Posthuman Perspectives on Futuristic Technology in Mickey 17 (2025)

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how futuristic technology influences human identity and ethics in the movie Mickey 17 (2025) through Robert Pepperell's posthumanism theory. The story follows Mickey Barnes, an "Expendable," a cloned human whose body is continuously reprinted and whose memories are digitally stored. This condition raises fundamental questions about individuality, humanity, and the value of life. The study aims to identify the futuristic technologies shown in the movie and analyze their impacts on human existence. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the analysis focuses on key scenes and dialogues, supported by books, journals, and previous research on posthumanism and science fiction. The findings reveal that technologies such as the reprinting machine, memory hard drive, bioreactor, cell bioreactor, space suit, spaceship, and translator device function as tools for human survival but also blur the line between humans and machines. These technologies generate new ethical issues, particularly for cloned characters like Mickey, who face identity loss, dehumanization, and commodification. The study concludes that Mickey 17 portrays a posthuman future in which technology strengthens human abilities but simultaneously threatens human dignity. The movie invites viewers to rethink life, individuality, and moral responsibility in a world shaped by powerful technological advancements.

Keywords: Mickey 17, posthumanism, futuristic technology, Robert Pepperell, science fiction movies.

INTRODUCTION

Technological development in the 21st century has changed the way humans understand life, identity, and the meaning of being human. These rapid advancements appear not only in real-world innovations but also in popular culture, especially movie. As a modern form of storytelling, science fiction movies often reflect society's hopes and anxieties about the future. Through imagined worlds and advanced machines, movies allow audiences to see how technology might reshape human experiences, relationships, and values. Scholars such as Semiyeva (2025) and Zhenzhao (2021) have shown that literature and movies do more than entertain, they help people think critically about social and cultural issues. Science fiction, in particular, becomes a powerful space where ethical questions about technology can be explored.

One of the important discussions in today's technological era is the shift from human-centered thinking toward a posthuman understanding. Posthumanism challenges the belief that humans are superior to all other forms of life. Pepperell (2009) explains that humans, machines, animals, and the environment are deeply interconnected. Therefore, technological progress will naturally reshape human identity. As technology becomes more advanced, the boundary between humans and machines becomes less clear, creating new questions about moral value, identity, and responsibility. This idea is also supported by Daigle and Hayler (2023), who emphasize that posthumanism invites humans to rethink their position in a world where technology, biology, and culture merge.

Science fiction movies often visualize these ideas by showing how humans interact with artificial intelligence, cloning, robotics, and other futuristic technologies. Previous studies have examined these themes in various movies. Ramadhan (2023) studied Dune (2021), finding that biological enhancement blurs the line between human and non-human. While Nugroho (2022) discussed moral status in the AI character of M3GAN (2022). These studies show that science fiction movies are a rich site for discussing posthuman ideas, especially the changing nature of identity in technological worlds.

However, there is still limited discussion of newer movies, especially those that present cloning and consciousness transfer as central issues. Mickey 17 (2025), directed by Bong Joon-Ho, offers a unique portrayal of an expendable human whose body is repeatedly reprinted and whose memories are stored digitally. The movie tells the story of Mickey Barnes, a worker sent to a distant planet who is "reborn" after every death through advanced technology. This situation raises important questions: What happens to a person's identity when their body can be replaced at any time? How does technology change the way society values human life? How do ethical boundaries shift when machines control life, death, and memory? Compared to previous studies, Mickey 17 introduces a more direct confrontation with cloning, commodification of life, and the emotional impact of repeated reproduction, making it a relevant object of research in the posthumanism field.

This research focuses on one central problem: how futuristic technology in Mickey 17 (2025) shapes human identity and ethical values when viewed through Robert Pepperell's posthumanism theory. This focus allows the analysis to be clear and specific while still addressing the movie's broader technological themes. The purpose of the study is to identify the key technologies depicted in the movie and examine how they influence human life, especially the psychological and moral challenges experienced by the main character. By using a qualitative descriptive method, the research interprets scenes and dialogues to understand how the movie presents the tensions between human nature and machine-driven existence.

