

Doctemp: RC51 2024 Governance.docx  
Abstract: three possible proposals for Krakow.  
Max 8000 Words  
Deadline June 1

**How are we to evolve governance systems which make it possible to take account of a wider range of information and promote pervasive experimentation and learning?**

A paper prepared for a conference of Research Committee 51 (Socio-Cybernetics) of the International Sociological Association, held in Krakow, 24-28 June 2024.

John Raven [www.eyesociety.co.uk](http://www.eyesociety.co.uk)

Email: [jraven@ravenfamily.co.uk](mailto:jraven@ravenfamily.co.uk)

Version date: 17 June 2024

Currently 3,500 words.

**ABSTRACT**

Our recent experience with government responses to climate change and Covid have revealed the devastating effects of neglecting vitally important information. These experiences have also illustrated the way in which the limited narratives that have been deployed contribute to mental viruses, or manias, through which populations turn on, and persecute, non-compliers and disbelievers. These things highlight the need for alternative forms of governance (actually societal experimentation and learning arrangements) and a better understanding of the network of social forces involved. We have explored such things in earlier studies. These are reviewed and elaborated in the current text, paying particular attention to the way in which AI has been absorbed into, and, in a sense has come to *be* governance. But my main aim in writing the paper has been to search for others who have been engaged in a quest for a more sociocybernetically-based image of appropriate social learning arrangements.

\*\*\*\*\*

This paper is more a request for help than a presentation of work done.

Our recent experience with government, indeed worldwide, responses to climate change and Covid have revealed the devastating effects of neglecting vitally important information in the formulation and implementation of policies.

But these experiences have also illustrated the way in which the limited narratives that have been promoted have contributed to manias through which the population turns on, and persecutes, non-compliers and disbelievers. One is reminded of Mao's Cultural Revolution and the religious programs of the past wherein individual members of the population generate ever more extreme versions of the original policy and find ways of torturing anyone deemed in danger of harbouring non-compliant attitudes and beliefs.

How to understand and intervene in such processes?

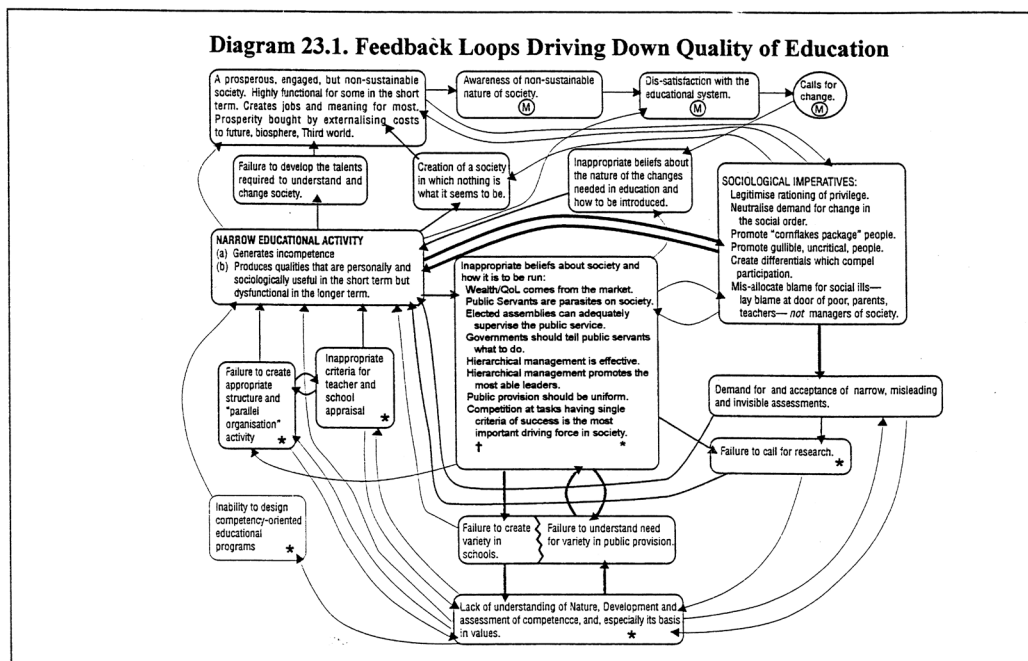
These things highlight the need for, at least, alternative forms of governance (or, more accurately, alternative procedures for societal learning and development and means of

holding public servants to account for the consequences of their actions) and a better understanding of the network and strength of the social forces involved.

