

ROBOTIC MARRIAGE AND THE LAW

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The United States, and the world at large, is in the midst of a family law revolution that will fundamentally change our very conception of family. Ethical challenges to age-old ideas have prompted people to ask foundational questions, such as how and why our most important personal relationships evolved. In a world where same-sex marriage has been legalized, it is only natural to wonder who marriage may include in the future.

At the same time, we are also living in an age of unprecedented technological innovation. The rise of smart machines and the incredible advances in robotics over the last few decades highlight that the difference between science fiction and science is closing with the passage of time. Social robots spend time with the elderly and the young. Robots can even experience a form of childhood. Robots now work in our factories and mines, and, career-wise, they can be anything from blue-collar prison guards to white-collar financial traders. Humans are already

forming deep and meaningful relationships with their artificial friends, and indeed many humans are becoming intrigued by the possibility, and increasing reality, of human-robot romance. Movies and TV shows such as *Her*, *Ex Machina*, *Humans*, and *AI* are just a small sample of the dynamics of this relationship spectrum, ranging from platonic love to prostitution.

The question that this essay deals with will extend these possibilities one step further with a simple thought experiment: Could it ever be possible for a human and a robot to legally wed in the United States? The second Section addresses whether robots could be legal persons subject to marriage laws in the United States. The third Section considers what it would mean for robots to be in loving relationships. Sections Four, Five and Six analyze three threshold requirements for marriages—consent, understanding and decision-making capacity—that robots would have to meet to qualify for a legal marriage. Our conclusions are laid out in Section Seven.