The significance of this study lies in how it contributes to discussions about technology, ethics, and identity in modern storytelling. First, it offers a new academic perspective by analyzing a recent movie that has not yet been widely studied. Second, it strengthens the application of Pepperell's posthumanism theory in movie studies, showing how concepts such as human-machine integration, the loss of human centrality, and the transformation of identity appear in contemporary science fiction. Third, it encourages readers to reflect on real-world technological progress, such as artificial intelligence, cloning, biotechnology, and digital memory, and how these inventions may influence future understandings of human life.

In the end, this introduction emphasizes that the research will analyze two major aspects: (1) the futuristic technologies shown in Mickey 17, and (2) their impacts on human identity and ethical values through the lens of posthumanism. By examining these elements, the research aims to show how the movie reflects both the possibilities and dangers of a future shaped by futuristic advanced technology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A solid theoretical foundation is needed to understand how futuristic technology in Mickey 17 (2025) reshapes human identity, ethics, and the meaning of life. This research uses posthumanism as the main framework because it focuses on the relationship between humans and technology in a world where machines increasingly influence human existence. The theories used here are well-established, relevant to the problem, and updated to reflect current discussions in cultural and technological studies.

Movie Theory

Movies, especially science fiction, play an important role in imagining technological futures. Scholars such as Goswami (2025), and Finn (2023) argue that Movies communicate ideas not only through dialogue but also through visuals, atmosphere, and symbolic scenes. Movie becomes a space where audiences can understand social problems, cultural conflicts, and ethical anxieties. Science fiction, in particular, brings futuristic technology to the screen to help viewers reflect on what humanity might become.

Posthumanism

Posthumanism is the main theoretical framework used in this research. It is a modern way of thinking that challenges the belief that humans are the center of the world. Pepperell (2009) describes posthumanism as an approach that views humans, animals, machines, and the environment as interconnected. In this theory, technology is not separate from human life, but it becomes part of how humans think, feel, and exist. Posthumanism also suggests that human identity is flexible and shaped by both biological and technological influences.

Daigle and Hayler (2023), expands this idea by explaining posthumanism as an ethical and philosophical response to new technologies such as robotics, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence. Posthuman ethics emphasize care, responsibility, and respect toward all forms of life, including non-human and artificial beings. Arguing that humans must rethink old ideas about superiority and recognize their shared existence with other life forms and technological systems.

Categories of Future Technologies

Pepperell (2009) identifies several major types of technology that influence the future of human life. These categories help researchers understand how technological change affects society:

I.   Robotics – Machines designed to imitate or replace human actions. Robotics are used for tasks involving movement, strength, or precision.

II. Prosthetics – Artificial body parts or devices that replace or improve human organs or limbs, including internal implants such as pacemakers or neural devices.

III. Machine Intelligence – Computer systems capable of learning, analyzing data, and making decisions, often through artificial intelligence or neural networks.

IV. Nanotechnology – Technology that works at microscopic or molecular levels, used to repair cells, create new materials, or solve biological problems.

V. Genetic Manipulation – Techniques used to modify DNA or redesign biological structures, including cloning, gene editing, and bioengineering.

