**The Spiritual Life and Educational Philosophy of Lord Lytton**

**Introduction**

This article takes as its subject Victor Alexander George Bulwer-Lytton, the second Earl of Lytton (1876-1947) specifically through examining his connection to a number of key radical causes of the early twentieth century. These include his work on the garden city movement, his support for women’s suffrage and his active involvement in outdoor boys’ clubs. Most importantly however, the main focus of the discussion here will be his hitherto unexplored role within the New Ideals in Education conferences as well as his promotion of, and support for, early progressive educational ideas particularly those of the American pedagogue and psychologist Homer Lane. This latter aspect is particularly noteworthy as Lytton’s support involved making not only an active contribution to Lane’s reforming school - the Little Commonwealth - but also as his own published works including *New Treasure: A Study of the Psychology of Love* (1934) acted as bold recasting of his friend’s ideals and one which shall be explored further.[[1]](#footnote-1) As we shall also see, many of Lane’s central ideas and precepts were to be anticipated within Lytton’s own thinking and therefore perhaps invite speculation as to the influence he was to have on his better-known and more influential American counterpart. More widely, understanding Lytton’s life and thought may serve to explain how the later ideas of, for example, the New Educational Fellowship were to be anticipated by an earlier wave of pioneering thinkers thereby calling into question the widespread belief that, ‘if a time has to be set for the beginning of progressivism in England, May 1911….is probably the best date.’[[2]](#footnote-2)

In entertaining these considerations, this paper thereby represents the first attempt to discuss Lytton’s distinctive *educational* interventions. Such previous scholarly neglect in relation to his work in this area stems arguably from two factors. First is his seemingly incongruous position as a reforming blue-blood Tory aristocrat – a demographic not traditionally associated with their support for more radical social causes. Such an assumption, as Michelle Myall points out, has also served to explain why his equally remarkable sister Constance has been absent from discussions pertaining to women’s history despite her deep attachment to the radical suffragette cause to which Victor was also a supporter. In referencing the feminist tradition of scholarship Myall argues that for a long time, ‘The prevailing idea….[was] that feminists should not concern themselves with ‘women worthies’ but with ‘ordinary women’ cast serious doubt on the validity of researching middle-class and upper-class women.’[[3]](#footnote-3) Second, is the fact that the fields in which Lytton moved and the networks of which he was a part have also not been the subject of much research and endeavour. The foremost discussion of the New Ideals movement for example continues to be John Howlett’s (2017) recent paper whilst the quixotic and controversial Homer Lane has only similarly re-entered the collective consciousness as a result of Judith Stinton’s belated biography.[[4]](#footnote-4) Even within that book, direct reference to Lytton was scant. There remains too the fact that education was but one facet of Lytton’s long life of public service in which he became heavily involved in the administration of the British Raj as well as leading the 1931 League of Nations delegation to investigate the outbreak of war in Manchuria.[[5]](#footnote-5) It is therefore a comparatively complex task to disentangle the many threads of his life and there is no official biography of either him or his extraordinary family. This is both surprising and unfortunate given the excellent archive held at Knebworth House which has served as the main basis for this paper.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Biographical Context and Early Educational Ideas**

Before considering Victor Lytton’s later educational work and thinking, it is initially important to better understand his genealogy as in this we find a biographical context which explains his later pre-occupation with two strands of thought – mystic forms of spirituality and the need to develop children’s intrinsic creativity. Born in Peterhof, the viceregal residence in Simla, Lytton’s father Robert, the first Earl, was a diplomat, rising ultimately to the position of Viceroy and Governor General of India, an office he was to hold between 1876 and 1880. Following his father, Victor himself was to also briefly hold this office in 1926 as well as being Governor General of Bengal from 1922 to 1927. Despite being sent home at the age of four, this background necessitated a deep engrossment with the politics of the land of his birth as this was a time when, through the initiatives of the recently founded Indian National Congress and Muslim League, demands for independence and separate homelands were becoming more forthright. Indeed, the family’s long-established connection to India has been well told by, amongst others, Mary Lutyens and goes some way toward illuminating Victor’s later interest in more esoteric philosophies.[[7]](#footnote-7) It was no coincidence that one of Lytton’s lifelong associates was to be the school inspector and educational theorist Edmond Holmes, an early advocate for Buddhism, and a man whose philosophy had as its goal the aim of *self-realization* which drew as much from the traditions of the East as it did upon his own quirky interpretation of Christianity.[[8]](#footnote-8) For Holmes, such ideals were to be obtained through self-expression via play as well as by giving free rein to innate childhood *instincts* which included the dramatic, the artistic and the communicative.

As significant as Lytton’s Indian connections however were the *literary* talents of his forebears and this perhaps explains why Victor was to advocate continually on behalf of forms of education driven by children’s self-expression. Aside from his political and plenipotential career, Victor’s father had also written poetry and short stories under the pseudonym of Owen Meredith whilst his grandfather Edward had been the best-selling Victorian novelist, in his day rivalling Dickens for popularity.[[9]](#footnote-9) His allegorical novels are also of significance when thinking of his grandson as they too provided a telling early fascination with the sorts of mystical ideas he himself was to later promote. Speaking of Edward’s own connection to the esoteric, J. Jeffrey Franklin points out that, ‘[in] his life and his writings, [he] provided a pattern of scholarly sampling from ancient esoteric traditions that was repeated by some founders of late Victorian ‘syncretic’ or ‘hybrid religions’’[[10]](#footnote-10) One such of these religions, drawing on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, was to be Theosophy which, through the pioneering endeavours of Beatrice Ensor, was to become an intellectual foundation stone in the development of the New Education Fellowship. Members of the Theosophical Fraternity read avidly Edward’s novels and were further to count amongst their number two of Lytton’s five sisters. Later, the Fraternity was to be part of a ‘complex relational web’[[11]](#footnote-11) of groups including that going under the name of the New Ideals in Education and with whom Lytton, as we shall see, was to be heavily involved.

