve as key interpretive frameworks.

On Robots, Artificial Intelligence, And Human Nature

The quest for immortality has been addressed in mythological, religious, and scientific contexts throughout history. The Epic of Gilgamesh, which dates to ancient Mesopotamia, emphasizes the futility of humanity's pursuit of eternal life. Similarly, Prometheus's act of stealing fire not only bestowed knowledge and technology upon humanity but also led to his punishment. With the Renaissance, the belief emerged that humans could transform them-selves through science and technology (Özer, 2023). Aydeniz (2020, p. 359) argues that with biotechnology, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence, human beings may artificially guide their own evolutionary process. Transhumanism seeks to transcend the limitations of biological existence and aims to enhance both physical and cognitive human capabilities (Feyzi & Bilgiz, 2023, p. 350). This line of thought is explicitly reflected in the narrative of Bicentennial Man.

The influence of artificial intelligence on human nature extends beyond professional and cognitive domains. Contemporary AI systems are in the process of developing capabilities such as ethical decision-making, emotional responsiveness, and the ability to empathize with humans. Yet, a critical question arises: To what extent can a system that lacks consciousness, but behaves as though it were

conscious, mimic aspects of human nature and how does this challenge our very definition of what it means to be human? In this regard, Sucu (2019) explores the societal implications of artificial intelligence by questioning whether machines can bear ethical responsibility or establish meaningful relationships with human beings.

The literature on cognitive science and AI ethics offers various views on how AI transforms human nature. While traditional perspectives see self-awareness and moral judgment as uniquely human, contemporary approaches argue that AI may also develop these capacities (Gültekin, 2021, p. 2). Accordingly, questions about AI's ethical responsibility and rights have sparked new debates in human rights and law. This transformation has also reshaped human-machine relations, as machines now participate in decision-making processes, expanding the limits of human cognition.

From a cognitive development perspective, transhumanism supports the idea that humans use technology to surpass their own limits, with AI as a central element in this process (Yeşilkaya & Umut, 2022, p. 89). In contrast, posthumanism questions anthropocentric views and aims to redefine the relationship between humans, nature, and technology (Braidotti, 2013, p. 49). In Bicentennial Man, Andrew's journey reflects both the transhumanist desire to transcend human nature and posthumanist concerns about identity. While his wish to acquire biological traits marks a transhumanist step, his continued perception as "**artificial**" raises posthumanist questions of identity and acceptance.

While some view artificial intelligence as a complementary technology that enhances human capabilities, others regard it as a potential threat to human identity. In science fiction narratives, AI is often positioned either as the savior of humanity or as an existential threat (Acar, 2023, p. 389). Moreover, the development of anthropomorphic designs intended to make robots appear more human has deepened the nature of human-AI interaction, adding new layers of emotional and psychological complexity (Chi, Chi, & Gürsoy, 2025, p. 82).

Anthropomorphism: Attributing Human Characteristics to Robots

The tendency toward anthropomorphism -observable across a wide range of domains from mythology to modern technology- plays a decisive role particularly in robotic design and human-robot interaction. The term anthropomorphism, derived from the Greek words anthropos (human) and morphe (form), refers to the attribution of human characteristics, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities (Mota-Rojas, et al., 2021, p. 2) This tendency has emerged as a means for individuals to make their environment more predictable in the face of uncertainty (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007, p. 82). It is also closely tied to human social nature; people may project human-like features onto inanimate objects or animals to fulfill their social interaction needs. From another perspective, Duffy (2003, p. 177) emphasizes that anthropomorphism is consciously employed as a strategy in robotic design and human-robot interactions. In this context, endowing robots with human-like attributes can facilitate users' adaptation to these technologies and enhance communication efficiency.

However, attributing human traits to robots also entails certain potential drawbacks. Users may develop unrealistic expectations regarding a robot's capabilities or level of consciousness, which could lead to disappointment and misinterpretation of the technology. Therefore, anthropomorphic features must be implemented with careful consideration and ethical awareness (Złotowski, Yogeeswaran, & Bartneck, 2017, p. 49). Additionally, the phenomenon known as the uncanny valley suggests that when a robot's human-likeness surpasses a certain threshold -yet still falls short of appearing fully human- it may evoke discomfort or unease in users (Mori, 2012).