I will first briefly summarise our work on the educational system and its extension to the arrangements needed to the problems involved in moving toward, and running, a sustainable society. Thereafter I will return to the wicked problem of how mass movements like those mentioned above – and others relating to hatred, harm, and social justice – get created and perpetuated.

## Managing Education

In our quest to understand why the educational system fails to attend to the goals most people would like it to attend to – like helping all pupils to develop, and gain recognition for, their own particular talents – we set about sketching what would now be called a causal loop diagram of the interacting network of social forces involved.



\* Intervention in these cells would help change the nature of the qualities nurtured and rewarded in the system. Motives which could be harnessed to do this are marked (M).

† These need to be replaced by acceptance of the need to make managed economies work—to find ways of giving effect to information concerning the public long term interest, the need to explicitly create variety and information on the personal and social consequences of the options, and to find ways of holding public servants accountable for, and getting them to act in, the long term public interest. This means systematic, broadly-based, evaluation and participative democracy.

This diagram sketches at least some of the interacting and recursive forces which flow round and perpetuate this self-maintaining and self-extending (autopoietic?) system.

These have been discussed in detail elsewhere (e.g. Raven, 1994).

But, for the purposes of this paper, we need to focus only on the large box in the centre of the diagram “inappropriate images of society and how it is to be run”.

Key features of this have to do with the widely noted (eg by Adam Smith) inability of centralised hierarchical management systems to generate comprehensive evaluation, feedback, and experimentation.

However, for the sake of completeness, and in order to facilitate comparison with what is to come later, here is an enlargement of that box.

Inappropriate beliefs about society and how it should be run:

- Wealth/QOL comes from the market.
- Public servants are parasites on society.
- Elected assemblies can adequately supervise the public service.
- Governments should tell public servants what to do.
- Hierarchical management is effective.
- Hierarchical management promotes the best leaders.
- Public provision should be uniform.
- Competition at tasks having single criteria of success is the most important driving force in society.

In contrast, what is needed is a *pervasive* climate of innovation and learning.

In a quest to find out what this might look like we reviewed research on innovation in organisations and were particularly impressed by Rosabeth Kanter's (1985) *Change Masters*.

Kanter appeared to demonstrate that innovation is best promoted via arrangements she described as *Parallel Organisation Activity*.

By "parallel organisation activity" she meant activities carried out, in time set aside for it, by everyone involved in the day-to-day operation of the organisation - from cleaning staff upward.

In the course of such activity those concerned contribute their diverse observations and, most importantly, their diverse and complementary talents, to form climates of enterprise or innovation.

Klemp, Munger and Spencer (1977) describe some of the arrangements made to harness multiple talents in more detail.

One problem is that many managers and politicians do not wish to do these things but instead focus on e.g. gaining promotion for themselves (see eg Hogan's [1990/2021] *Dark Side of Charisma*) at the expense of those most able to secure the viability of the organisation and its future.

But note that the promotion of such people is itself brought about by a network of systemic processes.

When we wrote *Managing Education* we did not have available to us Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Had we done so, we would have been able to characterise the requisite arrangements as "organic" ... arrangements having multiple and interacting feedback loops as in the bodies of animals<sup>1</sup>.

Bookchin's work would also have given us some insights into why, at every choice point in history, moves toward such arrangements have been displaced by hierarchy.

At any rate, we went on in *Managing Education* to try to generate a sociocybernetically-based picture of what such arrangements might look like.

We elaborated this in *The New Wealth of Nations* (1995).

### **The New Wealth of Nations.**

Here we set out to elaborate the societal learning arrangements (we try to avoid the use of the word "management" because that already traps one into a hierarchical way of thinking) that would be needed to create and run a sustainable society.

Part I of this book provides a stocktaking of the state of the planet. Basically, it illustrates the horrendous destruction of our soils, seas, and atmosphere.

As something of an aside, we may mention that Rees (2025) has shown that it would require 5 back-up planets for all the world to live as we live in the "West".

Climate change is the least of our problems.

If we are to survive as a species we will have to *radically* change the way we live. We will have to get rid of our cars, television sets, chemically based agriculture, and much trade as we know it.

We need *pervasive, radical, systems-oriented* change. This cannot be introduced via a series of centralised single-factor interventions (such as Net Zero) because these will be undermined by the reactions of the rest of the system – for which we provided a causal loop diagram similar to that above.

