



Psychology Today: Sex Robots And The End Of Civilization

With demographics already tanking in all Western nations, adding sex robots into the mix virtually guarantees to accelerate the trend and cause relationship dysfunction across the board. □ TN Editor

Imagine this: A totally realistic robot of your own design that is capable of fully carrying out any sex act that you can dream up. It looks, smells, and sounds incredibly realistic. And your state-sponsored insurance paid for her in full. In effect, she was free—prescribed by your physician to help with your status as officially “sexually dysfunctional.” Recent federal legislation, supported overwhelmingly by a male majority in the House and Senate, has made this kind of medical prescription perfectly legal.

Robin the Robot never has a headache. It never gets a cold. It never rejects an advance. It is, perhaps strangely, beautiful in many respects. And, surprisingly, it is even seemingly intelligent and witty.

Sure, it sounds great on the surface.

And get this: According to expert clinical psychologist and sex therapist Dr. Marianne Brandon, what I’ve described above is, in fact, a

likely portrait of our near future. Welcome to the new world.

Sex Robots as Supernormal Stimuli

Earlier this month, I was fortunate to attend a special symposium on understanding mental health from an evolutionary perspective. This event, formally sponsored by the Applied Evolutionary Psychology Society (AEPS) and affiliated with the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society (NEEPS), was eye-opening for the many scholars, practitioners, and students who were in attendance. And while all of the talks were provocative and engaging, I have to say that Dr. Brandon's presentation was something of a show-stopper.

When you think about things from an evolutionary perspective, the history of human technology largely becomes the history of developing supernormal stimuli for profit.

In the 1950s, renowned behavioral biologist Niko Tinbergen articulated the idea of a *supernormal stimulus*. A supernormal stimulus is essentially an exaggerated, often human-made version of some stimulus that organisms evolved to respond to in certain ways.

For instance, humans evolved taste preferences so as to desire high-fat foods because our ancestors regularly experienced drought and famine. A Big Mac is a human-created product that includes an amplification of high-fat food that would have been beyond the fat and caloric content of nearly any food that would have existed under ancestral human conditions. The Big Mac is a classic supernormal stimulus.

Same with pornography. And video games. And so many cosmetic products that amplify attributes of faces and bodies that bear on Darwin's bottom line of reproductive success. Vibrant hair color and lip gloss are supernormal stimuli.

Importantly, as you can see, supernormal stimuli may well be deceitful. In the modern world of humans, supernormal stimuli are essentially hijackers. They are human-created technological products that hijack our evolved psychology in a way that leads to short-term emotional and/or physiological benefits. However, since these products are, at the

end of the day, evolutionarily unnatural, they quite often do not lead to the long-term evolutionary benefits (such as strong connections with others and/or long-term reproductive gains) which pertain to why these stimuli evolved to be desired by humans in the first place. We can call this *evolutionary irony*.

In her presentation, Dr. Brandon rightfully pointed out that sex robots, when they arrive (and they will), will be the ultimate in human-created supernormal stimuli. And this could be a problem.

Potential Problems Associated with the Sex Robot Revolution

Is there a sex robot revolution on the horizon? In a few weeks, the city of Brussels will host the 4th International Conference on Love and Sex with Robots, so you tell me!

In her presentation at the AEPS symposium, Dr. Brandon made a strong case suggesting that sex robots are truly in development and on the way. Perhaps in a decade or two.

Brandon pointed out several potential problems that may well come along with the robots for the ride. These problems all make sense when we think of our evolved relationship psychology. Some of the potential problems that she pointed out are as follows:

- Men, who are disproportionately represented as consumers of pornography, will likely be over-represented as consumers of sex robots.
- Within committed relationships, sexual interactions, which are apparently already on a nationwide decline, are likely to drop further in prevalence.
- Intimacy in relationships, which strongly maps onto both quantity and quality of sexual interactions within mateships, is likely to drop in quality as well.
- The prevalence of marriage and birth rates may well see declining numbers.
- Motivation for people to work on relationship problems within mateships will be naturally reduced.

In short, the advent of sex robot technology may well foreshadow, in many ways, the demise of intimate relationships in the modern world.

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