These aspects of biography were to be supplemented by early direct experiences of more progressive forms of education, characteristic of the liberal intelligentsia of which his family was a part. In discussing his and his sisters’ early years for example, Lytton writes, ‘We led a fairly free and happy life out of doors, like the children in Castle Blair whom we imitated as much as possible.’[[12]](#footnote-12) In referencing here the novel of Flora Shaw, Victor was intentionally identifying with that tradition – going back to *Emile* but also incorporating Thomas Day’s classic *Sandford and Merton* (1780) – which entailed learning through the outdoors, developing an appreciation for the value of nature and a strong element of rough-and-tumble play. There are also records of activities, often unsupervised, taking place on the Knebworth estate including fishing and boating involving Victor and his sisters. Although one is always right to be wary of ‘psycho history’ which seeks to infer later motives from early experiences (and his educational views were to become bound up within a more philosophical and quasi-religious framework) understanding this type of upbringing perhaps explains both Lytton’s later interests but also his desire to be equally progressive with his own family. An unpublished account by Lytton’s daughter Hermione of her youth indicates him taking a very active interest in her own education and, in the process, betraying a *practical* attachment to such ideas:

‘Father took a lot of interest in our education. We belonged to something called the P.N.E.U. (Parents National Education Union)[[13]](#footnote-13) which supplied a curriculum for children being educated at home or in places where there was no school…The lessons were varied and interesting. Amongst other things I remember we were sent a number of pictures to study – reproductions of works of art – an early form of “Art Appreciation”.’[[14]](#footnote-14)

This quotation – which is part of a longer memoir - is revealing for it indicates Lytton consciously exposing his daughter to such areas of learning as art appreciation (clearly distinct from didactics) and this attitude was evident too in the upbringing of his son Antony, eulogized in his father’s famous eponymous memoir, which talked, again, of outdoor pursuits such as skating, scouting and exploring.[[15]](#footnote-15) In addition, and of greater importance, it also suggests his direct involvement with forward-thinking groups promulgating new and innovative ideas in relation to education and living. Although designed as a vehicle for middle and upper-class parents Christina de Bellaigue for one has highlighted the role of the aforementioned P.N.E.U. in stressing their emphasis on, ‘knowledge and understanding of the new sciences of childhood.’[[16]](#footnote-16) Affirming this, manuscripts in the Lytton archive reveal a number of speeches made by Victor Lytton in direct support of the organization’s ideas. The most significant of these, given in Brighton in 1906, is of particular interest as, although addressing an audience of ‘home-schoolers’, raised a number of nascent progressive ideas which were to be cornerstones of the movement’s later thinking. In particular, the place and responsibility of *parents* was seen as especially significant particularly when considering how future writers such as A.S. Neill and Susan Isaacs were to identify the potentially damaging effects poor parenting could have upon both children and, more widely, the society of which they were a part.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Lytton, in this particular speech, does not therefore simply reiterate established ideas or stratagems but instead emphasizes the role adults have to play in guiding children along their own paths of learning. In the main this meant ensuring they recognized the importance and sanctity of their peers: ‘Anything which will make young people think of others at an age when their thoughts are all concentrated upon themselves is health giving and the duty of example [of the parents] may be used as a means to that end.’[[18]](#footnote-18) Given how wider progressive texts including those by Edmond Holmes were to later write extensively about the need for state schools to be seen in terms of ‘the Socialistic dream of "Each for all, and all for each"’[[19]](#footnote-19) and many New Fellowship schools were to be similarly driven by a foregoing of competition at the expense of community living, Lytton’s was an important statement and chimed with nascent psychological understandings of cognitive development and the moves within the child from the subjective ‘id’ to the more moralistic ‘super-ego’. Harking back to earlier Idealist pre-conceptions which saw the child as being born with an essence of all that they would ultimately become, Lytton talked too of ‘certain instincts and certain passions their duty *requires* them to follow.’[[20]](#footnote-20) Given Lytton’s personal connections, through his sisters, to Theosophy this belief in spiritual energy and development is perhaps less surprising yet it remains striking both in terms of the audience to which it was presented but also that, as early even as 1906, Lytton was attempting to work through the implications for parenting and education of these ostensibly more spiritual notions and ideas. He was equally unsparing in his condemnation of mainstream forms of education. An unpublished speech around the question of public schools for example argued that ‘The fact is that an appetite for knowledge is born in everyone and it is only eradicated, or rather stifled in them by years of enforced drudgery and injudicious clogging of their minds in school.’[[21]](#footnote-21)

If therefore forms of parenting and pedagogy had the task of nurturing and developing the innate instincts of the child (which were seen as good), to avoid corrupting this process there was an imperative for adults to be completely honest both in their behaviour and responses toward the young. If they were not, the child’s natural desires and impulses and their inborn sense of curiosity risked being distorted thereby impeding the designs of nature. This was expressed most starkly in matters related to *sex*, a concept traditionally seen as unapproachable for the young mind. Although this was to be a theme addressed by his friend Homer Lane, in touching upon this idea here it indicates once more that even before any personal communication with Lane – and pre-dating other publications in the field - Lytton was fully aware of the need to stand against the most obvious taboo of childhood: ‘it is the duty of parents to share as far as possible with children the difficult problems which considerations of sex involve.’[[22]](#footnote-22) In short, this meant answering their questions and enquiries in an honest and frank way. By so doing, as for Lane, Lytton here was advocating a form of positive freedom – freedom *to* and not freedom *from* – and this involved not forbidding children from indulging ‘certain instincts and certain passions’[[23]](#footnote-23), in this case the latent sexual impulse common to all humans. To do otherwise risked again stunting an essential phase of growth and it is telling how later writings were to link criminality and delinquency with adult repression of the kind first warned about here by Lytton.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Many of these themes – parenting, naturalism and behaviour – were to find a wider audience in *The Web of Life*, a guide written by Victor and intended for, ‘a mother to tell to a child of about six years old.’[[25]](#footnote-25) Although in both in their form and the descriptions of the outdoors these stories are in the tradition of such earlier works as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), Lytton here eschews any maudlin sentimentality and overt moral messages preferring to focus instead upon the themes of life, birth and death. Represented as a series of vignettes describing the birth and life-course of various types of organism (ants, bees, butterflies and the like), the short work embodies many of his views around the need to be honest to children when dealing with difficult topics and, in that spirit, does not therefore shy away from encouraging them to confront the issue of their own mortality.

Equally, it is an important text for it manages even in its simplistic language to convey something of the spirit of Friedrich Froebel in its understanding of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the natural world. What for Froebel had been an, ‘all-controlling law…based on an all-pervading energetic, living, self-conscious…eternal unity’[[26]](#footnote-26) for Lytton was articulated to children as, ‘Whenever you find that something has life, because it grows, you will also find that God has given to it the power of making more life. Everything that lives can make itself.’[[27]](#footnote-27) Although betraying his particular pantheistic interpretation of Christianity such invocation of the natural world also chimed with those literary works reclaimed recently by Amy Palmer (2017) which similarly took a quasi-Froebelian philosophy and anthropomorphic approach to comprehending nature.[[28]](#footnote-28) By so doing, Lytton was demonstrating his adherence to an educational viewpoint which combined in a unique way emerging psychological theory with a very particular understanding of spirituality which went beyond orthodox Christianity. Although only suggested in this work intended for children, as we shall see these ideas were to be more fulsomely worked through elsewhere and were to have important implications for his thinking around schooling and the curriculum.

