

SHIFT

The Manifesto

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Table of contents

Foreword	3
The evolutionary revolution is coming	4
Forces shaping the future of humanity	5
Towards a new paradigm – our principles	8
Right to stay natural	8
Right to technology	8
Right to be equal	9
Our plan of action	10
Educating decision makers	10
Researching ethics and technology	11
Informing individuals	11
Synthesis	12
Plan of action 2018–2019	13
Educate	13
Research	13
Inform	13
Bibliography	14



Foreword

In the fall of 2014, a small group of friends got together over a cup of coffee and some proper Finnish cinnamon buns. As a product of that casual exchange of thoughts, the idea of SHIFT was born. Not merely a festival, but a movement.

The name SHIFT was chosen because it suggests a change of mindset – a deviation from the current path, a new paradigm. SHIFT is for people who believe we can impact the way we do business, use technology and better our lives.

New technologies will profoundly alter the direction in which humanity has so far evolved. This begs for a serious ethical dialogue and a plan of action on all stages of society. We need to help businesses become more socially responsible and to inform key decision makers on the possible pitfalls of these new breakthrough technologies.

The evolutionary revolution is already on its way, and we need individuals and organizations to take the lead. SHIFT aims to play a crucial part in this revolution. This manifesto explains the reasons for our existence and lays down the general frames of our action plan.

Elia Elenius
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The evolutionary revolution is coming

Let us first quickly paint the big picture. About seventy thousand years ago an ape experienced a cognitive revolution that opened the gates to the intersubjective realm of existence. Speaking and language enabled us to exchange stories and invent myths around the bonfire. An elder could teach how to build a better spear, which plants are bad for you and which can be used for healing. We started to accumulate knowledge.

First experiencing the agricultural revolution, then crawling towards the invention of the printing press, steam engine, and electricity, humanity has now started to sprint. Running through the information age, the era of personal computers and the internet, we have finally arrived at this point in time: at the gates of the second machine age.¹ Equipped with smartphones, platform economy, big data, ever-increasing processing power and artificial intelligence applications, we can accumulate and analyze information at an exponentially accelerating pace. Even though there is still much to be done, humanity has in relative terms almost eradicated poverty, malnutrition and war, and significantly increased both the quality and quantity of life.

We are about to enter a very different era for all of humanity. The second machine age can bring forth another evolutionary revolution.² Much as the first cognitive revolution of the past spearheaded our evolution from apes to homo sapiens, the rapid developments of today are likely to be every bit as definitive. This time, however, instead of natural selection and random mutations in our DNA, we are in charge. You can decide.

¹ MIT economists Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, who have coined the term second machine age, claim that unlike the first age of steam engine that resulted in easing the burden of humans, the second can substitute us as workers. World Economic Forum's Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab argues in similar vein and calls this turning point the 4th industrial revolution.

² Historian Yuval Noah Harari goes so far as to claim that humanity's next goals will be to conquer immortality, happiness and divinity. In other words, we will strive to be gods. Then, we would no more belong to Homo Sapiens but evolve into Homo Deus.



Forces shaping the future of humanity

So how does the individual matter, you ask? For the purposes of answering to this question, we must simplify the issue a bit. The world is an endlessly complex system, so we must make simplistic schemas to help us make sense of it all. Thus, to start, we argue that there are two main views on how the history of humanity has evolved.

One view is that history unfolds mainly through the activity of the mankind: by learning from our previous mistakes and successes we have synthesized how to better lead our lives.³ The history can be seen to be in a dialogue with itself – it is the ideas and societal dimension at different times that matter.

The competing view, however, argues that it is mainly the material, the technological world that has dictated how we live: we humans with our ideas have little to say about the course we take.⁴

The two views are oversimplifications and capture only one side of reality. Obviously both dimensions matter. However, even if we take both dimensions into account, we still cannot satisfactorily explain the evolution of humanity. Ideas and tools do not do anything by themselves – the schema is lacking something fundamental: an actor. Thus, we need to add one more crucial element to the picture – the individual.

Everything must start from the main actor. In the end, we can cast into doubt all other things in the world except our own individual existence.⁵ Our subjective reality is real. We are thrown into the world at birth and inherit a certain set of

³ For instance, right Hegelians, such as Francis Fukuyama famously claimed capitalism and democracy won after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

⁴ In Marxist dialectical materialism it is the being that determines consciousness, not the other way around.

⁵ The famous line by René Descartes “cogito, ergo sum” (I think; therefore, I am) is one of the most quoted ideas of Western philosophy. The line is as relevant as ever today, when applications of virtual reality are developing rapidly.





assumptions and norms to live by.⁶ We absorb the language of our parents that is stipulated by our culture.⁷ All our experiences are filtered through a lens bound in space and time.