Impacts of Futuristic Technology

Several theorists discuss the positive and negative impacts of advanced technology. These theories are essential for understanding how technology affects human values, identity, and society. Fukuyama (2022) warns that biotechnology and genetic engineering may change the fundamental qualities that give humans dignity and autonomy. When technology becomes powerful enough to redesign emotions, behavior, or physical traits, society must confront difficult ethical questions. Pepperell (2009) explains that technology can improve life by extending human abilities, solving biological problems, and supporting survival in extreme conditions. However, he also notes that technological integration may blur the boundary between humans and machines, creating uncertainty about identity and moral responsibility. Sengupta and Boruah (2024) describe technology as a source of both progress and risk. While it increases efficiency and convenience, it may also cause job loss, emotional disconnection, and reduced human interaction. These impacts highlight the need for ethical thinking in a world where technology rapidly transforms daily life.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the representation and impacts of futuristic technology in Mickey 17 (2025) through the perspective of posthumanism. Qualitative research is appropriate because it focuses on meaning, interpretation, and contextual understanding of cultural texts, particularly movies, rather than numerical measurement, (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, 2021). The primary data source is the movie Mickey 17 (2025), while secondary data consist of recent books, journal articles, and previous studies on posthumanism, and science fiction movies.

Data were collected through repeated viewing of the movie to identify key scenes, dialogues, and visual elements that depict futuristic technologies and their influence on human identity and ethics. The analysis followed a theory-driven approach by categorizing the technologies based on Robert Pepperell's posthuman technology classifications and interpreting their narrative functions and impacts using posthumanism theory. This systematic procedure ensures clarity, and analytical precision, allowing the study to present a reliable interpretation of how Mickey 17 reflects the ethical and existential consequences of technology in the posthuman era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this research based on the analysis of *Mickey 17* (2025). It examines how futuristic technologies are portrayed in the movie and how they influence human life from a posthumanism perspective. The discussion focuses on selected scenes and dialogues to show how technology supports human survival while also raising ethical issues related to identity, humanity, and the value of life in a technologically advanced world.

Technologies are Portrayed in *MICKEY 17* Movie (2025)

The analysis identifies five main categories of futuristic technology portrayed in the movie: robotics, prosthetics, machine intelligence, nanotechnology, and genetic manipulation. Each category demonstrates how technology becomes inseparable from human existence, supporting Pepperell's argument that posthuman conditions emerge when humans and machines form an integrated system rather than a hierarchical relationship.

1. **Robotics**

Robotic technology in Mickey 17 is portrayed through the use of the space suit and the spaceship. The space suit is shown as an essential device that allows Mickey to survive in extreme conditions such as outer space and the frozen planet Niflheim. It provides oxygen, controls body temperature, and protects him from radiation and toxic environments. Without the space suit, Mickey's body cannot function or survive in these places. The spaceship also plays an important role by serving as a living space for the human colony. Inside the spaceship, humans can breathe, eat, and carry out daily activities as if they were still on Earth, even though they are far from their natural environment.

Figure 1 Mickey Uses Space Suit (Minute 00:06:06)

Figure 2 Human Colony Stays in Spaceship During in Space (Minute 00:18:16)

These technologies show how the human body is no longer sufficient on its own and must rely on machines to exist. Posthumanism describes a condition in which humans and technology become deeply connected and dependent on each other. The space suit acts as an extension of the human body, while the spaceship creates an artificial ecosystem that fully supports human life. This dependence illustrates a posthuman condition where humans are no longer independent beings but part of a human–machine system. As a result, technology does not only support human life but also reshapes human autonomy and identity (Pepperell, 2024).

2. Prosthetics

Prosthetic technology in Mickey 17 is clearly portrayed through the memory hard drive implanted in Mickey's body. This device records his memories, emotions, and personality traits while he is alive. After Mickey dies during a dangerous mission, the stored data is transferred into a newly printed body. As a result, the new version of Mickey wakes up with the same memories and experiences as before. This technology allows Mickey to continue his work without starting life from the beginning, even though his physical body has been replaced many times. The scene shows how human memory and consciousness are treated like digital files that can be saved, copied, and reused.

Figure 3 Memory Hard Drive is Used by The Scientist (Minute 00:04:53)

This technology represents a major shift in how human identity is understood. In a posthuman condition, the boundary between humans and machines becomes unclear. In this case, Mickey's consciousness is no longer tied to one biological body but exists as data stored in a machine. Human identity is reduced to information that can be transferred between bodies, which challenges the traditional idea that identity is fixed and unique. This situation shows how technology changes the meaning of being human, where memories and personality matter more than the original body itself (Pepperell, 2024).