**The Quest for a Cause and Finding Lane**

The direct patronage afforded by Lytton to the P.N.S.U., and which has been mentioned above, is indicative of his youthful participation with a number of similarly-minded causes all of whom had something contingent to say about the state of childhood and children. Even where these causes were not explicitly educational, many of their concerns were nevertheless to feed into nascent discourses attenuated to the changing shape of society, a point exemplified by the later New Ideals and New Education Fellowship groups who were interdisciplinary and drew upon a range of new ideas and theories.[[29]](#footnote-29) This point was identified by Monty Woodhouse – Victor’s son-in-law – who was to characterize his early life as a search for a genuine cause which could hold and sustain his abundant energy. In listing Victor’s wide intellectual interests, which he gleaned through exploring notes given for public speeches, Woodhouse indicates something too of his liberal minded thinking and political positioning: ‘The welfare of the industrious poor is perhaps the largest single category: the Probation of Offenders Act, the Metropolitan Police Orphanage, the Poor Law, Home Brush-Making, the Sweated Industries Bill, Holidays for Workers.’[[30]](#footnote-30)

Such political causes coincided with an equally broad range of *cultural* interests which included the founding of a National Theatre, a commitment to temperance, and the garden cities movement.[[31]](#footnote-31) All of these concerns, after a fashion, had previously been articulated by the capitalist factory-owner and educator Robert Owen of New Lanark[[32]](#footnote-32) and equally indicate something of Victor’s own patrician status. Nevertheless, whilst it is easy in that regard to be cynical over a life lived in apparent privilege, this is to belie not merely Lytton’s active interest in the causes he championed (often through the written word or in public debates) but also the connections these ideas were to have to the formation of later progressive educational ideology. One example of this lies in the garden cities movement which can be so linked to the important work being carried out by Rachel and Margaret McMillan in seeking to improve the nation’s health through open air schools and clinics. Lytton’s interest in this idea was, typically, practical and reflected his lifelong commitment to schemes of social improvement:

‘Victor’s love of his home extended beyond the house and the park to the estate and the village and the neighbourhood. He was not merely a good landlord, but an inspired one. The little houses he had Lutyens[[33]](#footnote-33) build for his tenants put the nearby Council houses to shame…Later he joined enthusiastically in this new kind of community a few miles away, near Welwyn.’[[34]](#footnote-34)

Looking back on this early involvement, and in his capacity as President of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, Lytton was to later observe that such ideas were the saving grace for a world which continued to be beset with a number of war-induced problems.[[35]](#footnote-35) Along similar lines, his commitment to temperance – to which he even drafted his own suggestions for government policy[[36]](#footnote-36) - was predicated upon the idea that alcohol was a blight to clear, rational and reasoned thinking and the antithesis of health and the outdoors which he otherwise sought to vigorously promote. Nevertheless, these crusades were not, for Woodhouse at least, tantamount to a ‘Cause’ and for him it was only when Lytton became a passionate supporter of women’s suffrage that his mind and energies became more clearly focussed. A number of pamphlets were printed which reproduced Lytton’s writings and speeches on the issue and there are records of his engaging in a series of national debates including against a fellow Tory grandee Lord Curzon.[[37]](#footnote-37) However, it is a contention of this paper that, whilst this was important work and his support for equality in the franchise was to anticipate later moves towards mixed sex schools, the most significant and long-lasting ‘Cause’ was in fact Lytton’s involvement with *progressive education.* Not only was this a natural extension and culmination of many of his other interests (health and welfare of the child becoming increasingly more important) but also that this was a more sustained period of engagement lasting the decade between 1913 and 1923. These dates are important as they coincide both with Lytton’s first meeting with Lane but also the end of the New Ideals conferences and his move to Bengal as Governor General.

The New Ideals in Education conferences emerged out of the initial gathering of the Montessori Society of Great Britain held at East Runton in the summer of 1914. Lytton, along with Edmond Holmes, Bertram Hawker, Michael Sadler and Albert Mansbridge, acted as one of the founding conveners and, as much as anyone else, was to serve as the driving intellectual force behind the shape and direction of the movement. As John Howlett has charted[[38]](#footnote-38), in their first incarnation these conferences lasted until 1923 and Lytton was President of the organization for the duration of that time signifying his standing and esteem within the educational community. Although only three published records exist of his contributions– one full paper and two presidential addresses[[39]](#footnote-39) – these were important pieces for they laid down the scope and aims of the group which were ‘to welcome all ideas that represent[ed] the substitution of the freedom and self-expression of the pupil for the imposed authority of the teacher.’[[40]](#footnote-40) The inter-disciplinary nature of the meetings and speakers which included Robert Baden-Powell as well as the poets John Masefield and Henry Newbolt further reflected the wide array of cultural interests and personal contacts of Lytton and it is hard not to believe that he did not have a hand in purposely ensuring that these gatherings brought together those working in a range of cognate intellectual fields. What success the conferences enjoyed – particularly in encouraging the dissemination of ideas amongst practitioners - can therefore be heavily attributed to Lytton.

As the leading figure within the movement it was equally no surprise that, within his published contributions, he was willing to articulate a progressive viewpoint which had begun to see the deficiencies of schooling as but one part of a more widespread *cultural* malaise. His own interpretation of Montessori’s work – which only perhaps his friend Edmond Holmes amongst the other delegates would have then come close to sharing – was one which not only recognized it as method to better advance children’s learning and broader psychological development but also, more grandly, as a solution to the ills of a world ravaged by the exigencies of war. His short paper focussing on the social aspect of the Montessori Movement demonstrated this as it was here that Lytton extrapolated outwards to argue that the problems deriving from authority stringently imposed by teachers in schools were comparable to similar repressions being perpetrated within wider society. In commenting upon activities of thieving criminals, he writes, ‘Their only object was – like disciplinary authority among children – not to be found out.’[[41]](#footnote-41) Furthermore, his own interpretation of Montessori’s educational system supported an *a priori* belief in the ‘natural mental state of a fully equipped human being [as] one of liberty and freedom of choice’[[42]](#footnote-42) and it was only when this freedom was presented to previously repressed individuals that they began to thus display socially desirable behaviours. Lytton uses the example of Lady Henry Somerset’s house for inebriate women to make the point that ‘understanding and sympathy’[[43]](#footnote-43) could regulate conduct and, whilst yet to overlay these ideas with deeper psychological and theological understanding (this came later), still pre-empted by a number of years similar analogies made by those such as A.S. Neill in which childhood repression was equated with the ills of civilization. It is significant too to note that a number of papers at later New Ideals conferences[[44]](#footnote-44) were to place an emphasis upon spiritual (as opposed to political) freedom and so can be seen as building on those earlier contentions of Lytton which envisaged child-centeredness under that aspect. Not only then does this suggest a strong influence amongst this particular group but also locates him as an important progenitor of early progressive discourses a feature of which were not just more sympathetic attitudes to childhood but also where adult deviance was directly equated with the stunting effects of a previously repressed upbringing.

