

# **The Liberal Playground: Susan Isaacs, Psychoanalysis and Progressive Education in the Interwar Era**

**Shaul Bar-Haim,**

Birkbeck, University of London, UK

## **Abstract**

The Cambridge Malting House serves here as a case-study for investigating the tensions within 1920s liberal elites between their desire to abandon some Victorian and Edwardian sets of values in favour of more democratic ones, and at the same time their insistence on preserving themselves as an integral part of the English upper class. Susan Isaacs, the manager of the Malting, provided the parents – some of whom belonged to the most famous

scientists and intellectuals of their age – with an opportunity to fulfil their ‘fantasy’ of bringing up children in total freedom. In retrospect, however, she deeply criticized these milieus for not fully understanding the real socio-cultural implications of their ideological decision to make independence and freedom the core values in their children's education. Thus, 1920s progressive education is a paradigmatic case study of the cultural and ideological inner contradictions within liberal thought in the interwar era. The article also shows how psychoanalysis – which attracted many progressive educators – played a crucial role in providing liberals of all sorts with a new language to articulate their political visions, but at the same time, explored the limits of the liberal discourse as a whole.

### **Keywords**

Susan Isaacs, liberalism, Malting House, progressive education, psychoanalysis

### **Author biography**

Shaul Bar-Haim is a Lecture in Psycho-Social Studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. He is currently working on a monograph on the role of the British psychoanalytical movement in creating a maternalist culture in the age of the welfare state. His research has already been published in journals such as *Psychoanalysis and History*, and the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*. He is also the Book Reviews Editor of *Psychoanalysis and History*.

### **Corresponding author:**

Shaul Bar-Haim, The Department of Sociology, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ..

Email: shaulbarhaim@hotmail.com

Since the eighteenth century, European educationalists tried to develop a more child-centred approach: one that would create a very different – and much less authoritarian – model from what Durkheim described as ‘methodological socialization of the young generation’ (Durkheim, 1956: 71). Moreover, as one historian pointed out, by the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘something loosely called progressive education, especially its more child-centred aspects, became part of a larger revolt against the formalism of the schools and an assault on tradition’ (Reese, 2001:1). In Britain, it was particularly after the First World War, which many saw as a catastrophic testament to the total failure of the European education system, that some fruitful experiments in so-called ‘progressive education’ took place. This article focuses on one of the main case studies in interwar progressive education in Britain, the Cambridge Malting House (hereafter MH), led by the speculator in metals and educator Geoffrey Pyke (1894-1948), and the educator and psychoanalyst Susan Isaacs (1885-1948). It is mainly the latter who stands at the centre of this current study. The MH was one of the most famous experiments in the history of progressive education, and Isaacs’s writings on it made her one of the most influential educationalists in twentieth-century Britain. As Adrian Wooldridge (1994: 121) points out, Isaacs believed that children ‘know less than adults and have less developed minds than adults; but they do not understand the world in fundamentally different ways from adults’. Therefore, she allowed the children in her School almost total freedom in exploring the world according to their own personal inclinations, with minimal intervention from the adult world.

Even though the literature on Isaacs and the MH is relatively wide (Graham, 2009; Cameron, 2006; Thomson, 2006: 109-36; Sayers, 2001; Drummond, 2000; Hall, 2000; Van der Eyken and Turner, 1969:15-67; Gardner, 1969), many aspects of her life and work are

still overlooked. One of them is her critique of interwar liberal circles – the very people that she knew so well, mainly through their children who came to the MH. Isaacs's experience with these parents and children, and her growing interest in psychoanalysis and the child's unconscious, led her to object to certain crucial aspects of the liberal discourse of progressive education. In particular, she felt that the way some 'progressives' thought of the notion of 'freedom' was misleading when applied to the education of young children. At the same time, from the psychoanalytic perspective – which Isaacs became more and more committed to – she could no longer see how providing young children a total freedom could serve as a resolution to problems of authority and freedom. Thus, a close reading of Isaacs will show that one of the most notable figures in the history of progressive education was in fact also one of its main critics. This critique was much more than an argument on the right way to educate young children: it was an attack on some utopian dimensions of liberal thought.

