

systems upon which society relies -- can be construed as *untoward interference*.³ But there is an important distinction between the types of interference that operate in this way.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INTERFERENCE

Positive interference is any change in the ambient universe which allows an expansion of possible actions but does not produce any restriction of existing possible actions (Fig. 3A).

Negative interference is the converse of positive interference. It involves changes that restrict possible actions without producing any extra or alternative actions that were not viable before (Fig. 3B).

Synthetic interference. Almost all 'interferences' are, in reality, syntheses of positive and negative interference. They thus involve restrictions to existing possible actions while adding novel possible actions of a different character. This is particularly the case with large-scale changes in our surroundings, such as those associated with planning and architecture.

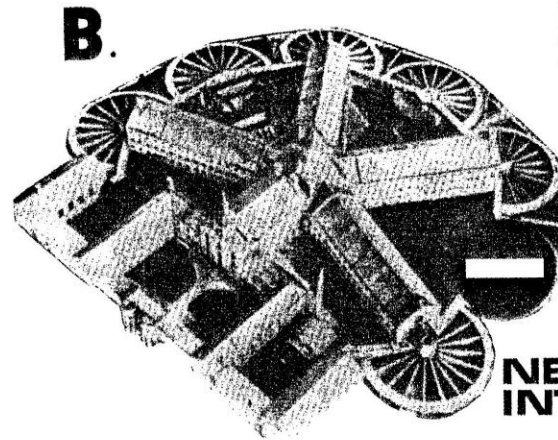
Positive interference can be most vividly seen in large-scale systems such as the telephone network. Telephones do not, in any physical sense, prevent any of the actions that would have happened before they came on the scene. The presence of a phone does not make any difference to the physical conduct of life. The thing is that it is available *if* you want to use it. It is a positive interference -- allowing certain novel actions (instant communication of various kinds) without disallowing any others. The walls of a prison, on the other hand, are there for the sole purpose of frustrating certain kinds of action. They are not in themselves meant to provide any positive interference -- any expansion of possible action -- whatsoever. Their function is to narrow down the scope of action of a given set of persons during given lengths of time. They are pure negative interference.

Probably the simplest example of a synthetic system is an

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A.



B.

3A and B. Positive and negative interference. Two objects whose introduction *changed the state of the world*, but in essentially different way. An example of synthetic interference is shown on pp. 12-13.