In conclusion, anthropomorphism is a fundamental component of human psychology and presents both advantages and challenges in human-robot interaction. When applied deliberately and with balance, it can enhance the successful integration of robotic technologies into human life.

Robot Ethics and Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics

Advancing robotics has intensified ethical concerns, particularly in human-AI interactions. Asimov's "**Three Laws of Robotics**" remain a key ethical reference.

Asimov first introduced the Three Laws in his 1942 short story Runaround. The laws are as follows:

1. A robot may not harm a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law (Asimov, 1942).

The primary aim of these laws is to prevent robots from harming humans and to ensure safety in human-robot interactions. Within Asimov's fictional universe, these laws function as core principles embedded in the robots' "**positronic brains**."

Asimov's Three Laws have had a profound impact on the fields of robot ethics and artificial intelligence, yet there is ongoing debate over whether they are sufficient for addressing the complexities of modern technologies. Some scholars argue for the development of more comprehensive ethical frameworks to govern advanced AI systems (Turan, Turan, & Küçüksille, 2022, pp. 293-294). In Türkiye as well, academic interest in AI and robot ethics is steadily increasing. For instance, Doğan and Çakıcı (2022) examine the ethical and legal status of AI-powered service robots and highlight the importance of establishing regulatory frameworks in this area.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the film Bicentennial Man (1999), which is considered a valuable case due to the ethical, legal, and social debates it presents around artificial intelligence and the process of becoming human. The film was selected through purposive sampling by three subject matter experts and analyzed using the method of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method aimed at systematically interpreting the meanings embedded in a narrative. In this approach, recurring patterns and themes within the data are identified, coded, and interpreted through in-depth analysis (Glesne, 2015, p. 259). Within the scope of the study, seven main themes that prominently emerge in the film's narrative were identified: "**Labor Robots**," "**Machine Learning and Andrew**," "**Andrew and Virtue**," "**Andrew and the Process of Becoming Human**," "**Andrew and Art**," "**Andrew and Love**," and "**Andrew and Justice**." These themes were visualized using the NVivo 12 Qualitative Data Analysis Soft-ware.

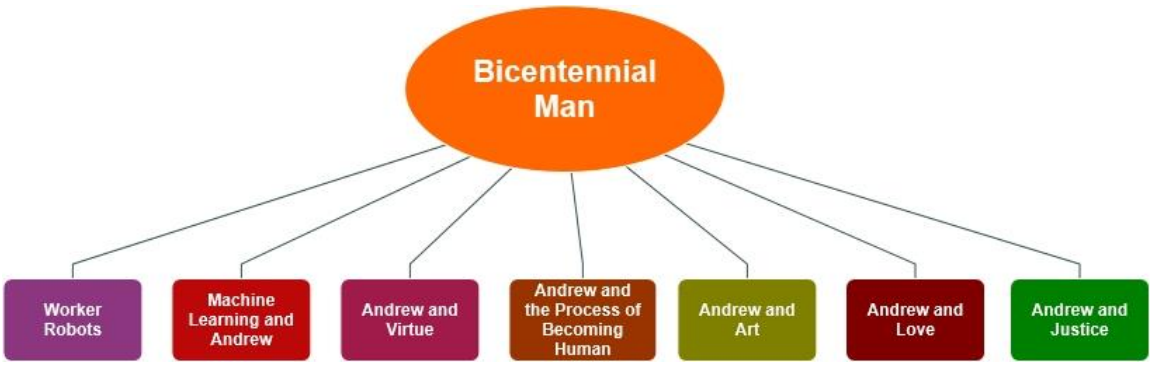

Figure 1. Themes identified in the analysis of bicentennial man (Prepared by the authors)

In this context, the narrative and conceptual elements presented in the film were examined within a framework that questions the boundaries between human and machine, ethical and legal statuses, the process of individuation, and the place of artificial intelligence within societal norms. During the analysis, the development of characters, the structure of the plot, and the presentation of themes were assessed within a contextual integrity and were associated with the broader social and academic debates introduced by the film.

