

### Case 13: Sexbots

Douglas Hines has designed what he calls "the world's first sex robot." Her name is Roxxy. She responds to touch and can hold simple conversations. According to Hines, "The sex robot thing is marketing—it's really about making a companion." Indeed, he initially wanted to create a home health care aide for sick or elderly people but the project became mired in bureaucratic paperwork and he had to turn to other markets.<sup>58</sup>

As more and more advanced sex and companion robots are created, they may become more and more popular. Indeed, there are many potential benefits to sex robots: "users would obtain sexual fulfillment with something resembling the target of their desire (assuming you manage to find such a model), without harm. No STDs; no confusion about consent . . . ; in terms of sex work, for example, there wouldn't be a worry around sex trafficking or harm to the workers."<sup>59</sup>

And sex toys are already widely used today—are sex robots really that different than vibrators or fleshlights? Perhaps they are: "What makes robots different from sex toys, and for some people what makes them creepier, is that robots trigger us to make the opposite kind of psychological flip-flop: like a mirror-image of classic sexual objectification, robotic sexual partners encourage us to look at mere inanimate objects as sentient, conscious, willful, and desirous." Concerns arise because we have a tendency to anthropomorphize robots but at the same time we know that the robots are not in fact alive and do not have to be treated like living beings.<sup>60</sup>

The widespread use of sex robots could encourage people to withdraw from interactions and relationships with other humans in favor of robots designed to unconditionally serve them.<sup>61</sup> Robots designed to feign intimacy could replace intimate relationships between humans that are, though real, also complicated and messy. People could act out their most perverse fantasies or violent urges on sexbots without concern for their wellbeing, and allowing such behavior with sexbots could encourage them to behave similarly toward other human beings.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Roxxy Sex Robot (PHOTOS): World's First 'Robot Girlfriend' Can Do More Than Chat," Huffington Post, March 18, 2010, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/10/roxxxy-sex-robot-photo-wo\\_n\\_417976.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/10/roxxxy-sex-robot-photo-wo_n_417976.html); see also Howard Koplowitz, "Sex Robots: Meet Roxxy, Robot that Comes with 'Skank Mode,'" International Business Times, April 20, 2012, <http://www.ibtimes.com/sex-robots-meet-roxxxy-robot-comes-skank-mode-nsfw-video-439870>

<sup>59</sup> Tauriq Moosa, "Robots and Sex: Creepy or Cool?" The Guardian, April 7, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/brain-flapping/2014/apr/07/robots-and-sex-creepy-or-cool>

<sup>60</sup> Greg Stevens, "Would You Have Sex with a Robot?" The Daily Dot, June 2, 2014, <http://www.dailydot.com/opinion/would-you-have-sex-robot/>

<sup>61</sup> Anna Weltner, "Do the Robot," New Times, February 23, 2011, <http://www.newtimesslo.com/news/5698/do-the-robot/>

<sup>62</sup> John Danaher, "The Ethics of Robot Sex," Real Clear Technology, October 14, 2013, [http://www.realcleartechology.com/2013/10/14/the\\_ethics\\_of\\_robot\\_sex\\_16456.html](http://www.realcleartechology.com/2013/10/14/the_ethics_of_robot_sex_16456.html)