

# Bicentennial man



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Bicentennial Man is a film that depicts philosophical musings in a science fiction story. It relays the story of a robot named Andrew Martin and his unique sense of self-awareness as he discovers the remarkable qualities of humanity, and how such exposure seizes him to aspire for human-likeness.

It lingers on the idea of free will, which struggles to find its place in the being of Andrew, a robot who can rationalize things. The movie's premise revolves on the concept of humanity and how an object such as a robot could be considered as a rational being, rather than what it was originally intended to be which was to serve human beings.

The film goes through the motions of Andrew's arrival in the Martin family and the interactions he had experienced toward them that contributed to his fascination about humans. As the story progresses, Andrew becomes immersed in his ability to fully understand the human condition that he becomes like one.

The dilemma in this film is seen when Andrew attempts to insist upon his human-likeness by behaving in a rational manner, which agitates human beings who do not understand his exceptionality. Analysis At the beginning of the film, it was projected that Andrew's sole purpose was to serve and obey the Martin family.

Like all robots, Andrew's function was to cater to the needs of the humans he was assigned to serve. The political theorist, Jeremy Bentham, describes this relation as the concept of utilitarianism. Bentham explains that the utilization of an object or individual is relative to the benefit, advantage, pleasure,

good, or happiness produced by the object or individual for the party concerned.

In its simplest terms, it defines the use of an object, or even individuals, as a means to an end. The purpose of using anything depends on the notion of pleasure and pain as the former is seen as good while the latter is seen as evil (Nelson 205).

The fundamental principle of utilitarianism derives its condition from the assumption that individuals act according to their own self-interest which sought pleasure and avoided pain. This line of thinking anticipates an individual's actions or behavior since it recognizes the imperfection of humanity and how individuals need objects or other human beings to survive (Nelson 207- 210).

In the context of the film, Andrew's initial role was merely a utility that produced pleasure or happiness for the Martin family. This was shown when the family ordered him to do things for them, which was exactly what he was intended for.

However, over the course of his interactions with the members of the Martin family, especially with the youngest daughter Amanda, Andrew became more self-aware of his state and his comprehension of the beings he was obligated to. Mr. Martin's influence on the growth of knowledge that Andrew received through the books he was given to read and the conversation pieces that they had, created a lasting impact on Andrew's capability to understand and imitate the complexities of humanity. Andrew developed a unique consciousness that led him on a quest for self-realization.

He had demonstrated a capacity to function beyond his means, through the creation of objects by carving, his fondness for music that led him to learn how to play the piano and his special interest in the human condition. His ability to develop creativity on his own volition, which is considered a human trait, places him in an awkward light that dimly reflects the uncertainty of his being. The concept of free will clearly operates in this section of the film as it portrays Andrew's ability to reason and act in reference to the way he understands his situation.

Immanuel Kant defines free will as a direct experience of reality brought about by introspection. It relies on the faculty of volition that pushes an individual to decide or act on something without being coerced to do it (Nelson 117).

Andrew had demonstrated the concept of free will in the scene where he asked Mr. Martin if he could obtain his freedom. This correlates with Kant's discussion about how freedom is seen as autonomous. Kant defines the laws governing autonomy as conditions under which the will of one individual could be combined with those of others, according to a general law of freedom.

In obeying this general law, an individual was following an internal moral law which is the result of her or his reasoning. The individual is said to carry out an act for the purpose of being aware of her or his capability to act (Nelson, 118).

Furthermore, the concept of sovereignty is magnified in this scene as Andrew was able to assert himself as a rational being when he requested for

his freedom since he believed that he had the right to ask for it. According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Freedom is a sovereign right.

It is aspired by rational beings who view themselves as beings of worth. For Andrew to have been allowed by Mr. Martin the privilege of acknowledging that signifies his acceptance of Andrew's rational sense of being (Nelson 133). Andrew also validated his human-likeness when he exercised his free will to build his own house and live on his own to find his destiny. He made the decision not because someone ordered him to leave, but he did it out of his interest to discover more things about himself and the world around him.