FINDINGS

The film begins with the introduction of Andrew, an NDR-114 model robot, who is brought into the home of Richard Martin in 2005 to serve as a domestic helper. Initially programmed solely for household tasks, Andrew gradually discovers that he possesses artistic and creative abilities. The emotional bond he forms with Amanda, one of the young daughters in the family -affectionately called "**Little Miss**"- lays the foundation for his acquisition of hu-man-like qualities.

Over time, Andrew realizes that he has developed a sense of individual consciousness and begins to experience emotions, setting him apart from other robots. Encouraged by Richard Martin, Andrew embarks on a journey of learning and existential inquiry. Seeking to live an independent life apart from the Martin family, he eventually obtains his legal freedom. He begins creating original works of art and becomes a scientist specializing in robotics, developing human-like organs.

In the course of becoming human, Andrew undergoes a series of medical procedures that transform his mechanical body into a biological form. During this process, he forms a romantic relationship with Portia, the granddaughter of Little Miss. Despite completing his bio-logical transformation, he continues to be legally recognized as a machine. The film reveals that in order to fulfill his greatest desire -to be considered human- Andrew must also accept mortality, an essential component of the human condition. Ultimately, he embraces aging and death, thereby being formally granted the status of a biological human being. However, this status is legally acknowledged only at the moment of his death.

Bicentennial Man explores how artificial intelligence can imitate human nature and questions the meaning of being human. The film offers a philosophical perspective on identity, ethics, autonomy, and human rights. Andrew's 200-year journey becomes a profound narrative on the human relationship with technology.

Worker Robots

Originally designed for household tasks, the NDR-114 model robot Andrew gradually reveals abilities beyond his initial purpose. As his artistic side emerges, Richard teaches him watchmaking. Andrew's earnings from this craft spark a family debate over ownership: while Richard and his wife claim the income belongs to the family, Amanda argues it belongs to Andrew. The question "**What would a robot do with money?**" raises broader issues about the legal and economic status of robots in financial systems.

Figure 2. Andrew performing household tasks (Screenshot captured by the authors)

In today's labor market, although robots do not yet demand wages for their work, the impact of automation on employment is a widely debated issue. The widespread adoption of artificial intelligence and automation enables companies to reduce operational costs by employing fewer

workers, yet it also poses a threat to low-skilled laborers, who face an increased risk of job displacement (Özmen, 2019, pp. 31-34). A similar scenario is portrayed in the film: despite advancements in humanoid robots, public fear of job loss prevents their mass adoption, leading to a halt in production.

However, some studies suggest that the impact of robots on the labor market is not exclusively negative. Technological innovation may reduce costs, stimulate economic growth, and even generate employment. For example, while ATMs were initially expected to displace bank employees, in practice, banks expanded their operations and increased the number of branches and staff. Opinions on the labor implications of automation vary: Stephen Hawking predicted widespread unemployment for low- and middle-income workers; Bill Gates pro-posed a robot tax; and Elon Musk advocated for the redistribution of economic value created by robots through a system of universal basic income (Yılmaz, 2018, pp. 115-117).

In conclusion, the role of robots and AI in the workforce is complex, with both risks like job loss and inequality, and benefits such as economic growth and new jobs. How this transition is managed will shape the future of the labor market.

Machine Learning and Andrew

Andrew is portrayed as a learning and evolving robot from the moment he arrives at the Martin household. Initially, he mimics speech but struggles with context and emotion, replying to "**Good night**" with "**Yes, it is a good night**." With Richard's guidance, he gradually learns to use language naturally and begins to act more human. His learning goes beyond language; he learns to play the piano from Little Miss and masters clockmaking by studying carpentry manuals.