It was at this 1914 East Runton conference too where Lytton first met in person Homer Lane, a meeting which coincided with the latter’s appointment as Superintendent of the Little Commonwealth community in Dorset. We know from the initial Annual Report covering the period from June 27th 1913 to June 30th 1914 that Lytton was among the establishment’s subscribers - that year alone he is recorded as having donated £2 in contributions - though not yet as a member of the General Committee which was at that point chaired by the Earl of Sandwich. The first actual letter from Lane to Lytton is dated July 30th 1914 and records a note of thanks for the donation of a book on engineering, probably given to him at East Runton five days earlier. Although it is less clear what first brought the Little Commonwealth to Lytton’s attention – it may have been his friendship with Sandwich or the Duchess of Marlborough both of whom had provided early patronage – what is indisputable is the support Lytton was to give the institution and its founder in the years ahead.

Typically throwing himself fully into the venture, Lytton was appointed in 1916 as Chairman of the Executive Committee and was to serve as a central figure around the now infamous closure of the institution two years later. Although this convoluted affair has been well told by previous accounts[[45]](#footnote-45) and is therefore not necessary to repeat here, it is significant to note that he was alone amongst the Committee in opposing a motion to close the school for the duration of the First World War. Whilst all serving committee members had agreed on Lane’s innocence in relation to the earlier allegations of sexual impropriety brought by the Home Office, only Lytton amongst them believed that to be morally consistent it was necessary to carry on the business of the Little Commonwealth in the face of wider protest. In the letter conveying his resignation to the Committee, Lytton wrote: ‘I have a rooted conviction…that when an innocent person becomes involved in a scandal his only chance of escaping perpetual suffering…is to make a full and frank statement of all the facts…and then to continue his normal existence exactly as before.’[[46]](#footnote-46) A later letter to his sister following the guilty verdict against Lane and his subsequent imprisonment likewise found Lytton railing not merely against John Rawlinson, the MP for Cambridge University who had carried out the Little Commonwealth enquiry (‘the kind of man who would find overwhelmingly convincing evidence that Mary Magdalen was Christ’s mistress’[[47]](#footnote-47)), but also asking his sister to volunteer to be cross-examined by the Home Secretary as well as offering to invite Lane to India so as to carry on undertaking his work!

These were clearly the letters of a ‘true idealist and a staunch friend’[[48]](#footnote-48) however it represented more than simply a close personal friendship; by now Lytton was convinced that it was possible to put into practice his earlier esoteric thinking around spiritual freedom. His prior interest in Montessori had shown to him the possibilities inherent within a free classroom.[[49]](#footnote-49) Now, this was to be taken a stage further and he was to envisage the Little Commonwealth both as a way of life but also as a, ‘living community, the members of which were changing, growing, developing from day to day.’[[50]](#footnote-50) In this he once again pre-dated similar effusive claims by progressives such as J.H. Simpson and Harriet Finlay-Johnson[[51]](#footnote-51) around the school as an organic, changing entity and, in his introduction to an early biography of Lane, Lytton makes clear that this was as much a system driven by universal principles of childhood than necessarily by the personality of any individual: ‘it [the Little Commonwealth] could have been established without him, it could have been carried on without him, its principles could be applied to-day with equal success to every reformatory in the world.’[[52]](#footnote-52) In thus searching for and finding a ‘Cause’, Lytton had been able to formulate not just a particular conception of childhood (which pre-dated similar contentions of Lane) but one which was, as we shall see, to soon evolve into a more comprehensive theory of human relations.

***New Treasure* and a New Philosophy**

It was perhaps not surprising given his staunch defence and discipleship of Lane that Lytton would seek to both grapple with and popularize his core ideas and principles. Although this process was not immediate – and the archives house draft work over a number of years which shows him slowly working through its implications – it was to come to fruition within Lytton’s most important work *New Treasure*, first published in 1934. Little read and cited today (it appears in no academic literature), it nevertheless deserves to be reinstated as a key progressive text as it captures not only the essence of Lane’s philosophy - which to that point had been laid down only in a series of recorded verbatim talks, Lane not being a natural writer[[53]](#footnote-53) - but also, importantly, as this became overlain and filtered through Lytton’s own particular interpretation of Christianity. Other writings by Lytton at this time[[54]](#footnote-54) had similarly begun to construct a particular quasi-religious philosophy based around his own interpretations of Biblical texts including the Gospels and Epistles of St. Paul and it was these which were to intersect with his earlier concerns on schooling to construct a unique analysis of Western education. This represented a clear extension to the work of Lane and was seen as filling a void in his thinking which, ‘lacked something that would have given him even greater power, and that something was the spiritual force that men call religion.’[[55]](#footnote-55)

Lytton’s approach was closely aligned to the views of those contemporary philosophers of education who understood that, ‘The answer to every educational question [is] ultimately influenced by our philosophy of life.’[[56]](#footnote-56) The aims of education thus became bound up with more esoteric conceptions over the aim and purpose of existence itself which, in the inter-war years, was equated by some intellectuals with a feeling of spiritual aridity – akin to T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* and the years of *l’entre deux guerres*.[[57]](#footnote-57) In therefore referring to the post-War era, H.G. Stead was to argue that, ‘there has been a bewildering loss of faith in nearly every sphere of thought’[[58]](#footnote-58) and that what was needed was, ‘*the force of an ideal*.’[[59]](#footnote-59) Amongst Lytton’s fellow educationalists, understanding over that ideal differed; by the time of *New Treasure’s* publication Edmond Holmes for example had renounced any attachment to orthodox Christianity and had become fully ensconced in Buddhism[[60]](#footnote-60) whilst those such as the psychologist Susan Isaacs were indicating the turn that progressivism was taking in becoming more influenced by explicitly psychological ideas and theory.[[61]](#footnote-61) Lytton’s thinking can then be understood as evolving along similar lines away from more immediate New Ideals concerns over how freedom could be deployed in the classroom to a more intense questioning over the ‘rationality of man’[[62]](#footnote-62) particularly as the horrors and implications of the First World War became more intensely felt.