Another revelation in the film supports the philosophy of Kant when it emphasized that an action should be done from duty to have moral worth. Kant maintains that duty does not depend on the realization of the object of action, rather on the principle of volition in performing the action which disregards any object of desire (Nelson 120 -125). Andrew's duty to still serve the Martin family after being acknowledged as free establishes his moral worth since he performed them out of his own will and not because he was obligated to.

The fact that he did things according to his own understanding of them connotes how his behavior and line of thinking has changed from the beginning of the film up to that point Kant also stated that the greatest good or morality of an act should only be identified under the conception of the existing internal moral law, which can only be found in a rational being. Since Andrew's actions were mostly dictated by his own judgment of things, his behavior reinforces him to become rational, which is the only trait that is ascribed to humans (Nelson 120 -125).

Andrew's realization of his conflicted being came into light when he stopped referring to himself as "one" and started to use "I" in the latter part of the movie. "I" is a term used to identify humans while "one" is commonly used in identifying a thing or referring to another person. The transition from "one" to "I" is a vital indication that Andrew saw himself as a rational being. This occurrence gave Andrew the opportunity to assert his self as though he was part of the human race.

There are a lot of peculiar characteristics that outlined Andrew's uniqueness from other robots. He displayed a higher understanding about human beings because he too exhibited qualities that were considered flawed when compared to other robots of function. He had developed an inclination toward emotionality and creativity, identifiable traits that are uniquely present among human beings. It is essential to take note of this since the very idea of Andrew's immortality and perfect composition is questioned because of the human-like traits that he possessed.

Andrew's distinct ability to portray human characteristics and personalities makes him a very interesting character to study since he defies the natural laws of reason regarding free will. His possession and understanding of such ideas like emotions, mortality, free will and discernment creates tension within his nature as it was not expected of him to possess such qualities. The film tackled the very notion of humanity, arguing how to determine the boundaries of being human.

In the movie, Andrew contended that being human should not only be based upon the physical attributes that defines humanity; it should also be rooted on the principles of individual comprehension and the concept of death.

Andrew gave up his mortality in order to be accepted as human. Although in the film, it would seem that Andrew's nature cannot be changed for his metaphysical make-up is a robot, his assertion of his self and the idea of being recognized as part of the human race is a trait of a rational being.

Kant lucidly explains the complexities of the human condition when he states that all individuals should be treated as ends and never merely as a means. He stresses that the rights of an individual must be upheld through the pursuance of equality before the law and the acquisition of education that leads to enlightenment. Based on this statement, rationality is characterized by the ability to see oneself as an entity of worth. It is to apply reasoning to verify his or her existence. From the film's perspective, Mr.

Martin had demonstrated Kant's edict with regard to his involvement in Andrew's mental progress since he gave Andrew the chance to achieve something that was beyond a robot's nature. Mr. Martin's support formulated Andrew's exceptional voice that lends a humanistic view on life. Andrew's appreciation for life was borne out of Mr. Martin's subjective treatment of the robot as a being of worth. All of these things mentioned by Kant are found within Andrew's being. If this is what defines humanity as a whole then Andrew is very much human despite his origins.

It is through Andrew's expression of freedom that affirms his humanity. Conclusion The film attempts to blur opinions about morality and humanity; both terms are used interchangeably to affirm the existence of human beings.

It takes apart human reasoning through the being of a robot and relays its sentiments about the world in a self-imposing way. The views of Bentham, <https://assignbuster.com/bicentennial-man/>

Rousseau and Kant explain partially the complex nature of humanity found in the film and how it has affected the way people have defined their existence.

It is a movie that challenges each individual to look closely at her or his imperfections and render appreciation for the uniqueness each one possesses. As difficult as it is to fully grasp the concept, it is important to analyze the film as a tool of introspection into the consciousness of our rationality as humans since it questions the very essence of how we understand our existence. Work Cited Nelson, Brian R. *Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology*. 2nd ed. New York: Prentice Hall, 1995.