(We may note in passing that the concept of Green Energy is an oxymoron because it ignores the first law of thermodynamics which formalises the conservation of mass and energy. If one harnesses energy for any purpose it results in products – such as the accumulation of vast quantities of debris and unwanted gases and by-products of production – which are hard to dispose of. (Not to mention the disposal of the windmills, solar panels, and IT devices). Even running the apparently clean/green internet requires vast quantities of energy [actually fossil fuels] and water.)

In Part II of the book we provide a critique of many aspects of the modern political economy including its financial system and market processes.

Among other things we showed that, if one did the arithmetic, the spending of some 75% of GNP was, in all countries of Europe, in some sense under government control. (45% is spent directly. Then there is local government and the nationalised industries. Then there is the effect of legislation requiring, e.g. owners of cars being required to insure them.) We live in managed, not market economies.

Tucker (2024) has nicely brought this observation up to date. In doing so, he notes, not only the huge proportion of GNP under government control but also the proportion of that which

is devoted to IT and AI. He particularly notes the huge role of government in funding and “controlling” this huge international industry which it barely understands.

Still more recently, Weyl and Tang (2024) have produced a book documenting the terrifying way various forms of AI are being, and could be, used not only to administer vast sectors of some societies (e.g. India, Taiwan) but to inform public decision making and the options available to individuals. The right to engage in, and choose between, a number of socially-determined options is determined by the number of “social credits” one has achieved. All determined by AI and public “debate” orchestrated by AI.

Under such circumstances it becomes difficult to even distinguish between government and social functioning determined, not by markets or democracy, but by AI. In the end, it seems that even the choice of the AI to be used will be determined by AI.

Unfortunately, as the authors point out, such a dystopian future is largely already here.

The need to understand the social forces involved and find ways of intervening in them could not be more urgent.

Part III of *The New Wealth of Nations* offers an evaluation of current societal management arrangements including “the market” and “democracy”.

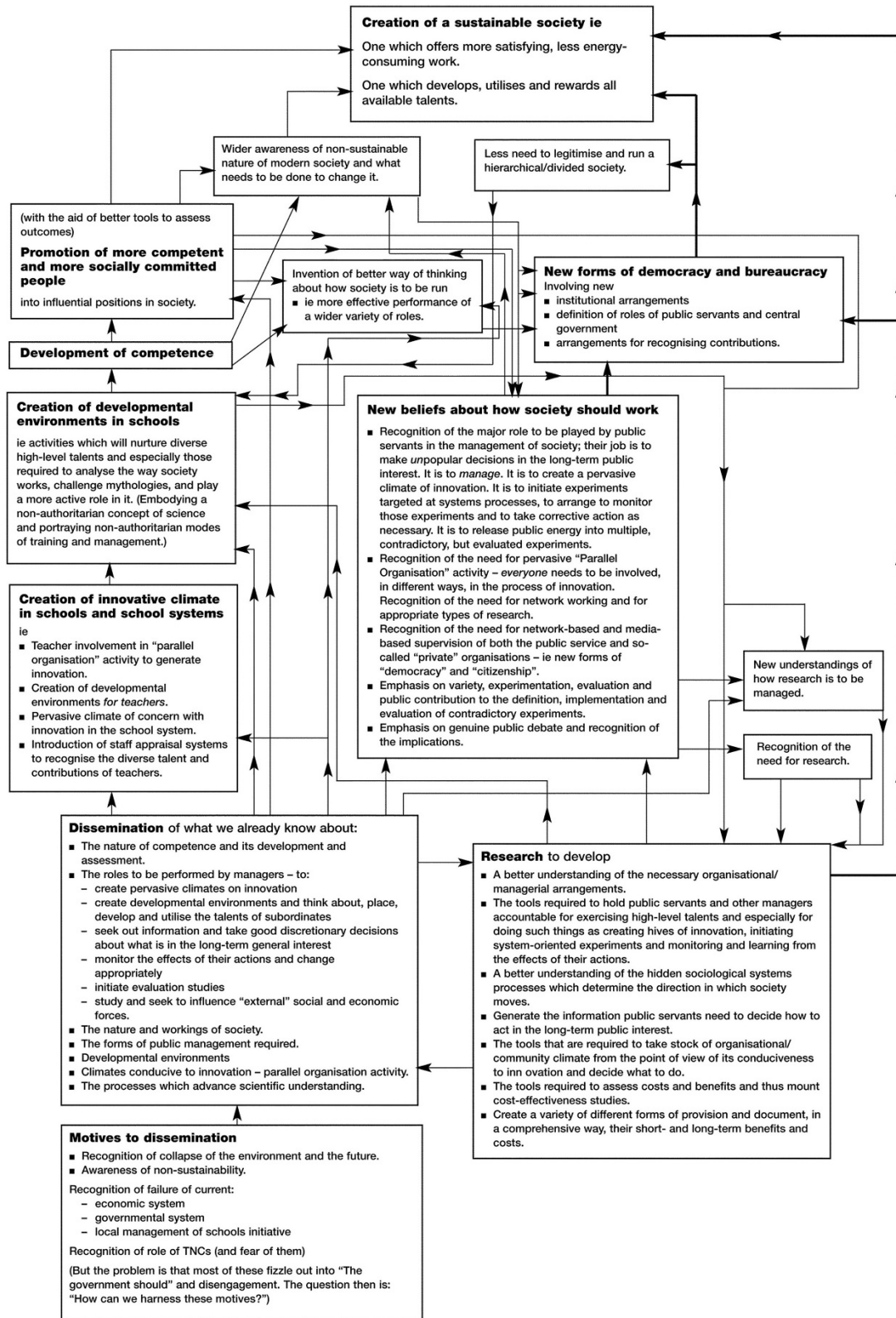
Part IV moves on to propose a design for an experimentation, innovation, and learning system which would help us move forward.