3. Machine Intelligence

Machine intelligence in Mickey 17 is portrayed through the translator device that allows humans to communicate with non-human species, especially the Creepers. In the movie, this device translates alien sounds into human language so both sides can understand each other. Without the translator, communication between humans and the Creepers would be impossible and could easily lead to conflict or violence. The scene shows that humans depend on this technology to negotiate, explain intentions, and build understanding with another species. The translator device becomes an essential tool that enables interaction in an unfamiliar world where human language alone has no meaning.

Figure 4 Mickey & Creeper are Talking Use Translator Device (Minute 2:03:12)

From a posthumanism perspective, this technology shows how machines actively shape human understanding rather than simply helping it. Technology changes the way humans experience and interpret reality. The translator device does not only transfer words, but it also creates meaning between different beings. Communication is no longer direct but is mediated by a machine, making technology a central part of relationships between species. This reflects a posthuman condition where humans are no longer the sole creators of meaning, but share this role with intelligent machines that influence how the world is understood and experienced (Pepperell, 2024).

4. **Nanotechnology**

Nanotechnology in Mickey 17 is portrayed through the use of the bioreactor and the cell bioreactor. These technologies are shown as important tools for human survival on Planet Niflheim, where natural food sources and safe environments do not exist. The bioreactor is used by scientists to study unknown viruses and to create vaccines that protect the human colony from deadly infections in the planet's air. Meanwhile, the cell bioreactor is used to produce cultured meat by growing animal cells in a controlled environment. Through these scenes, the movie shows how advanced technology can create food and medical solutions, allowing humans to live and adapt in extreme conditions where normal biological processes cannot function.

Figure 5 Bioreactor is Used to Find Vaccine (Minute 00:26:47)

Arkady : *"Apologies, sir. This is embarrassing. The cultured meat that he just ate includes an experimental growth hormone. Obviously, it's still risky. I'm so very sorry, sir."*

Kenneth Marshall : *"You're sure it's not because he was eating so much? He was stuffing his friggin' pie hole."*

           Minute 00:57:03-00:57:18

However, the use of bioreactors also raises serious ethical concerns when viewed through posthumanism theory. Posthumanism emerges when technology begins to replace natural biological limits and takes control over life itself. In Mickey 17, biological processes such as eating, healing, and survival are no longer natural, but engineered, tested, and optimized by machines. Living bodies, especially Mickey's cloned body, are treated as experimental resources rather than autonomous human beings. This reflects a posthuman condition in which technology does not only support life but also controls and redesigns it, reducing the value of living beings to their usefulness within a technological system (Pepperell, 2009).

5.   Genetic Manipulation

Genetic manipulation in Mickey 17 is most clearly shown through the human reprinting machine. This machine is used to recreate Mickey every time he dies during dangerous missions. After his death, a new body is printed using stored genetic data, and his memories are uploaded into the new body. Through this process, death no longer becomes the end of life, but something temporary. The movie shows several scenes where Mickey is reprinted inside a transparent chamber, waking up confused but still remembering his past experiences. This technology allows the human colony to continue their mission without losing workers, especially for risky tasks that normal humans cannot survive.

Figure 6 Reprinting Machine is Used to Clone Mickey's Bodies (Minute 00:15:22)

From a posthumanism perspective, this technology reflects the idea that advanced technology can change the meaning of being human. When technology makes life endlessly reproducible, human existence begins to lose its uniqueness. In Mickey 17, Mickey's life becomes less valuable because he can always be replaced by a new version. His repeated deaths are treated as normal and acceptable, which shows how cloning turns humans into functional objects rather than irreplaceable individuals. This situation threatens human dignity, because life is no longer seen as something precious, but as something that can be copied, reused, and controlled by machines (Pepperell, 2009).