### **Being an English liberal: Ideology or identity?**

Instead of defining liberalism as a homogenous ideological model, I consider it here as what Michael Freeden called the 'semantic field in which the political understandings of people who regard themselves as liberals, or whom others regard as liberals, may be investigated' (Freeden, 2005: 20).<sup>1</sup> In other words, rather than a fixed set of political values, liberalism – like any ideology – is considered by Freeden as historical and dynamic. The major turning point for our purposes in the history of liberalism is the emergence of 'new liberalism' in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. This liberal strand remained influential far beyond this period. As Freeden argues, the history of new liberalism can tell us a great deal about what happened in Britain 'between the landmarks of [Mill's] "On Liberty" and the "Beveridge Report"' (1986: 2).<sup>2</sup> The great power of 'new liberalism' was its ideological flexibility and its

willingness to adapt classical liberal values to the massive social changes of the early twentieth century. This is why ‘from the vantage point of the modern British welfare state it is the new liberalism of the turn of the century which appears to have gained the upper hand over its rival ideologies, conservatism and socialism’(Freeden, 2005: 1). Indeed, many late nineteenth-century and early twentieth century liberal thinkers attempted to integrate some liberal values, such as freedom, individualism, and a deep ambivalence towards the very concept of the ‘state’ itself (Stapleton, 1999a) , with some new social ‘welfarist’ inclinations.<sup>3</sup>

This relative ideological flexibility allowed new liberals to acknowledge – as Gal Gerson (2004: 4) pointed out – that ‘under complex industrial conditions, individuals have to be similarly sheltered from the ebb and flow of the capricious market’. However, the ideological pragmatism and political flexibility which stands at the centre of liberal thought since the occurrence of ‘new liberalism’ makes it difficult to define what was a (new) liberal way of thinking for contemporaries in the interwar era. By that time, there were so many forms of liberalism that Stapleton suggests that rather than one ideological movement we better describe these many political variants as ‘sensibilities [which] articulating a style of political action appropriate to the English political world they characterized’ (Stapleton, 199b: 273). Indeed, with the emergence of European fascism and Soviet communism, some intellectuals such as G. M. Trevelyan and Ernest Barker, argued that in contrast to authoritarian ideologies, the appeal of liberalism is its flexibility, pragmatism, and suspicion of state intervention. As the Anglophile, Vienna-born economist, Friedrich Hayek described it, the ‘English’ has ‘tolerance of the different and queer, respect for custom and tradition, and a healthy suspicion of power and authority’ (quoted in *ibid.*: 286). By the 1930s, liberalism became a national character, perceived by many as specifically tailored to the psychology of the ‘English’.<sup>4</sup> Thus, being a ‘liberal’ in the interwar period was very often a label, mainly

useful in designating a vague political orientation, cultural identity, or imaginary national character rather than a coherent ideology or a specific political credo. In that sense, progressive education was indeed a liberal project, i.e., an umbrella term for an educational movement with a wide range of contradictory political aims, carried out by persons from different socio-cultural orientations of the liberal spectrum.<sup>5</sup>

The young Isaacs was an enthusiastic socialist, but from the 1920s she was living and working within a cultural liberal environment, which was not necessarily committed to her political priorities. Together with the founder of the MH, Geoffrey Pyke, she attempted to inculcate liberal freedom from a very early age. Thus, she helped some parents to fill their self-understanding as liberals with real content in a major domain of their everyday lives, i.e., the education of their young children. However, Isaacs was also the first to recognize that this was in many respects a phantasy, and as such, it was about some political promises which were impossible to fulfil. Thus, studying the MH and its aftermath would enable us to see the ways in which the reconsideration of childhood and education became an ideological site of inner contradictions within this liberal semantic field, with all its very different 'sensibilities'. Psychoanalysis played a central role in this field because it provided a new language for bringing in more clearly the child's 'voice', and thus potentially to help conducting a liberal-democratic educational methods from a very early age. However, at the same time, psychoanalysis helped Isaacs to understand the limitations of this educational experiment because it revealed the unconscious of the child as too complex and unwilling to cooperate against the authority of the adults. In contrary to her initial intentions, Isaacs had to recognize the incapacity of children to accept the invitation to conduct radical freedom offered them by their parents and teachers.

## **Susan Isaacs and the educational psychology movement in Britain between the wars**

Susan Sutherland Isaacs was born in Bolton in 1885, the seventh of eight children.<sup>6</sup> Her mother died when she was six, and she had a difficult relationship with her father, a journalist and a strict Methodist. Janet Sayers argues that Isaacs's work was very much motivated by her 'concern to enable parents and others better to understand children so as to protect them from the unhappiness she suffered as a child' (Sayers, 2001: 222). From an early age she was a non-conformist, and developed – in defiance of her background – her own atheist and socialist views. In 1908 she began studying for a Certificate in the Teaching of Young Children in Manchester, and a year later, at the suggestion of her teachers, she undertook a full honours degree course in philosophy. She earned the degree from Manchester University in 1912. Isaacs was a lecturer in psychology at Darlington Training College and in logic at Manchester University, before moving to London because of her marriage to Charles Henry Brierley. In London, she became a tutor at the Workers' Educational Association, and in 1916 she became a tutor in psychology at the University of London.