At its heart, Lytton’s case rested on the *a priori* assumption that ‘Human nature is innately good; the unconscious processes are in no way immoral.’[[63]](#footnote-63) Instinct was therefore seen as being divine in origin. As we have seen, this was a broadly-agreed principle amongst the New Ideals group who, in taking their ideological cues from Lane and the experimental techniques developed by Maria Montessori, understood that such ideas had important educational implications, notably that, ‘The child should not do anything until he comes to the opinion – his own opinion – that it should be done.’[[64]](#footnote-64) Members of this group were also of one mind in conceiving of the existence of a broad oppression upon children which forbade them from expressing such natural interests and impulses. In general terms, this was perpetrated by parents and, more significantly, schools. The originality of Lytton in this milieu however lay in locating such subjugation amongst, ‘those who have most wished to improve it - namely, its *moral* instructors.’[[65]](#footnote-65) For Lytton, the original message of the New Testament Christ had become distorted such that, ‘The Church puts orthodoxy before truth, authority before sincerity…The Church of Christ on earth has denied to its members the right to seek truth or to express it with sincerity.’[[66]](#footnote-66) As a result, when thinking about childhood oppression it became necessary for Lytton to understand this as part of a wider problem of civilization and its underlying morality/theology and not as confined purely to the realm of the family or the school-room. Although he was not alone in looking at the stunting effects of contemporary Christianity – Edmond Holmes had earlier also unleashed a withering critique[[67]](#footnote-67) - Lytton’s thinking was original in that it sought to align religious coercion with Lane’s concept of ‘original virtue’ in a way that was, and remains, highly novel.

By therefore denying what Lytton understood as the true and original essence of the religion, Christianity in the contemporary world was instead driven by a particular form of *legalism* that corresponded to that morality which both crucified Christ and also, ‘led the authorities of a later generation to treat Lane as an undesirable alien.’[[68]](#footnote-68) In comparing Lane to the figure of Christ[[69]](#footnote-69) Lytton was making a point to not merely make a martyr out of the recently disgraced and deceased American but also to draw a connection between ancient religious doctrines and the contemporary educational world. In many ways this was an appropriate linkage for it was aspects of these worlds – the ancient and the modern - which were to provide Lytton with a broad set of ideas that he was to deploy in critiquing education as well as offering comment on the inexorable and enduring collapse of wider aspects of society.

Lytton was not alone in offering a critique of Western religion and its detrimental social and educational effects. From his own set of acquaintances, Edmond Holmes had previously set down a vociferous attack upon the stunting effects of Christianity impelled by his own concepts of *externalism* and *dualism* The former was his way of articulating the, ‘prevalent tendency to pay undue regard to outward and visible “results” and to neglect what is inward and vital’[[70]](#footnote-70) whilst the latter served to define the propensity which divorced Man from his own Spirit. This had the effect of ‘debase[ing] notions of a Creator, Nature and Man who were in this scheme brought down to the level of materialism and ephemera.’[[71]](#footnote-71) In addition, as John Howlett (2016) has shown[[72]](#footnote-72), this was a line of thought descending from and influenced by the thinking of the widely-read philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche whose posthumously published work *The Antichrist* (1895) was to make a similarly emboldened claim that prevailing Christian morality, ‘destroys all reason, all naturalness of instinct; - all that is beneficent, that is life-furthering.’[[73]](#footnote-73)

Nevertheless, whilst undoubtedly sharing some of these concerns, Lytton’s work was less explicitly idealistic instead preferring to emphasize emotional states and arguing that contemporary religion lacked *joyousness*: ‘The religion which he [Christ] expounded was the most joyous of all religions, but it has been turned by His interpreters into the least joyous.’[[74]](#footnote-74) Pleasure and recreation, under this aspect, were therefore seen as sinful, with sinful acts themselves caused by, ‘the protest of the divine nature in man against the fake conception of God created by moral authorities.’[[75]](#footnote-75) Although Lytton was not here arguing for any form of freedom without licence, his definition of pleasure was as one equated broadly with a more natural state of being. This naturalism even extended to childhood nakedness and Lytton was clear – in language that appeared no doubt shocking for his readership - that nudity was a means by which the body would not be seen as spiritually sinful. Interestingly, this topic was covered too by the aforementioned A.S. Neill however whereas his was a more straightforward argument based around the later effects of such repression (‘children will avoid so much sick sex later on; it’s inconceivable that any of them will become peeping Tom’[[76]](#footnote-76)) Lytton saw condemnation as representing a form of moral censure that built up and developed later complexes and suppressed desires around sex as well as other forms of moral behaviour.

If his own idiosyncratic interpretation of ancient religion and the ideas of Christ were to provide an explanation for the malformed human condition, it was to the modern discipline of psycho-analysis and in particular its specific exploration of the unconscious that Lytton turned to in order to proffer solutions, specifically as these related to the young. Ultimately, for Lytton, there was a distinction to be made between the impersonal unconscious and the personal unconscious. The former referred to the purely instinctive impulses of the individual (impersonal in the sense of being unthinking) whereas the latter was an artificial construct formed by the moral and social beliefs and values imposed on it directly by wider society. In Lytton’s case, as we have seen, these were understood as the product of established religion. Drawing on Freud, Lytton therefore argued that sin was caused by, ‘the protest of the divine nature in man against the fake conception of God created by moral authorities.’[[77]](#footnote-77) In other words, the impersonal and personal unconsciousnesses being in revolt against one another. The only way therefore of resolving this conflict – and removing sin - was to eliminate commonly understood morality and restore faith in the original virtue of human desires.

Deriving from this new and highly original form of thinking, which represented a combination of Freud and Christ, much of *New Treasure* therefore argues for the substitution of older morality - which sought the reformation of sin by confession and repentance – with, instead, a philosophy of *love* or, more specifically, a Gospel of Love. This was understood as, ‘not the love of poets or of romance…it is not an emotion but an attitude of mind’[[78]](#footnote-78). Lytton believed in the divine purpose of all human experience including, by extension, even those acts which were often regarded as sinful. The role of this new morality was therefore to recognize that even such sinful acts emanated from a spiritual source and represented a, ‘protest of the divine nature in man against the false conception of God created by moral authorities.’[[79]](#footnote-79) Such forgiveness even extended to the case of the drunken man who murdered his wife and beat his child: ‘Love alone can find in his hideous acts some admirable motive, some extenuating circumstance.’[[80]](#footnote-80) By contrast, in fashioning a God which was understood, in Lytton’s thinking, as judgemental and condemnatory, the Church had instead over time fostered antipathy and resentment which, within certain individuals, produced hate-impulses. These were seen as inadmissible to the conscious mind which had been indoctrinated into accepting established theology as infallible and they therefore became supressed in the unconscious. These became expressed in various points within later life in particular through ‘behaviour that is unethical, anti-social or self-indulgent.’[[81]](#footnote-81)