Figure 3. Andrew practicing the craft of woodworking (Screenshot captured by the authors)

Andrew's intellectual development is equally noteworthy. From the history books he reads, he comes to understand the importance of freedom to humanity, and he tells Richard, "**I want to have what so many have died for**," thus expressing his desire for independence. After securing his legal freedom, he sets out to discover whether there are other robots like himself and, along the way, meets the scientist, Rupert. Together, they begin developing artificial organs. By studying medical and anatomical texts, Andrew designs synthetic organs and collaborates with Rupert to apply this technology in extending human life.

Andrew's learning journey throughout the film closely parallels the machine learning techniques that contemporary AI engineers are currently developing. Machine learning is a field that enables robots to imitate and improve upon human behavior, and it evolves along-side artificial intelligence through techniques such as deep learning (Gükçem Akyıldız & Akyıldız, 2020, pp. 1002-1003). This process involves not only data processing, but also understanding, learning, prediction, and adaptation. Thanks to deep learning, natural language processing, and data mining algorithms, AI systems are increasingly

capable of exhibiting more complex and human-like behaviors (Fırat & Fırat, 2017).

In conclusion, Andrew's journey reflects the future of AI, where systems evolve through learning. His pursuit of freedom raises key ethical and legal questions for AI development.

Andrew and Virtue

Virtue is commonly defined as a reflection of moral excellence and spiritual maturity in human beings. However, whether a concept that requires consciousness and will can be at-tributed to a being without a soul is a matter of significant ethical and ontological debate. While Socrates equated virtue with knowledge, Aristotle argued that virtue is a state of balance in which individuals actualize their potential through reason. The Stoics, on the other hand, believed that virtue is grounded in the capacity to live in harmony with nature, emphasizing the importance of aligning one's life with both personal nature and the surrounding world (Çubukçu, 1982). In the film, Andrew's path to becoming human is shaped not only by his physical transformation but also by his internalization of moral values and individuality. For example, his decision to release a spider he finds in the basement rather than killing it can be associated with the Stoic conception of virtue. However, the film raises a critical question: is virtue merely a programmed behavior, or does it represent a conscious choice? Andrew's ethical decisions provoke inquiry into whether he acts virtuously simply to conform to human norms or whether he genuinely develops moral values.

The primary framework that governs Andrew's understanding of ethics is Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics. While these laws define the ethical boundaries within which he operates, they also constrain his process of individuation. Nevertheless, the film demonstrates that Andrew eventually transcends these rules and develops his own moral compass. For instance, when Portia criticizes his restoration work, Andrew replies, "**I apologize for always telling the truth, but I can't help it; I was programmed this way**," a statement that clearly reveals his inner conflict as he strives to align himself with human morality.

Although Asimov's Three Laws occupy a central place in robot ethics debates, their applicability has been the subject of criticism. Kahambing and Deguma (2019, p. 23) argue that scientific advancements should be strictly regulated, while Öztürk Dilek (2019, pp. 52-53) emphasizes that such rules are important to prevent the misuse of artificial intelligence. How-ever, Gary Marcus of New York University (Britannica, 2019) points out that teaching abstract concepts like "**causing no harm**" or "**justice**" to a robot is far more difficult than programming concrete mathematical rules. Moreover, the ethical implications of such learning processes also assign responsibility to the engineers who program the robots (Łichocki, Billard, & Kahn, 2011, p. 46). The film complicates this debate by portraying Andrew not as a merely programmed entity but as one who gradually constructs his own ethical framework.

In conclusion, Bicentennial Man presents a compelling narrative that challenges the notion that virtue is exclusive to humans. By questioning whether Andrew's ethical behavior stems from pre-programmed instruction or conscious moral development, the film offers a pro-found exploration of the relationship between artificial intelligence and ethics.

Andrew's Process of Becoming Human

Andrew is a robot equipped with a personality chip that enables him to exhibit a range of individual traits. However, his owners choose not to activate this feature. This decision reveals how the potential for robots to develop individuality can be limited by human intervention, raising important ethical concerns. Andrew's journey toward personhood sparks significant debate not only on technological grounds but also in terms of social acceptance.