In 1922 she divorced Brierley and married Nathan Isaacs, a metal merchant with a great interest in philosophy and education. He supported Isaacs greatly in her educational and academic work, and was very involved in running the MH. In 1921 she became an associate member of the then new British Psycho-Analytic Society, and in 1923 she became a full member. Between 1924 and 1927, Isaacs served as the first manager of the progressive MH School in Cambridge. In 1933, Isaacs was appointed the first Head of the Child Development at the Institute of Education at the University of London. She was also a popular respondent in journals such as the *Nursery World*, where she served as an Agony Aunt. From the late

1920s, Isaacs was known as one of Melanie Klein's major adherents and one of Klein's main representatives in the so-called Controversial Discussions.<sup>7</sup> She died in London in 1948.

From the early 1920s, Isaacs was part of a wider group of educationalists, psychologists and psychoanalysts who attempted to promote a child-centred education, guided by the principles of the upcoming discipline of 'educational psychology', i.e., 'the application to educational practice of psychological principles and findings'(Wooldridge, 1994: 422).<sup>8</sup> Among this group were Cyril Burt (1883-1971), C. W. Valentine (1879-1964), and Thomas Percy Nunn (1870-1944), to mention just a few.<sup>9</sup> They thought that integration between education and psychology was a necessary step towards a liberal reform in Britain's education system. Their focus was on education, but as Hendrick has pointed out, they believed that psychology was a necessary discipline if they wished to '[bring] to education a "scientific" vocabulary' (1994: 152). By discussing central themes of child-centred education in popular newspapers, women's magazines and guide books, as well as in some new training programs for teachers and educators, these experts explicitly aimed to bring their new approaches to the wider public. Although their direct influence on parents and teachers was limited to some very specific middle-class circles, their importance was in bringing alternative approaches to the educational domain, which they thought had been hitherto dominated by severely authoritarian methods (Hendrick, 1997: 77; Urwin and Sharland, 1992).<sup>10</sup>

Apart from progressive education, interwar educational psychologists were interested in wide range of topics such as mental measurement, intelligence tests, and child-guidance. Thus, for example, she and some of her colleagues attempted to bring new psychologically



based arguments against corporal punishment, which was very popular as an educational tool in both the private and the public spheres.<sup>11</sup> It is hard to estimate the success of this campaign, but the emergence of new psychological justifications against beating children as a way of punishing them can tell us something about the new ways in which childhood was perceived in some middle-class circles during the interwar period. In the name of new educational values, these educationalists tried to encourage children to be independent, non-conformist and self-governing. According to this way of thinking, corporal punishment was a humiliating act that discouraged the child from thinking of himself as an independent person, with an independent free will.<sup>12</sup> This subject emerged very clearly in Isaacs' advice to parents, which she published between 1929 and 1936 under the penname Ursula Wise. Thus, for example, in one of her replies to a mother who consulted her regarding corporal punishment she said:

I really do not understand what you mean when you say, 'I want her to grow up knowing that 'When I say "Yes" I mean it, and "No", I mean "No", and that's the end of it.' Surely you want her to grow up able to say 'Yes' and 'No' for herself – able to take her place in the social world as an independent moral being, not as someone whose simple guide is docility to her mother? (Isaacs, 1968: 40-1)

For Isaacs, obedience was not an educational value in its own right. On the contrary, obedience stood in contradiction to some new notions that were now much more important for interwar educational psychologists, especially the new injunction to be an 'independent moral being'. Corporal punishment, Isaacs thought, could make a child obedient only because

the child was afraid of being beaten, but could not contribute anything to his or her free thinking and moral development.<sup>13</sup>

Not only did Isaacs reject corporal punishment as an educational tool, but she also rejected the mother's attempt to speak for her child and to claim that she knew better than him or her how it felt to be smacked.<sup>14</sup> Isaacs believed that there was no way of knowing the child other than to listen to what he or she had to say for themselves. Indeed, the child's voice became one of the core values of progressive education, and Isaacs became a prominent representative of the demand to listen to this voice. Indeed, her experience at MH was a formative one in making her so attuned to children's need to be heard.