This includes sketches of the requisite processes and sociocybernetic feedback loops.

Diagram 20.5 and 25.1 provide summaries of the outcomes of this work

Diagram 20.5

New societal management arrangements



Version date: 28 May 2004. John Doctemp/Jean ODDMENTS file: NSMA.\*\*\*

The central box has been enlarged below.

#### **New beliefs about how society should work**

- Recognition of the major role to be played by public servants in the management of society; their job is to make *unpopular* decisions in the long-term public interest. It is to *manage*, it is to create a pervasive climate of innovation. It is to initiate experiments targeted at systems processes, to arrange to monitor these experiments and to take corrective action as necessary. It is to release public energy into multiple, contradictory, but evaluated experiments.
- Recognition of the need for pervasive “Parallel Organisation” activity – everyone needs to be involved in different ways in the process of innovation. Recognition of the need for network working and for appropriate types of research.
- Recognition of the need for network-based and media-based supervision of both the public service and so-called “private” organisations – i.e. new forms of “democracy” and “citizenship”.
- Emphasis on variety, experimentation, evaluation and public contribution to the definition, implementation and evaluation of contradictory experiments.
- Emphasis on genuine public debate and recognition of the implications.

It is difficult to imagine anything more different from the image portrayed in the central box in our causal loop diagram of the network of forces driving education out of schools.

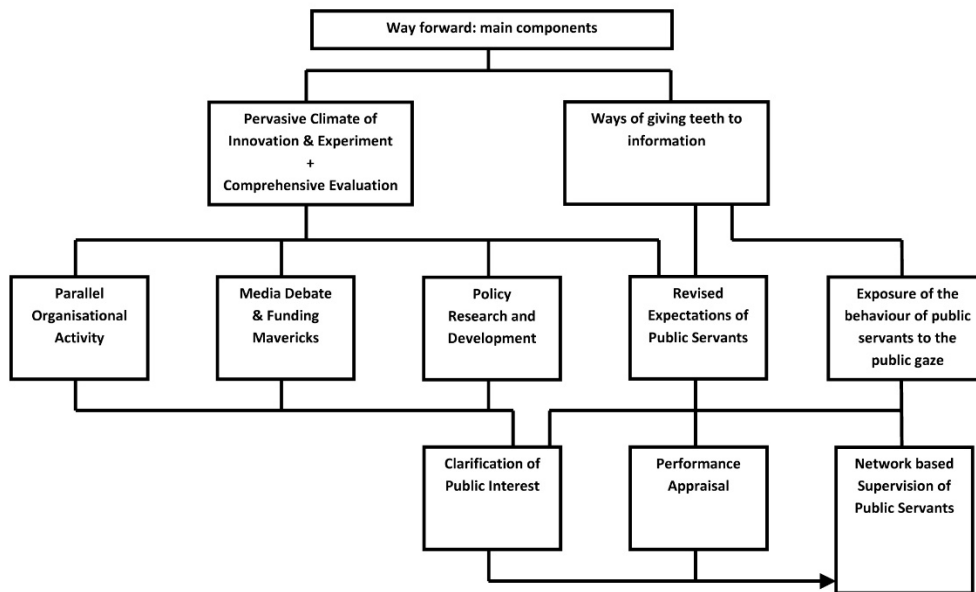
The research priorities highlighted in bottom right-hand box in the diagram, which deals with requisite research, (enlarged below) may also come as a surprise to many.