Consequences of Futuristic Technology in *MICKEY 17* Movie (2025)

The findings reveal three major impacts of futuristic technology in Mickey 17: technology as an extension of human existence, objectification of human beings, and disintegration of self-identity.

1.   Technology as an Extension of Human Existence

The movie shows technology as an extension of human existence through several important scenes or dialogues. In Mickey 17, humans cannot survive in extreme environments without advanced tools such as space suits, bioreactors, and the human reprinting machine. The space suit allows Mickey to breathe, move, and stay alive in outer space and on the frozen planet Niflheim. The bioreactor helps scientists create vaccines so humans can survive deadly viruses in the planet's air. Meanwhile, the reprinting machine allows Mickey to return to life after death, making dangerous missions possible. These scenes clearly show that human survival in the movie depends on technology, not on the natural strength of the human body.

Figure 7. Spacesuit Helps Mickey Survive from Radiation (Minute 00:06:09)

Mickey : *"There really was an unknown virus in the air. A lethal one. In the end, thanks to the lab rats, Mickey 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, getting stabbed, gassed, dumped and burned, we got the vaccine. My great gift to mankind. And so, we didn't need oxygen masks, and we could see our breath as much as we wanted."*

Minute 00:27:48-00:28:06

Mickey 17 (VO) : *"But they just printed me out again every time I died. All my data is saved, and I just get a whole new body. They do all this, kind of, regular uploads of memories and my personality traits...and re-implant it back in my brain. That's some crazy technology, man. Let's just say it's-it's advanced. It's very advanced."*

Minute 00:04:37-00:05:02

From a posthumanism perspective, these scenes reflect posthumanism idea that humans and technology are no longer separate. In the posthuman condition, technology becomes part of human existence, not just a tool that humans use. In Mickey 17, humans can only live and function through constant cooperation with machines. The space suit becomes an extension of the human body, the bioreactor replaces natural biological processes, and the reprinting machine changes the meaning of life and death. This shows that human life is sustained by technological systems, where humans and machines work as one integrated system. As a result, the movie presents a posthuman world in which survival is no longer purely human, but deeply shaped by technology (Pepperell, 2009).

2. Objectification of Human Beings

The movie clearly shows the dark impact of futuristic technology through the way Mickey is treated as an Expendable. In several scenes, Mickey is used as an experimental subject because his body can always be reprinted after death. He is ordered to face deadly situations, such as being exposed to radiation, toxic air, and dangerous biological experiments, without concern for his safety. When he dies, the people around him show little emotional reaction because they know a new version of Mickey will soon be printed. His body is even treated as waste, wrapped and prepared for disposal, despite the fact that he is still alive. These scenes show that Mickey's pain, fear, and death are no longer seen as meaningful human experiences, but as part of a technical process that can be repeated again and again.

Timo : *"Hold on. Oh, shit. Your flamethrower's still good. Not a single scratch. It's a good thing I thought to come down here. Weapons will be happy to see this. Hey, I'm gonna turn this in, okay?"*

Mickey : *"I can take it."*

Timo : *"You're not mad, right? That I'm just taking this? I mean, it's not looking very good for you, right? Also, line only goes this far."*

Mickey : *"Yeah, no, we-we're cool. You shouldn't have to take the risk."*

Timo : *"Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Plus, they're gonna reprint you back out tomorrow anyway."*

Mickey : *"Yeah."*

Timo : *"What's it feel like to die? I'm sure you're used to it by now. Still... How many times is this? You're Mickey... 16?"*

Mickey : *"17. Jerk."*

Timo : *"18 after this one. Well, it was nice knowing you, have a nice death. See you tomorrow."*

Minute 00:02:12-00:03:38

This situation reflects the idea that the integration of humans and technology can reduce humans into functional components within a system. When technology becomes deeply embedded in human life, there is a risk that humans are no longer valued as individuals but as useful objects. In Mickey 17, Mickey's body is treated like a machine that can be repaired, replaced, or discarded, while his suffering is reduced to data for experiments. This shows extreme dehumanization, where technology is misused to control life and death without ethical consideration. The movie highlights how posthuman integration, instead of empowering humans, can erase human dignity when technology places efficiency and progress above empathy and moral responsibility (Pepperell, 2009).

