

Europe Considers Granting Robots Legal Status

“For making good any damage they may cause”

In the 21st century West, unborn babies are not people, but robots have legal “personhood.”

In 2017, the European Union released legal guidelines and questions concerning artificial intelligence in the future. One particular section that has robotics experts in an uproar is the EU’s discussion of a “legal status for robots in the long run” so they could be “responsible for making good any damage they may cause.”

The commission said it is considering “creating a specific legal status for robots in the long run, so that at least the most sophisticated autonomous robots could be established as having the status of electronic persons responsible for making good any damage they may cause, and possibly applying electronic personality to cases where robots make autonomous decisions or otherwise interact with third parties independently.”

Basically, the EU reasons that if a robot with artificial intelligence were to cause damage to a human’s property in some way, the robot should be liable rather than the company that manufactured it.

As many as 156 artificial intelligence experts have signed an open letter questioning the EU’s decision to include the “personhood” of robots in their reports. While they applaud the EU for looking ahead into the potential legal challenges posed by AI, they think they may have gone too far, claiming that the report was “distorted by Science-Fiction” and “an overvaluation of the actual capabilities of even the most advanced robots.”

“The European Union must prompt the development of the AI and Robotics industry insofar as to limit health and safety risks to human beings,” the letter said. “The protection of robots’ users and third parties must be at the heart of all EU legal provisions.”

While “Blade Runner” may not be in our future anytime soon, robots certainly

have been making strides in the public square, the most notable being Sophia, the citizen robot.

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