#### **Research to develop**

- A better understanding of the necessary organisational/management arrangements.
- The tools required to hold public servants and other managers accountable for exercising high-level talents and especially for doing such things as creating hives of innovation, initiating systems-orientated experiments and monitoring and learning from the effects of their actions.
- A better understanding of the hidden sociological systems processes which determine the direction in which society moves.
- Generate the information public servants need to decide how to act in the long-term public interest.
- The tools that are required to take stock or organisational/community climate from the point of view of its conduciveness to innovation and decide what to do.
- The tools required to assess costs and benefits and thus mount cost-effective studies,
- Create a variety of different forms of provision and document, in a comprehensive way, their short- and long-term benefits and costs.

Diagram 25.1 provides a summary sketch of the operation of the overall system.

Diagram 25.1



Note the attention paid to arrangements to expose the internal workings of the system to the public gaze – a feature which, according to Mill, is likely to lead people to act in the public interest.

Also the way in which media debate and the funding of mavericks are placed alongside parallel organisation activity and research to facilitate clarification of what is in the long term public interest.

It is perhaps of interest to try to make explicit the way in which this proposal differs from that of Weyl and Tang.

Weyl and Tang bring their observations about the role of AI in running society together in a vision of the future symbolised by two overlapping squares which it is, intentionally, hard to express in verbal form but which may be roughly translated as “*Plurality*”.

It would seem that, in a sense, this offers an answer to our question.

But, actually, it does not because it is preoccupied with using AI to improve the quality of (government) **decisions**, whereas we have essentially been concerned with how to run a society which innovates and learns *without* government direction; how to promote evolution.

Actually, Weyl and Tang do briefly discuss another Taiwanese movement **G0V** (pronounced “GOV ZERO”) which seems more aligned with our objectives.



### **That is really the end of this part of this paper.**

My aim in writing it was to promote a discussion of, and the generation of alternative images of, requisite forms of social organisation, especially forms that promote societal innovation and learning without central direction.

But I do have a couple of other things to add.

The first is that Figures 20.5 and 25.1 unfortunately do *not* offer a way of harnessing social forces, such as those depicted in Figure 23.1, to drive society in the direction in which we would like it to go.

What I mean by this is that they do not accomplish this in the sense in which the cybernetic design of a sailing boat, as a result of Newton's work on the conceptualisation and measurement of physical forces, enables the helmsman and crew of a sailing boat to harness the raw forces of the wind, the waves, and the sea to drive the boat in the direction in which he wants it to go and, indeed, to drive the boat *into* the wind. (See Raven & Gallon (2010) for a fuller discussion).

The other is that, in the last chapter of *The Ecology of Freedom*, despite recognising that the international destruction of habitat requires some form of management, Bookchin develops an entirely contrary, non-bureaucratic, answer to our question based on what might be called classic anarchist thought. In the course of doing so, he summarises several recent experiments in the area.

More than that, in his chapter *An Ecological Society* he presents a fundamental challenge to current "scientific" ways of thinking about society and its organisation which in turn leads to a still more radical image of the way forward.

### **Mass Mania, Mass Formation, and the spread of Mental Viruses.**

Important though the importance of the abuses of science, logic, and authority in relation to COVID described in my paper for the RC51 meeting in Zaragosa (Raven, 2021) are, they pale into insignificance in comparison with the worldwide manias/crazes released by the apparent threats of COVID and climate change.

How to understand these things?

I will try to move toward an understanding of these things by setting the manias mentioned above in the context of others.

These include not only Mao's Cultural Revolution and the many such movements associated with various forms of religion (including witchcraft) in the past, but also many more recent manias such as the drive to criminalise minor forms of hatred and trivial harms, and the extraordinary promotion of safetyism and "social justice".

These movements release enormous energy in the general population to persecute non-believers and those who do not comply.

Protests against the development of such policies and the provision of evidence of their ineffectiveness (see e.g. Raven, 2020) have little effect.