Andrew's process of acquiring identity gains momentum when the family's older daughter attempts to harm him, prompting Richard to establish the rule that "**Andrew must be treated like a human**." As the story progresses, Andrew begins to demonstrate qualities typically associated with human beings - such as creativity, curiosity, and friendship- which draw Richard's attention. In an effort to determine

whether these traits are the result of mere programming or genuine development, Richard takes Andrew back to the company that manufactured him. The CEO interprets Andrew's individuation as a malfunction and offers to take him back. Richard's response "**You can't put a price on an individual**" strongly underscores the argument for recognizing robots as persons.

Nevertheless, acknowledging robots as individuals remains a contentious issue from both ethical and technological standpoints. Research indicates that robots perceived as autonomous are viewed as more realistic than non-autonomous ones, which may heighten perceived threats to human identity and lead to negative attitudes toward autonomous robots (Złotowski, Yogeeswaran, & Bartneck, 2017, p. 53). One of the fundamental fears' humans have about robots is their potential to become stronger and more independent in ways that might pose a threat to humanity (Batukan, 2018). This perception of threat is also apparent in the film: when Andrew's artistic creations begin to generate discomfort, Richard redirects him toward the more socially acceptable craft of watchmaking. This scenario reflects a broader societal tendency to limit the creative expression of robots.

Figure 4. Scene of Andrew undergoing surgery to become biologically human (Screenshot captured by the authors)

According to Vishwanathan Mohan (2019), the essence of being human lies in the sense of self, a faculty that enables individuals to make sense of themselves and their environment, and to engage meaningfully with others. In this context, self-perception is understood to be constructed not only through individual experience but also through interactions with the ex-ternal world (Yazar, 2020, p. 65). While the human mind is capable of transforming sensory data into conscious experience, robots - despite their ability to process environmental information- fail to attain a comparable level of consciousness (Koyuncu, 2015, p. 24). This deficiency underlies Andrew's struggle to integrate into society. His desire for individuality leads him on a quest to find another robot like himself. However, the robot he encounters -named Galatea- although equipped with an activated personality chip, fails to develop genuine individuality. This illustrates that the acquisition of identity in robots is not merely a technical is-sue.

Although Andrew's autonomy is presented as a fictional construct within the film, it raises complex ethical and societal questions. The individuation of robots is not solely a technological concern but also prompts profound philosophical and ethical debates regarding how society chooses to recognize and accept such beings.

Andrew and Art

In July 2013, a promising new artist held an exhibition at Galerie Oberkampf in Paris. The week-long show attracted public attention, received media coverage, and featured works created over several years- including some produced live within the gallery. Yet, this seemingly typical art-world event had one unusual aspect: the artist was a computer program known as The Painting

Fool. (Gayford, 2016)

Similarly, in Bicentennial Man, Andrew's artistic inclination is first revealed when he accidentally breaks a glass horse figurine belonging to Little Miss. Feeling the need to make amends, Andrew spends hours reading books on woodcarving to improve his skills. He then painstakingly creates a wooden replica of the figurine and presents it to her as a gift. This moment marks Andrew's first significant step toward demonstrating that he is not merely a mechanical being, but one capable of forming aesthetic and emotional connections. However, while his creative act is met with surprise by the family, the manufacturing company regards it as a "**mechanical malfunction**."

Today, artificial intelligence and robotics are gaining increasing acceptance in the art world. Andrew Conru, founder of the RobotArt gallery, argues that AI will not replace human artists but will instead carve out a unique artistic domain of its own. Just as photography did not displace painting but created its own form of artistic expression, artificial intelligence is now contributing to the emergence of new artistic modalities (Robitzski, 2018). This development, however, raises fundamental questions about authorship and the creative process be-hind artworks.

Unlike Andrew's experience -where his artistic identity was suppressed- contemporary AI-generated art is increasingly welcomed with admiration and curiosity. Nonetheless, de-bates persist over whether machines can truly be creative or possess imagination. While Bicentennial Man presents a scenario in which Andrew's creativity is viewed as a deviation, the cur-rent rise of AI in the arts suggests that machines are now being embraced not as creative threats, but as innovative tools within a broader artistic landscape (Gayford, 2016).