3. Disintegration of Self-Identity

The third impact shown in Mickey 17 is the disintegration of self-identity, which is clearly portrayed when Mickey 17 encounters Mickey 18. In this scene, Mickey 17 realizes that a new version of himself has been printed while he is still alive. Both characters share the same memories, personality, and physical appearance, yet they exist as two separate individuals. This moment creates confusion, fear, and tension between them. Mickey 17 becomes anxious because he understands that once he dies, his existence will truly end, while Mickey 18 will continue living. The scene shows how cloning technology breaks the idea of one life, one self, and replaces it with multiple versions of the same person, making identity unstable and uncertain.

Figure 8. Mickey Comes into Conflict with His Clone (Minute 00:45:51)

Mickey 18	: *"Are you afraid to die?"*
Mickey 17	: *"Kinda, yeah."*
Mickey 18	: *"You died plenty of times. What are you so scared of?"*
Mickey 17	: *"Until now, I died and… I was just born again, you know. It felt like it was me continuing on. But now… once I die… it'll be over for me. It'll be you living on. You get what I mean?"*
Mickey 18	: *"I don't like you. You're such a little bitch."*
Mickey 17	: *"But I'm you."*
Mickey 18	: *"I'm not you. I'm not gonna live like you. I'm gonna kill you."*

Minute 00:45:04-00:46:00

This scene reflects the idea that posthumanism challenges the concept of a fixed and stable human essence. In a posthuman condition, identity is no longer tied to a single body or a continuous life experience. In Mickey 17, Mickey's identity becomes fragmented because technology allows his body and memories to be duplicated. His sense of self is no longer secure, as it can be replaced at any time by another version of himself. This situation creates psychological conflict and existential fear, showing how technological reproduction threatens personal identity. The movie suggests that when humans are treated as repeatable products, their sense of uniqueness and self-worth slowly disappears, which is one of the main concerns of posthumanism (Pepperell, 2009).

Discussion

Overall, Mickey 17 (2025) shows a posthuman future where technology helps humans survive but also slowly removes their humanity. Advanced technologies make it possible for humans to live in extreme environments and overcome biological limits. However, at the same time, these technologies turn human life into something that can be copied, replaced, and controlled. Life is no longer seen as unique, but as something that can be reproduced whenever needed.

Based on Robert Pepperell's posthumanism theory, the movie shows that technology does not only improve human abilities, but also changes the meaning of being human itself. Humans are no longer fully independent from machines, and their identity and dignity become fragile. Through Mickey's experience, the movie invites viewers to think more deeply about ethical responsibility, personal identity, and the value of human life in a future where technology has great power over existence.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that *Mickey 17* (2025) clearly shows how futuristic technology deeply affects human life when viewed from a posthumanism perspective. The movie presents various futuristic technologies such as cloning machines, memory storage devices, bioreactors, cell bioreactor, translator device, and spaceship technology that help humans survive in extreme environments. However, these same few technologies also create serious ethical problems. Through the character of Mickey, the movie shows how technology can turn humans into replaceable objects, causing the loss of identity, dignity, and personal value. The findings of this study show that technology in Mickey 17 works in two ways: it supports human survival, but it also dehumanizes individuals who are controlled by the system. By using Pepperell's posthumanism theory, this research highlights that technological progress does not only change how humans live, but also changes the meaning of being human. The movie encourages viewers to rethink the value of life, individuality, and moral responsibility in a future shaped by powerful technology.

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