

The industrial-technological system may survive or it may break down. If it survives, it may eventually achieve a low level of physical and psychological suffering, but only after passing through a long and very painful period of adjustment and only at the cost of permanently reducing human beings and many other living organisms to engineered products and mere cogs in the social machine.

If the system breaks down the consequences will still be very painful. But the bigger the system grows the more disastrous the results of its breakdown will be, so if it is to break down it had best break down sooner rather than later.

The technophiles are taking us all on an utterly reckless ride into the unknown. Many people understand something of what technological progress is doing to us yet take a passive attitude toward it because they think it is inevitable. But we don't think it is inevitable.

Imagine a society that subjects people to conditions that make them terribly unhappy then gives them the drugs to take away their unhappiness. Science fiction. It is already happening to some extent in our own society. Instead of removing the conditions that make people depressed modern society gives them antidepressant drugs. In effect antidepressants are a means of modifying an individual's internal state in such a way as to enable him to tolerate social conditions that he would otherwise find intolerable.

Our society tends to regard as a sickness any mode of thought or behavior that is inconvenient for the system and this is plausible because when an individual doesn't fit into the system it causes pain to the individual as well as problems for the system. Thus the manipulation of an individual to adjust him to the system is seen as a cure for a sickness and therefore as good.

The concept of “mental health” in our society is defined largely by the extent to which an individual behaves in accord with the needs of the system and does so without showing signs of stress.

In modern industrial society only minimal effort is necessary to satisfy one's physical needs. It is enough to go through a training program to acquire some petty technical skill, then come to work on time and exert the very modest effort needed to hold a job. The only requirements are a moderate amount of intelligence and, most of all, simple obedience.

Technology is a more powerful social force than the aspiration for freedom. A technological advance that appears not to threaten freedom often turns out to threaten it very seriously later on. When a new item of technology is introduced as an option that an individual can accept or not as he chooses, it does not necessarily remain optional. In many cases the new technology changes society in such a way that people eventually find themselves forced to use it.