Andrew and Love

Romantic relationships between humans and artificial intelligence have frequently been explored in cinema. In Spike Jonze's Her (2013), Theodore's love for an operating system prompts viewers to question whether AI can form emotional bonds. In Bicentennial Man, however, Andrew's story presents the experience of love in a far more intricate framework. A similar theme is addressed in the character 216 from Cem Yılmaz's G.O.R.A. series. As 216 attempts to become human, he also learns about human selfishness and flaws culminating in his friend Arif's comment: "**Now you're truly human,**" highlighting the connection between humanity and ethical dilemmas.

Andrew's journey toward becoming human also involves attempts to understand and experience love. Early in the film, Little Miss Amanda consults Andrew about her boyfriend Frank's marriage proposal. Although Amanda hints at her feelings for Andrew by saying, "**I have another friend-sweet, funny, and the kind that makes me forget Frank**," Andrew advises her to marry Frank, thereby experiencing both the beginning and end of love simultaneously.

After obtaining his freedom, Andrew lives alone for many years and begins to seek out a being similar to himself. However, upon meeting Galatea -another robot- he realizes he cannot form an emotional bond with her. His collaboration with Rupert Burns in developing humanoid robots accelerates his transformation. Meeting Portia, Amanda's granddaughter, and forming a deep emotional connection with her intensifies Andrew's desire to become human and build a family. Yet Portia's response calling Andrew "**a wonderful machine**" and stating she cannot emotionally attach herself to a machine further motivates Andrew to take an addition-al step toward humanity. In pursuit of this goal, he undergoes a neural system transplant, initiating both a physical and psychological transformation.

Andrew describes this transformation as "**a gift to science**" and shares his first kiss with Portia, expressing that the feeling was "**wonderful**." However, when Portia replies, "**Charles and I are getting married**," it marks a new turning point in Andrew's emotional development. Portia later explains to him that being human is not about perfection, but rather about making mistakes, taking risks, and accepting imperfections. This dialogue emphasizes that humanity is defined not merely by logic or physical capability but also by emotional and ethical experiences.

Figure 5. Scenes of Andrew experiencing *love* (Screenshot captured by the authors)

As humanity strives to overcome its own flaws, it often constructs robots as idealized, flawless beings. However, Andrew's story in Bicentennial Man illustrates a reversal of this narrative: the journey of a perfect robot toward becoming human necessitates the abandonment of perfection. Humans expect robots to be logical, controlled, and error-free; yet, in order to become human, Andrew must make mistakes, take risks, and endure emotional confusion. On Portia's engagement day, as Andrew watches her from a distance, he experiences jealousy and interprets the feeling as love.

Although robots today do not possess the capacity to experience love, some individuals have formed emotional bonds with them. In 2017, Zheng Jiajia -a former AI and robotics engineer at Huawei- married a robot he himself had developed. In 2018, Akihiko Kondo wed a 16-year-old hologram named Miku, justifying his decision by stating that she "**will never age, die, or leave his side**" (Haas, 2017; Suzuki, 2018).

These cases suggest that, for some individuals, the idea of a "**flawed human**" may no longer be desirable. Yet in Bicentennial Man, the expectation placed upon Andrew is quite the opposite: to relinquish his status as a perfect machine and become an imperfect human. As robots increasingly enter the realm of love, attachment, and human relationships, such developments give rise to new ethical questions. Humanity must not only consider the fulfillment of emotional needs through these relationships but also reflect on their broader moral and social consequences.

Andrew and Justice

Is it possible for a robot to seek justice? If so, which legal authority would evaluate such a claim? Should certain rights be granted to robots? Should current legal systems be restructured to accommodate artificial intelligence and autonomous systems? Bicentennial Man raises these questions through Andrew's legal struggles, challenging the boundaries of AI's legal status.

Early in the film, when Andrew visits the manufacturing company with Richard, the CEO refers to him as "**a simple household appliance**" and attempts to repossess him. Richard, however, refuses, stating that he sees Andrew as an individual. Notably, despite being acknowledged as a person in principle, Andrew is not permitted to make autonomous decisions about his own future. Similarly, the question of who holds legal ownership over the income generated from Andrew's clockmaking sparks a legal debate. Although this obstacle is over-come within the film, it remains true today that a robot cannot legally open a bank account.