Some of us never start to question anything and just follow the flock. Some of us start at puberty, some at a later stage when we encounter compelling arguments and people who convince us otherwise.⁸ Or maybe we're just swept up by a behavioural trend and start acting the way all others do.

The societal dimension is powerful, but we can also influence it: by behaving against a trend, by protesting, voting, or voicing our opinions, we can make a difference.⁹ In a board meeting of a company, a person can vote according to their conscience. Yes, sometimes it may be a hard thing to do, but the choice is, in the end, solely within you.¹⁰

The material world, the world of technology, machines and tools, has a huge influence on us as well. Browsing the internet and being constantly glued to the screens of our smartphones affects us. We can use technology however we wish, but technology itself also alters us and the ways in which we behave. Throughout history, we have been able to adapt to a multitude of environments largely due to our

⁶ Martin Heidegger speaks of "thrownness": we are thrown into existence at birth and just inherit all the burdens that social reality gives us.

⁷ Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein essentially argues that what is in the world is a product of culture. He famously wrote that if a lion could speak, we could not understand the lion, meaning that even if we knew the words, the reality of a lion differs so much from ours that the words would be mere sounds. This brings forth the question of how different the reality of a machine is. How could we understand a sentient machine without knowing their world? We can only guess.

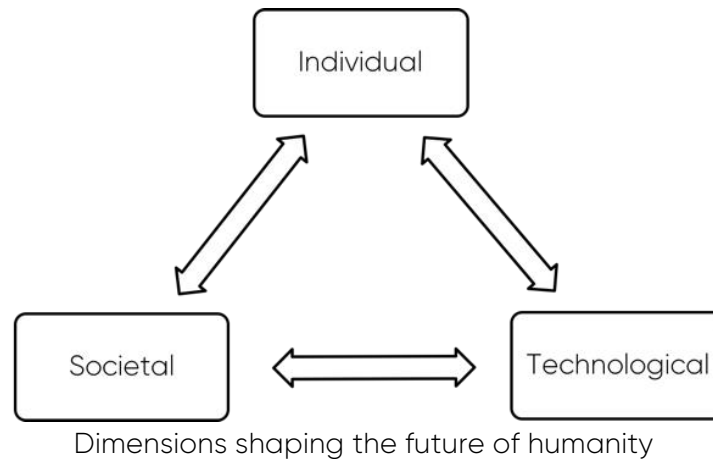
⁸ Linguist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas claims that the better argument prevails in an unconstrained dialogue where all participants have equal access. This he calls the "ideal speech situation". Critics often remark, however, that dialogue is never completely equal in the real world, and that the arguments that win are determined by the power distribution between the parties involved.

⁹ Legal scholar Cass Robert Sunstein coined the term 'norm entrepreneur'. These are individuals who can, introduce new patterns of behaviour, if successful.

¹⁰ Economist Timur Kuran has investigated how people often tailor their preferences according to what is socially acceptable rather than what they genuinely think. This is called preference falsification.



ability to adopt and make use of technology. Some go as far as claiming technology is so integral a part of us that it defines us as much as language and culture do.¹¹ Without technology, as without the cognitive revolution, we would be no more than apes.



Now our schema is ready. The three dimensions – the individual, the technological and the societal – shape the direction of our future. These three elements are in a reciprocal relationship: they shape and are shaped by each other. Through coevolution, man and technology mold each other. Technology accelerates the accumulation of knowledge in a society (e.g. the printing press, the internet), and accumulation of knowledge, in turn, accelerates technological development. And finally, through culture and language, society and the individual each define the other.

¹¹ French philosopher of technology Bernard Stiegler insists that since empirical palaeoanthropology proves there are no humans without technicality, technology must be incorporated in the definition of a man.



Towards a new paradigm – our principles

Now that we have defined the central forces shaping our future, we must concentrate on what kind of a future we want.

As argued, we are at the brink of a new era for the whole of humanity. With the aid of new technologies and ground-breaking discoveries in life sciences, we can start to alter the very evolution of our species. This, however, brings forth several ethical concerns we need to address.

By manipulating our genes, or implanting mind-altering chips, we can create a totally new type of human. Depending on the value system of the surrounding society, the ends to which the manipulation is done, however, can vary greatly. If we do not pay attention, we might end up being something completely non-human and chain the future of humanity to a progress we see undesirable – at least by today's standards. Thus, we need to carefully consider the principles upon which we will build.

To begin the dialogue about what kind of values we should build our future on, we have formulated three main principles for the basis of discussion.¹² There is a plethora of principles that could be on this list, but we see that we need to emphasize the most fundamental ones. These three principles reflect the importance of individual free will in choosing how to cope with technology.

Right to stay natural

The first principle is that you must be able to stay natural, if you choose to do so. For instance, even when we strive to increase productivity, we cannot force anyone to become a cyborg just to be more efficient.