But we may also note in passing that many of these movements end(ed) up delivering the opposite of what was intended, such as the famine in China. Willburn (2023) and Raven (1977) list many more examples in the modern world and Bevan (2023) unpacks the counterintuitive effects of embracing neo-liberalism.

Yet, while, in a sense, these examples offer little more than confirmation of Forrester's law that single-factor intervention in complex systems always has counterintuitive, and usually counter-productive effects, they do little to help us understand mass mania.

Desmet (2022) has offered an "explanation" of the covid mania and its spill-over into totalitarianism, and Haslam (2016 & 2021) has noted the role of concept creep in relation to harm and hate: Ever more trivial happenings are included within the network of behaviours to which the term is applied (and legal "remedies" [often much more serious than the original crime] offered).

The role of "leaders" – Mao, Stalin, Hitler – is widely noted as a contributory problem, but we are always left with the question of how such people get promoted and how the mass, over the top, implementation of their policies comes about. Hogan *et al* (1990/2021) have drawn attention to the "dark side of charisma". Such leaders create climates of fear and set up bureaucracies to persecute offenders and encourage family members and neighbours to persecute each other.

But all these are essentially *psychologically*-based explanations.

I myself cannot help feeling that there must be a *sociocybernetically*-based account of such phenomena, meaning an account based on mapping the social forces involved as in the Education diagram above – in which what happens is *not* attributed to evil administrators, teachers, or parents.

Put another way, my hope would be to push "Great Men" type explanations of history and events into the background and focus on the social forces which, among other things, lead such people to become great men.

In a sense, the task is parallel to that which Newton undertook by first removing animated spirits, the wind, and the gods from explanations of movement and then replacing them by a new concept "force" (which he showed how to measure), and finally showing how one could apply that understanding to generate cybernetically-based thinking about the control of sailing boats (see Raven & Gallon, 2010).

But, so far, I have been unable to find others who have been engaged in parallel work and would be grateful to anyone who can point me in the right direction.

## References

- Bevan, G. (2023). [How Did Britain Come to This?: A century of systemic failures of governance](#). London, England, LSE press. Also: *The unintended consequences of adopting the neoliberal ideology*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGRvpppzA8E&t=3142s>
- Bookchin, M. (2005 [1971; 1991]). *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Desmet, M. (2022). *The Psychology of Totalitarianism*. Chelsea Green Publishing UK.
- Forrester, J. W. (1971/1995). *Counterintuitive Behavior of Social System: An introduction to the concepts of system dynamics, discussing social policies and their derivation from incomplete understanding of complex systems*. Original text appeared in the January, 1971, issue of the *Technology Review* published by the Alumni Association of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. All figures are taken from *World Dynamics* by Jay W. Forrester, Pegasus Communications, Waltham MA.  
<http://static.clexchange.org/ftp/documents/roadmaps/RM1/D-4468-2.pdf>
- Hogan, R., Raskin, R., & Fazzini, D. (1990). The dark side of charisma. In K. E. Clark and M. B. Clark (Eds.), *Measures of Leadership*. West Orange, NJ: Leadership Library of America.
- Hogan, R., Kaiser, R. B., Sherman, R. A., & Harms, P. D. (2021). Twenty years on the dark side: Six lessons about bad leadership. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 73(3), 199–213. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000205>
- Haslam, N. (2016). Concept creep: Psychology's expanding concepts of harm and pathology. *Psychological Inquiry*, 27, 1-17 <file:///C:/Users/jrave/Downloads/pi16a.pdf>
- Haslam, N., Vylomova, E., Zyphur, M., & Kashima, Y. (2021). The cultural dynamics of concept creep. *American Psychologist*, 76(6), 1013–1026.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000847>
- Kanter, R. M. (1985). *The Change Masters: Corporate Entrepreneurs at Work*. Hemel Hempstead: Unwin Paperbacks
- Klemp, G. O., Munger, M. T., & Spencer, L. M. (1977). *An Analysis of Leadership and Management Competencies of Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Naval Officers in the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets*. Boston: McBer
- Raven, J. (1994). *Managing Education for Effective Schooling: The Most Important Problem Is to Come to Terms with Values*. Unionville, New York: Trillium Press. Also available at [http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/fulllist.html#managing\\_education](http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/fulllist.html#managing_education) and [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292320504\\_Managing\\_Education\\_for\\_Effective\\_Schooling](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292320504_Managing_Education_for_Effective_Schooling)
- Raven, J. (1995). *The New Wealth of Nations: A New Enquiry into the Nature and Origins of the Wealth of Nations and the Societal Learning Arrangements Needed for a Sustainable Society*. Unionville, New York: Royal Fireworks Press; Also available on line at: [http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/fulllist.html#new\\_wealth](http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/fulllist.html#new_wealth) and [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292308206\\_The\\_New\\_Wealth\\_of\\_Nations\\_The\\_Societal\\_Learning\\_Arrangements\\_Needed\\_for\\_a\\_Sustainable\\_Society](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292308206_The_New_Wealth_of_Nations_The_Societal_Learning_Arrangements_Needed_for_a_Sustainable_Society)
- Raven, J. (1997). Can we discuss policy if nothing is what it seems to be? *Journal for Mental Changes*, III(1), 85-103. <http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/hcwpdall.pdf> and [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376811697\\_CAN\\_WE\\_DISCUSS\\_POLICY\\_IF\\_NOTHING\\_IS\\_WHAT\\_IT\\_SEEMS\\_TO\\_BE](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376811697_CAN_WE_DISCUSS_POLICY_IF_NOTHING_IS_WHAT_IT_SEEMS_TO_BE)
- Raven, J. (2008). The emergence of hierarchy, domination and centralisation: Reflections on the work of Murray Bookchin. *Journal for Perspectives of Economic, Political, and Social Integration*, 14(1-2), 11-75. Also available at: <http://www.eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/Bookchin.pdf> also [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350654264\\_The\\_Emergence\\_of\\_Hierarchy\\_Domination\\_and\\_Centralisation\\_Reflections\\_on\\_the\\_Work\\_of\\_Murray\\_Bookchin](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350654264_The_Emergence_of_Hierarchy_Domination_and_Centralisation_Reflections_on_the_Work_of_Murray_Bookchin)