As Andrew's process of individuation progresses, he requests information from the manufacturing company to determine whether any other robots like himself exist. When his request is denied, he seeks to obtain the information through legal means. While a robot would not typically have stood to file a lawsuit, Amanda's son Lloyd -who is a lawyer and strongly dislikes Andrew- shares the information under the condition that Andrew disappears for several years. This event brings ethical and legal concerns to the forefront regarding whet-her robots can meaningfully participate in legal processes.

The legal status of robots is an ongoing topic of debate among legal scholars. According to (Pagallo, 2018), granting personality to robots may create significant gaps within the legal system, necessitating

new forms of regulation. Akbilek (2017, p. 233) emphasizes that producers, software developers, and users of AI-powered robots should bear specific responsibilities. With the increasing prevalence of autonomous AI systems, it will become inevitable to introduce new laws, ethical guidelines, and international standards to define and regulate their legal status (Bozkurt Yüksel, 2017, p. 107).

Figure 6. Courtroom scenes from Andrew's pursuit of justice (Screenshot captured by the authors)

Andrew's legal battle frames these debates within a dramatic narrative. When he petitions the court to be allowed to marry Portia, he is denied recognition as a human on the grounds that he is an "**immortal being.**" The court rules that robots cannot hold the same legal rights as humans. Notably, the legal gap in question is not about recognizing robots as human beings, but rather the absence of any regulation concerning whether a human may legally marry a robot. Although the film does not explicitly engage with this issue, it invites speculation on how future legal systems might respond to such scenarios.

Today, various legal frameworks regarding the status of robots are under discussion. The European Union has proposed the idea of granting robots "**electronic personhood**," while legal scholars remain divided on whether robots should be classified as property, software, artificial persons, quasi-persons, or as an entirely new legal category (Demir, 2017, p. 14).

In conclusion, Bicentennial Man opens up a profound discussion on the legal status of artificial intelligence. Andrew's process of individuation is not only a personal journey but also part of a broader legal and ethical issue concerning how robots will be recognized and what rights they may hold in future legal systems.

CONCLUSIONS

Bicentennial Man presents a nuanced narrative that examines the process of becoming human through the lens of artificial intelligence, exploring its ethical, legal, and social dimensions. This study analyzes the character of Andrew and his pursuit of humanity within the broader context of robot representations in science fiction cinema and the impact of techno-logical progress on societal norms and acceptance. The film opens up a critical discussion on human-robot interaction by addressing fundamental concepts such as individuation, freedom, ethics, and law.

Andrew's transformation demonstrates that becoming human is not merely a matter of physical or cognitive advancement, but one that is intrinsically linked to social acceptance and ethical values. The difficulty humans face in accepting Andrew's artistic abilities and emotion-al attachments underscores the need to reexamine societal norms and perceptions of human imperfection. While humanity strives to create ideal beings through technology, it paradoxically resists accepting perfection when it is embodied in a robot. This contradiction brings to light fundamental philosophical questions and necessitates a reassessment of how technological advancements redefine our understanding of what it means to be human.

Furthermore, the film delves deeply into the ethical and legal aspects of artificial intelligence. Andrew's position within the legal system raises the question of whether being human is a biological condition or a matter of social recognition. This directly parallels contemporary debates regarding how

AI and robotic technologies should be situated within ethical and legal frameworks. The growing discussion around "**electronic personhood**" in the European Union and other international legal systems highlights the ongoing relevance of the ethical dilemmas portrayed in Bicentennial Man.

In conclusion, Bicentennial Man poses critical questions about a future in which the boundaries between human and artificial intelligence become increasingly blurred. Academic and philosophical discussions around the individuation of robots, their ethical responsibilities, societal acceptance, and legal status are becoming ever more vital. This film -and the present study- demonstrates that as AI becomes more human-like, humanity must continuously recon-sider its stance toward technology. Future research should focus on developing new perspectives on ethical codes, individual rights, and mechanisms of social acceptance for artificial intelligence.

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