If religion was the cause, and psycho-analysis the solution, it was to education that Lytton turned to in order to provide an *arena* in which some of these ideas could be applied. There was an element of inevitability about this; his previous observance of the Montessori classrooms at East Runton at the first New Ideals conference would have shown themselves to him as places where happiness in learning served to regulate wider classroom behaviour. Indeed, as he had earlier commented, ‘This [the Montessori Method] shows what understanding and sympathy will do for the regulation of conduct’.[[82]](#footnote-82) Now however the ideas of Montessori seemed insufficient; learning environments were no longer about simply stimulating mental and cognitive development but were being broadened out as a vehicle to explore wider ideas about psychology, religion and morality. In other words, progressive education was seen as a way by which possessive happiness (the personal unconscious) could be converted to *creative happiness*. Partly this was linked to creative activities like art and music such as were taking place in Fellowship schools (and we have already alluded to Lytton’s passion for these) but, more importantly, to the creation of a happiness which stemmed from the appropriate fostering of the impersonal unconscious: ‘The object of education must be to direct instinctive desires into channels that are socially and ethically desirable instead of suppressing them by moral censure.’[[83]](#footnote-83)

The real value of *New Treasure* therefore is that it offered a particular analysis of education through the twin lenses of religion and psychology and, more specifically, psycho-analysis. Lane may have understood the latter but his thinking never went beyond the narrow confines of his discipline. Lytton’s importance however lay in the way in which he was able to use such ideas, along with his religious thinking which manifested as a modified form of Christianity in which the spirit was central, to develop a nascent model of good educational practice in which: ‘The only successful way of arousing interest is by encouraging the spiritual in creation.’[[84]](#footnote-84) Although the influence of Homer Lane has been traced by some commentators in the writings of both A.S. Neill and J.S. Simpson[[85]](#footnote-85) not only are their reputations in the progressive narrative now secure (in the way that Lytton’s is not) but moreover the emphasis in their writing tended, somewhat simplistically, to be on the stunting effects of poor parenting and schooling which was a model derived directly from Lane. Neither were willing or able to use this template as but one part of a wider theory of human relations which we find in the developed ideas of Lytton and particularly within *New Treasure*.

**Conclusion: Last Years and Assessment**

Although the last two decades of Victor Lytton’s life were in the main to be dominated by wider political causes such as the politics of India and Manchuria it is clear that education and the wider benefits it could be seen to impart remained a prevailing concern and one close to his heart. For example, as Governor of Bengal, he worked hard, often in the face of staunch resistance, to promote local languages, a move which ran counter to the prevailing colonial insistence on English as the *lingua franca*. One case where this intervention was to have a tangible effect was in the matriculation examinations of major universities. Lytton understood that to allow Indians to sit these in their respective native languages was a way of not only bettering their thinking and clarity of argument which had traditionally been stifled when made to learn complex subjects in a foreign tongue, but also because it allowed for a more meritocratic form of selection into groups like the civil service.[[86]](#footnote-86) It is worth also perhaps noting that these political decisions came at the same time as he was producing his later religious writings which sought, as we have alluded above, to develop an all-encompassing spiritual philosophy and one which perhaps aligned itself more naturally with the ideas of the mystic East.

These soundings – despite Lane having died in 1925 - continued to be tied to Victor’s interest in *progressive* educational ventures. One such commitment was to the Caldecott Community[[87]](#footnote-87) and bundles of correspondence within the Lytton papers indicate his keen and active interest in this group. This encompassed not merely more formal duties - as late as 1946 (a year before his death) he is recorded as chairing the governing Council and working with Finance and Executive Sub-Committees – but also informal as Lytton used his social connections[[88]](#footnote-88) to secure support and patronage for the recently-formed settlement. Most prominent of these was the donation by Princess Elizabeth (via Lytton) of ‘a large packing case of children’s garments’[[89]](#footnote-89) which she desired to be passed on to the Community. In a similar vein, other letters between Lytton and the founder of the Community Leila Rendal show him persuading the Duchess of Kent to be a patron of the organization as well as asking her to attend a fund-raising film screening. Although unsuccessful in the latter Lytton did nevertheless manage to procure an appearance at the event of the famous actor Laurence Olivier.[[90]](#footnote-90)Although Lytton’s involvement in this group was to be more from the position of administrator there is much to suggest that he was nevertheless instrumental in offering significant financial and intellectual support, so much so that Leila Rendel herself was moved to offer him her personal thanks: ‘In many ways I feel your affection for the Community is so deep and your knowledge of it so wide that to have had you [has been] in a great many ways a tremendous asset.’[[91]](#footnote-91)

Equally important to these later years was Lytton’s involvement with boys’ clubs which started as a result of the death of Victor’s son Antony in a flying accident. Antony had been passionate about giving less privileged boys the chances for sport and outdoor activity, and in the year before his untimely demise had become Chairman of the Seaside Camps and Settlement Association.[[92]](#footnote-92)In 1935, the Antony Viscount Knebworth Knebworth Memorial Fund was set up, with Victor as a founding Trustee; the moneys raised were put to support the work of the Association which ultimately morphed into the Knebworth Memorial Camps.This Association was wound up in 1945 and its funds transferred to the London Federation of Boys’ Clubs & the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, who supported the establishment of a new (and similar) organisation named The Knebworth Camping Club whose stated object was, ‘the promotion of the mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing of youths without restriction of class or creed, by providing camping facilities at Amersham, Bucks, and such places as may later be considered desirable.’[[93]](#footnote-93) There is even a card in the archives dated 1946 declaring Victor as Life Vice-President of the West Ham Boys and Amateur Boxing Club, once again a position with a link to his son as Antony had been a keen and talented boxer. In therefore taking prominent roles with these outdoor and physical organizations, Victor was both honouring the memory of his beloved Antony but also demonstrating active support for a key plank of progressive thinking which was the many benefits conferred by outdoor education, often that of a particularly rugged kind. Although directly harking back to his earlier work with the garden cities movement and the need to make a stand against urban spread, by the 1930s these ideas were becoming associated with aspects of progressive education especially those institutions associated with the New Education Fellowship and which often featured outdoor activity as part of their curriculum.[[94]](#footnote-94)

