Robot Prostitutes as Alternatives to Human Sex Workers

David Levy

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When will robot sex start?

- "People will be having sex with robots within five years."
 - Henrik Christensen (2006)

Why do people pay for sex?

"I pay for sex because that is the only way I can get sex. I am not ashamed of paying for sex. I pay for food. I pay for clothing. I pay for shelter. Why should I not also pay for sex? Paying for sex does not diminish the pleasure I derive from it."

Hugh Loebner

Trends leading to the development of sexbots

- Sophisticated humanoids: Repliée Q1
- Vibrators (tens of millions sold annually)
- Sex dolls (retail prices \$6,000-\$7,000)

Repliée Q1

Lifelike appearance



Vibrators

Sex dolls

Orient Doll (made in Japan)



When these technologies are merged

- The size, shape and appearance of a sophisticated humanoid
- Artificial genitalia as effective as a vibrator
- As appealing as a high-priced sex doll

But how expensive will the first sexbots be?

Hanson robot heads sell for \$130,000 upwards



But how expensive will the first sexbots be?

Upmarket sex machines sell for around \$1,800

So what is the answer? How can sexbots be made affordable?

- Doll No Mori (Forest of Dolls) was started in 2004 as an alternative to a regular "escort" service.
- A female "escort" in Tokyo cost around \$100 per hour (in 2004)
- A Doll No Mori "escort" in Tokyo cost around \$100 per hour (in 2004)
- Similar services started up in South Korea in 2005.

What will sexbots have that sex dolls do not?

- Moving components (like vibrators!)
- Conversation (speech synthesis)
- Artificial emotions
- Artificial personality
- Etc.

Why do men pay for sex?

- Variety
- Lack of complications and constraints
- Lack of success with the opposite sex

Variety (of sex partner)

The opportunity to have sex with a range of different women.

A robot will be able to provide variety in its:

Size Conversation

Appearance Voice

Virtual interests Virtual personality

Variety (of sexual experience)

• The opportunity to have oral sex and other experiences not available with regular human partner.

Lack of complications and constraints

- The encounter has a clear purpose
- The encounter is bounded in time
- The encounter is anonymous
- There is no emotional involvement

The same will be true with robots.

Lack of success with women

Many men wanting sex find it difficult to attract a partner because they are:

Unattractive (even ugly)

Physically deformed

Psychologically inadequate

A stranger in another town or country

Lacking in social skills and/or sexual assurance

Lack of success with women

- With robots none of these factors will matter
- Paying for sex almost guarantees it "on a plate".
- 40% of men in one study could only get sex by paying for it.

Women also pay for sex

- Far less prevalent amongst women
- But it appears to be on the increase
- Very little published research on women paying for sex
- What research exists suggests that the reasons are similar

Summary of the benefits of sexbots-for-hire

- Will satisfy the motivational needs of clients of sex workers
- Will satisfy the sexual needs of clients of sex workers
- Will help to guarantee safe sex sexual hygene can be undertaken by the clients.

Ethical aspects of robot prostitution

- Ethics of making robot prostitutes available for general use
- Ethics vis à vis oneself and society of using robot prostitutes
- Ethics vis à vis one's partner or spouse of using robot prostitutes

Ethical aspects of robot prostitution

 Ethics vis à vis human sex workers of using robot prostitutes

 Ethics vis à vis the sexbots themselves of using robot prostitutes

Ethics of making robot prostitutes available for general use

- The purpose of sexbots is to achieve orgasm without needing another person
- The purpose of vibrators is to achieve orgasm without needing another person
- Vibrators are widely sold at major pharmacy and drug store chains in the USA and Europe
- Vibrators are widely accepted
- Sexbots should be equally widely accepted

Ethics vis à vis oneself and society of using robot prostitutes

- Self-respect and dignity are important to most clients of sex workers
- Most clients of sex workers try to avoid family, friends and work colleagues finding out
- Some police forces name-and-shame those arrested
- Robots are not alive so there will be less stigma
- Still some stigma because most people do not understand the idea of sex with robots

Ethics vis à vis oneself and society of using robot prostitutes (legal issues)

- Most people in a free-thinking society will feel that sex with a robot in private should not be made illegal
- In some jurisdictions in the USA (Alabama, Texas) selling vibrators is illegal
- In some jurisdictions the sale and hire of sexbots will probably be made illegal
- Surely all adults should be free to decide for themselves how they act sexually in private

Ethics vis à vis one's partner or spouse

- Many different attitudes possible from partner or spouse
- Some partners and spouses will be upset
- Some will feel that the sexual demands placed on them are excessive, and therefore relieved at the use of a sexbot
- Some will appreciate their partner or spouse being taught by a sexbot to improve their lovemaking skills
- Some will enjoy threesomes
- Some will find the idea abhorrent

Ethics vis à vis human sex workers

- Many people perceive prostitution to be a bad thing
- If human prostitution *is* a bad thing then robot prostitution must be a good thing because it will reduce the number of human sex workers
- Robot prostitutes will put many human sex workers out of business
- Many human sex workers have literally no other way to make the money they need, so unemployment amongst sex workers presents a serious ethical issue

Ethics vis à vis the robots themselves

- Up to now our discussion has involved artefacts, without consciousness and without rights.
- Artificial consciousness (machine consciousness) is becoming an important subject within robotics and Al.
- When robots have artificial consciousness, how will it affect our thinking regarding robot prostitutes?

Ethics vis à vis the robots themselves

- If robots have legal rights, will their owners have legal responsibilities towards them?
- Will robot prostitutes become subject to legal restrictions that apply to human sex workers?

Ethics vis à vis the robots themselves

Torrance (2006) discusses:

"the creation of systems which perform in ways which confer or imply the possession of ethical status when humans perform in those ways. For example, having a right to life, or a right not to be treated merely as an instrument of someone else's needs or desires."

The debate is just beginning

The End