Right to technology

Our second principle is that you must have access to new technologies – if you choose to use them. For instance, an

¹² These principles are influenced by futurist and SHIFT 2017 keynote speaker Gerd Leonhard's "Five human rights for the digital age".



increased lifespan, or even immortality, should not only be in the hands of the few.

Right to be equal

Thirdly, you must not be discriminated against no matter what your decision is. For example, an employer should not be able to discriminate against a fully biological person. Conversely, biologically or mechanically enhanced people should have the same rights as those who remain natural.



Our plan of action

By laying down our proposition for key principles, we have established what kind of a world we should seek. Now we must come up with a credible plan about how to get there.

As argued, new technologies bring forth new ethical dilemmas. Solving these takes time. For this reason, national – not to mention international – regulation often comes too late. This pushes responsibility onto the shoulders of the companies bringing new innovations to the masses, the scientific community conducting the research, and the individuals using the new technologies.

Companies and research institutions need to be socially responsible and ethical – even when governments and the international community are sluggish at imposing new rules. Even more so, the responsibility is on the individuals working in the organizations. Key decision makers need to be aware of the consequences new technologies can have on society and the environment at large. Senior managers cannot afford to answer “I did not know”. The latest example of unethical use of technology with dire consequences comes from the U.S., where Cambridge Analytica and Facebook might have used big data of nearly 90 million people, potentially to impact the final result of the U.S. presidential vote.

To support the growing needs in different organizations to make ethical decisions concerning technology, SHIFT will begin looking into establishing SHIFT Think Inc. think tank. SHIFT Think Inc. will educate and inform decision makers and individuals on all levels of society, basing its information on sound research. Following are our key action points.

Educating decision makers

The first key action point for SHIFT Think Inc. is to educate decision makers about the dark sides of technology. We need well informed and ethically behaving individuals at all levels of society. The government cannot always be there to watch over every organization in all situations.



Researching ethics and technology

To keep the decision makers well up-to-date, SHIFT Think Inc. needs to base its message on thoroughly researched information. Thus, the second key task for SHIFT Think Inc. is to organize research activities on ethics and technology.

Informing individuals

In the end, however, if the government is sluggish and a corporation is short-sightedly chasing only profit, it is the responsibility of the individual not to purchase or use unethical products or services. Thus, the third main task for SHIFT Think Inc. is to educate the public on ethics and technology, name & shame a company or a research facility if it is behaving unethically, and give praise to those who work towards a better tomorrow.



Synthesis

In this manifesto, we have argued that even though there are major forces shaping the direction of our future, the individual should be the starting point. We cannot outsource our responsibility to governments, corporations or any other entity. Since governments and the international community are slow at reacting to change, companies and research institutions need to pay attention to ethics and be even more socially responsible. However, in the end, it is up to us individuals to safeguard the future we are heading to. In this task, well-informed individuals and decision makers play a crucial role.

We have also laid down our basic principles as the basis of future discussion and established a concrete action plan – to educate, research and inform, so that we can truly grasp the changes that we are facing.

We have just begun to scratch the surface of a much wider and longer-lasting debate. We have not yet discussed, for instance, the rights of possible sentient machines. The issue of machine rights does, however, lurk around the corner. In addition, if sentient machines do arrive, we might also have to deal with humans that become completely non-biological. For example, how to deal with the rights of people who have transcended their consciousness? If we follow our third principle to its logical end, they should have full human rights.

The world is changing rapidly, and we live in a time where science fiction writers have difficulties in coming up with new topics – when the book is finished, the fiction is already reality. In these uncertain times, one thing, we claim, is not fiction anymore: the evolutionary revolution has begun, and we need to be prepared for the next big SHIFT.

Plan of action 2018–2019

Educate

1. Effective immediately, SHIFT will educate organizations and individuals on ethics and technology.
2. Effective immediately, SHIFT will start to spread high-quality, thought-provoking content on ethics and technology.
3. In 2019, SHIFT Business Festival will continue to be the flagship event of our movement.

Research

1. SHIFT will begin looking into establishing a think tank – SHIFT Think Inc.
2. From the beginning of 2019, SHIFT Think Inc. will start to organize research on ethics and technology that meets the most rigorous academic standards.
3. SHIFT Think Inc. seeks active cooperation with other research institutions.

Inform

1. SHIFT Think Inc. will organize “Ethical technology company of the year” award with the aim of raising public awareness of the ethical sides of technologies. The public has the chance to take part in choosing the winner. A high-profile award gala will be held at SHIFT 2019.
2. Effective immediately, SHIFT will begin to monitor activities of companies using new technologies and, if necessary, use its network and channels to shame unethical behaviour.
3. Beginning in September 2018, SHIFT will start a series of monthly mini-seminars which educate decision makers and citizens on technology and ethics.

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