However, for the many good causes he championed, and the outward saintliness of his persona, Victor Lytton was not to everyone’s taste. The diarist James Lees-Milne for example recounting a visit to Knebworth remembered him thus: ‘pompous, courteous in a keep-your-distance manner, patrician and vice-regal. He was wearing rather precious country clothes, a too-immaculate tweed suit, a yellow-green short of large checks loose at the collar, and a gold chain round his neck.’[[95]](#footnote-95) Nor was he exempt from errors of judgement; his decision to oppose economic sanctions on Japan following their conflict with China and his steadfast faith in the collective security offered by the League of Nations seemed out of step with the rising militaristic climate and at least one commentator has argued that ‘loyalty to internationalist ideals threatened to distance him [Lytton] from political reality.’[[96]](#footnote-96) Equally, his discipleship of Lane has been called into question; Lyndsey Jenkins for example saw this as a peculiar blind spot: ‘Victor believed whole-heartedly in his innocence…Lane seems to have been a powerful and hypnotic personality: none of his influential friends saw through him, and they were so convinced of his goodness that they ignored all evidence to the contrary.’[[97]](#footnote-97)

To take such a view is however contingent on taking a position on *Lane*. What it does not do is indicate not just the significant role that Lytton played in facilitating progressive education in the United Kingdom in the early part of the twentieth century but also how he articulated his own educational theory in a number of written works with *New Treasure* being the most important. These theories were an amalgam of Christ and Freud as well as incorporating his own analysis of social relations which, in its way, was a natural culmination of his life to that point. Although in constructing such a theory he was not alone as many educational thinkers of the time were locating education within the wider picture of society, Lytton’s analysis was both unique but also extended the ideas of Lane. This, in conjunction with his wider interventions in a range of areas, serve as the justification for reintegrating him into progressive educational narratives as a significant figure.