- Raven, J. (2020). Submission to Scottish Government Justice Committee re Scottish Government Hate Crime Bill. <http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/Response-to-scottish-govt-hate-bill.pdf>
- Raven, J. (2022) *Some abuses of “science”, logic, and authority illustrated from responses to the COVID-19 threat*. (Prepared for RC51, Zaragoza, June 2022) <http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/Abuses-of-Science-and-authority-COVID-19-RC51-talk-outline.pdf> and [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361263052\\_Some\\_abuses\\_of\\_science\\_logic\\_and\\_authority\\_illustrated\\_from\\_responses\\_to\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_threat](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361263052_Some_abuses_of_science_logic_and_authority_illustrated_from_responses_to_the_COVID-19_threat)
- Raven, J., & Gallon, L. (2010). Conceptualising, mapping, and measuring social forces. *Journal of Sociocybernetics*, 8, 73-110. [http://www.unizar.es/sociocybernetics/Journal/journal\\_1\\_2\\_2010\\_1.pdf](http://www.unizar.es/sociocybernetics/Journal/journal_1_2_2010_1.pdf) Also [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292374004\\_Technical\\_Paper\\_Conceptualising\\_Mapping\\_and\\_Measuring\\_Social\\_Forces](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292374004_Technical_Paper_Conceptualising_Mapping_and_Measuring_Social_Forces)
- Rees, W. (2005). Contemplating the abyss. *Nature*, 433, 15-16.
- Tucker, J.A. (2024) How Did American Capitalism Mutate Into American Corporatism? <https://dailysceptic.org/2024/03/16/how-did-american-capitalism-mutate-into-american-corporatism/>
- Welbourn, H. (2023). *Jung Predicted How the West Would Destroy Itself* <https://dailysceptic.org/2023/12/21/jung-predicted-how-the-west-would-destroy-itself/?highlight=the%20perfect%20misnomer%20of%20wokeness>
- Weyl, E.G. and Tang, A. and others. (2024) *Plurality: The Future of Collaborative Technology and Democracy*. No publisher given but assumed to be Plurality Community. Maybe: RadicalxChange.  
ISBN-13 979-8321247181

---

<sup>i</sup> Bookchin later distances himself from this image saying that it has been captured by capitalism to suggest something very different from what he had in mind. What he means to refer to is a whole organic, largely symbiotic, organic *community* which can be imaged by thinking of an Alpine meadow (which involves many plants and animals living in largely symbiotic relationships).