1. See Victor Bulwer-Lytton, *New Treasure: A Study of the Psychology of Love* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1934). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R.J.W. Selleck, *English Primary Education and the Progressives 1914-1939* (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 26. Selleck chose this date as it represented the first publication of Edmond Holmes’ seminal treatise, *What is and What Might Be*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Michelle Myall, ‘“Only be ye strong and very courageous”: the militant suffragism of Lady Constance Lytton’ in *Women’s History Review*, 7.1. (1998), 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See John Howlett, ‘The Formation, Development and Contribution of the New Ideals in Education Conferences, 1914- 1937’ in *History of Education*, 46 (4), 459-479 and Judith Stinton, *A Dorset Utopia: the Little Commonwealth and Homer Lane* (Norwich: Black Dog Books, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The result of this investigation was the Lytton Report (1932) which stated that Japan had been the aggressor in the seizing of Manchuria and further recommended Manchurian autonomy under Chinese sovereignty. The League of Nations adopted the Report and Japan quit the League. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Of particular interest are the three boxes of uncatalogued papers relating to Victor Lytton and his educational correspondence. This includes, within boxes 1 and 2, letters to and from Lane and the closure of the Little Commonwealth with particular reference to Lane’s culpability. The third box includes Victor’s long missive ‘An attempt to explain the principles of Lane’s psychology’ as well as correspondence pertaining to the Caldecott Community. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Mary Lutyens, *Lyttons in India: An Account of Lord Lytton’s Viceroyalty, 1876-1880* (London: J. Murray, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For an account of Edmond Holmes’ philosophy, in particular the influence of Buddhism upon his thinking, see John Howlett, *Edmond Holmes and Progressive Education* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016) pp. 65-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. As Leslie Mitchell in *Bulwer-Lytton: The Rise and Fall of a Victorian Man of Letters* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003) points out: ‘At the end of his life he was unassailable. There were five editions of *The Coming Race* within a year of its publication, and 3150 copies of *Kenelm Chillingly* were sold on the day of its publication.’ (Mitchell, op., cit., xvi). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. Jeffrey Franklin, ‘The Evolution of Occult Spirituality in Victorian England and the Representative Case of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’ pp. 123-142 in Tatian Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism and the Occult* (London: Ashgate, 2012), 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. John Howlett (2017), loc., cit., 462. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Victor Lytton, *Set in Remembrance*, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, Knebworth House Archive 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The Parents’ National Education Union (PNEU) was founded in Bradford in 1887 as the Parent’s Education Union and was dedicated to developing and providing resources for homeschoolers in accordance with the philosophy of Charlotte Mason, its co-founder. The word National was adopted from 1890. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Hermione Lytton-Cobbold, Unpublished memoir of her youth – Chapter Three ‘School Days’, Knebworth House Archive, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Victor Lytton, *Antony: a record of youth* (London: Peter Davies, 1935) especially pp. 1-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Christina de Bellaigue, ‘Charlotte Mason, home education and the Parents’ National Educational Union in the late nineteenth century’ in *Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 41, Issue 4* (2015), 511. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. To best understand this aspect of their thinking see in particular A.S. Neill, *The Problem Parent* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1932) and *The Problem Family* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1949) and Susan Isaacs, *The Educational Value of the Nursery School*, (London: University of London Press, 1954) respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Victor Lytton, ‘Some Duties and Responsibilities of Early Manhood’, unpublished typescript of a speech given in Brighton 1906 to the P.N.E.U., Knebworth House Archive, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Edmond Holmes, *What Is and What Might Be* (London: Constable, 1910), 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Victor Lytton, 1906 op. cit., 11, italics added. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Victor Lytton, ‘Public Schools: An Appreciation and Criticism’, unpublished manuscript, no date, Knebworth House Archive, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See for example F. Ivan Nye, *Family Relationships and Delinquent Behaviour* (Wiley: Chapman and Hall, 1958) and Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, *Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency* (New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1950). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Victor Lytton, *The Web of Life: Little Stories for my Grandchildren*, (London: Peter Davies, 1938), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man*, translated by W.N. Hailmann (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Victor Lytton, 1938, op., cit., 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See Amy Palmer, ‘“A Pleasant Way of Teaching the Little Ones to Recognize Flowers”: Instructional Nature Plays in Twentieth Century Britain’ in *Children’s Literature in Education, Volume 48, Issue 4*, 341-354. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. As one example the New Ideals in Education conferences were to include not merely speakers from within the world of education such as Percy Nunn, Homer Lane and Edmond Holmes but poets like John Masefield and Henry Newbolt and luminaries including Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouts. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. C.M. Woodhouse*, A Biography of Victor Lytton 2nd Earl of Lytton*, unpublished biography, Knebworth House Archive, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The garden cities movement was a form of town planning devised by Ebenezer Howard and which involved self-contained communities surrounded by Green-Belts. It was no coincidence that the two main Garden Cities - Letchworth and Welwyn – were located close to Knebworth. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. New Lanark in the Scottish Lowlands was a utopian socialist community, founded and developed by Owen. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The architect Edwin Lutyens was Victor’s brother-in-law having married his sister Emily in 1897. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Woodhouse, op., cit., 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See Victor Lytton, *The Place of Garden Cities in National Policy: Ebenezer Howard Memorial Lecture*, (London: Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, 1934). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Victor Lytton, *The State and its Licences. Suggestions for a Comprehensive Temperance Policy* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1909). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For Lytton’s writings on the suffrage debate see Victor Lytton, *Woman Suffrage: The Only Way*. (London: National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, 1909) and *The House of Lords and Women’s Suffrage: Speech by the Earl of Lytton in the Debate in the House of Lords, - May 6th, 1914*. (London: P.S. King & Son, 1914). On the debates with Curzon see Victor Lytton, *The Earl of Lytton on Votes for Women. A Speech delivered at St James’s Theatre, June 15, 1909*. (second edition) (London: Woman’s Press, 1909) and *Two Voices in the St. Andrew’s Church, Glasgow. Refutation by Lord Lytton, Suffragist of the arguments of Lord Curzon, Anti-Suffragist*. (Glasgow: Conservative and Unionist Women’s Franchise Association, 1912). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. John Howlett, loc. cit., 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. These are ‘The Social Aspect of Montessori Work’ in *Report of the Montessori Conference* (London: Montessori Society, 1914), 1-10, ‘New Ideals in Education’ in *New Ideals in Education: 2nd Conference Papers* (London: New Ideals Committee, 1915), 1-2 and ‘Presidential Address’ in *New Ideals in Education: 4th Conference Papers* (London: New Ideals Committee, 1917) 1-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Victor Lytton, 1915, op., cit., 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Victor Lytton, 1914, op., cit. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See for example Miss Mackinder, ‘Freedom for Young Children’ in *New Ideals in Education: 9th Conference Papers* (London: New Ideals Committee, 1923), 66-75 and E. Sharwood Smith, ‘Freedom for the Teacher’ in Ibid, 51-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See Stinton, op. cit., 73-78, W. David Wills, *Homer Lane: A Biography* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1964) 156-195 and E.T. Bazeley, *Homer Lane and the Little Commonwealth* (Unwin Brothers, 1928), 141-170. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Letter from Victor Lytton to Little Commonwealth Committee, draft notes by Victor Lytton, Box LH30, Knebworth House Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Letter from Victor Lytton to Lady Betty Balfour, April 9th, 1925, Knebworth House Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. W. David Wills, op., cit. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. At East Runton, Montessori classes ran alongside the conference so Lytton would have had ample opportunity to observe the children at first hand. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Victor Lytton, ‘Introduction’ to E.T. Bazeley, op. cit., 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. For works around the idea of the progressive school as a community see in particular J.H. Simpson, *Sane Schooling. A Record and Criticism of School Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936) and Harriet Finlay-Johnson, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1911). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Victor Lytton, ‘Introduction’ to E.T. Bazeley, op. cit., 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See Homer Lane, *Talks to Parents and Teachers* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. These include both *Old Treasure: A Bible Anthology* (London: G, Allen & Unwin, 1934) but also a work within the archive intended for private circulation ‘to such friends as are capable of understanding its contents’, *Faith Abounding: New Treasure regarding the Christian Faith revealed in the Writings of St. Paul*. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Lytton, *New Treasure: A Study of the Psychology of Love* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1934) pp. 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Robert R. Rusk, *The Philosophical Bases of Education, 3rd impression* (London: University of London Press, 1929), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. This phrase comes from ‘East Coker’, the second of the *Four Quartets*. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. H.G. Stead, *Full Statute: Education and Tomorrow* (London: J. Nisbet, 1936), 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid, italics in original. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. By 1908 Edmond Holmes had written and published *The Creed of Buddha* (London: Bodley Head, 1908) which represented his interpretation of Buddha’s creed and which he offered up as a viable alternative to prevailing Christianity especially as it allowed for the development of self-realization. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. See in particular Susan Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1933) and *The Intellectual Growth of Young Children* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. R.J.W. Selleck, op. cit., 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Victor Lytton, op. cit., 1934, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. A.S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Education* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Victor Lytton, op., cit., 1930, 104, italics added. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Victor Lytton, Ibid., 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See Edmond Holmes *The Creed of Christ* (London: John Lane, 1905) which argued that the original message of Christ had been distorted over time which had important repercussions for contemporary schooling in which these distortions became reproduced. Most obviously this was in an externalizing of human behaviour. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Victor Lytton, Ibid, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Such an analogy was also made by A.S. Neill who in *A Dominie’s Log* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1916) was refer to the ‘Christ like experiment of Homer Lane’. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Edmond Holmes, op. cit., 1911, v. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. John Howlett, op. cit., 2016, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. See John Howlett, *Edmond Holmes and Progressive Education* (London: Routledge, 2016), 82-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist* (London: Dover Publications, 2004), 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Victor Lytton, op. cit., 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. A.S. Neill, *Freedom-Not License!* (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1966), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Victor Lytton, op., cit. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Victor Lytton, op., cit., 1930, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ibid 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibid 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Victor Lytton, 1914, op., cit., 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Victor Lytton, 1930, op., cit. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Ibid, 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. See David Wills, ‘The Legacy of Homer Lane’ in *Anarchy 39* (May 1964), 135-143 as well as Ronald Swartz, *From Socrates to Summerhill and Beyond. Towards a Philosophy of Education for Personal Responsibility* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2016), 215-224. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. See Victor Lytton, *Pundits and Elephants: Being the Experiences of Five Years as Governor of an Indian Province*, (London: Peter Davies, 1942), 175-177. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. The Caldecott Community was founded in London, 1911 by Leila Rendel and was designed as a therapeutic environment for troubled children. From 1917, it existed within a number of rural settings. It was named in honour of the artist Randolph Caldecott whose illustrations adorned the school’s walls. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. As an illustration of this, the godfather to Victor’s eldest child Antony was Edward VII whilst Victor’s own godmother had been Queen Victoria. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Letter from Delia Peel, Lady-in-Waiting, to Victor Lytton, March 28th, 1946, Knebworth House Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Letter from Laurence Oliver to Victor Lytton, March 9th, 1946, Knebworth House Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Letter from Leila Rendal to Victor Lytton January 18th, 1946, Knebworth House Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See Lytton, op., cit. 1935, 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Knebworth Camping Club Constitution, Knebworth House Archive Box, LH40. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See Robert Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) and John Howlett, *Progressive Education: A Critical Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), pp. 141-176 for more on this. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. James Lees-Milne, diary entry for 13th June, 1942 published in *Diaries, 1942-1954* (London: John Murray, 2007), [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Jason Tomes ‘Lytton, Victor Alexnder George Robert Bulwer-, second earl of Lytton’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Available at htps://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10/1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32169?rskey=bj3f3q&result=18 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Lyndsey Jenkins, *Lady Constance Lytton: Aristocrat, Suffragette, Martyr* (Silvertail Books, 2018), 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)