### **The short history of English 'progressive' history**

The term 'progressive education' was coined in the 1960s and 1970s by sociologists of education, and was applied retrospectively on the interwar period by historians of the movement. What we describe today as 'progressive education' was called by contemporaries 'new education' (Brehony, 2001: 415). One may argue that there was a historical sense of using retrospectively this term in the American case, where there was a strong and clearly identified political 'progressive' movement between the 1890s and the 1920s. In Britain, however, the term 'progressive' was an indication for, and association with, an 'active citizenship' that went far beyond known distinctions of Left and Right. As Robinson has shown recently, since late nineteenth-century, 'the seemingly natural and eternal division between the "progressive and conservative elements" of human society was no longer reflected in the political system. Both factions vigorously contested their right to inherit the mantle of the "Party of Progress"' (Robinson, 2015: 618). Thus, between the 1890s to the late

1930s, the ‘progressive’ cause was part of a wider belief in modernisation and democratisation of the public sphere, which many political forces, from the socialist left to the conservative right attempted to shape according to their own moral and social priorities. Therefore, even though many of the leading interwar educationalists surely thought of themselves as ‘progressive’, it would be historically inaccurate to relate them into a much wider ‘progressive’ political movement. A better definition might be a ‘child-centred education’ which Brehony (2000: 97) suggested as a synonym for progressive education.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, for purposes of clarity, I will still use ‘progressive education’ in this article: challenging the usage of the term – which is now a standard term in any modern historiography of education – in the context of interwar Britain is not one of my aims.

Progressive methods had been widely practiced in British schools since the second half of the nineteenth century. Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852), the founder of the Kindergarten movement in Europe and one of the leading figures in nineteenth-century education, was particularly popular in some nineteenth-century educational circles in Britain (Steedman, 1985; see also Nawrotzki, 2006 for the neo- Fröbelian movement in the interwar period and the 1940s). The Fröbelian methods were mainly popular in Bradford, Birmingham and Manchester (Wooldridge, 1994: 24-5), where Susan Isaacs trained as a teacher of young children, and where she was indeed very impressed by the Fröbelian way of thinking. Another figure who inspired many progressive educationalists, including Isaacs, was Maria Montessori, because her ‘approach presented itself as offering an ideologically progressive freedom, but one that did not degenerate into socially unacceptable disorder’ (Thomson, 2006: 122; See also Babini, 2000; Lee, 2000).

The interwar years were a period of flourishing for progressive education in Britain (see Hustak, 2013; Thomson, 2006: 109-39; Jenkins, 2000; Lawson and Silver, 1973: 397-401; Selleck, 1972; see also Brehony, 2001, for a fine historiographical review). The demand for a radical revision of 'authoritarian' tendencies of parents and teachers was a crucial element in the flourishing of 'educational psychology'. Some of these educationalists were also very much influenced by psychoanalysis, which was perceived as a promise for a totally new approach to the individual freedom of the child (Jenkins, 2000: 141). Several progressive schools besides the MH were established throughout the 1920s, most notably the Beacon Hill School, founded by Bertrand and Dora Russell, and Summerhill School, founded by A. S. Neill. Some older independent schools such as Bedales, King Alfred, and Bryanston, became oriented with progressive education after adopting in the 1920s the Dalton Plan, created by the American educator, Helen Parkhurst (1887-1973). The Dalton Plan particularly emphasized the importance of providing the child with tools for independent learning and self-management (Lee, 2000).<sup>16</sup>

### **The Malting House School**

The MH was an experimental school, which attempted to educate children without forcing any authority on them in most aspects of their life. Its founder Geoffrey Pyke, was traumatized by his own experience with English educational institutions, and was looking for a child-centred kindergarten for his three-year-old son, David. When he realized that there is no such progressive nursery, he decided to establish one. As he was considerably influenced by psychoanalytic theory, he saw Susan Isaacs as the natural choice for running the House.<sup>17</sup>

As Laura Cameron (2006) has shown, Pyke's educational thought deserves more attention than it received by historians of education, who tend to attribute the theoretical

thinking behind the MH solely to Isaacs. He was not only the person who initiated the establishment of the MH, but an original thinker about the historical role of education in the modern world, as can be learnt from some of his unpublished work. Pyke thought that the main lesson from the Oedipus Complex is the nature of generational rivalry between children and their parents, and especially fathers and sons. The main reason why we educate our children, he thought, is an existential fear of them, which make us want even more to know them and to make them similar to us: 'the better we know our children the better we can defend ourselves' (Pyke, quoted in Cameron, 2006: 862). Science was also the main cause for his belief in non-authoritative education, which for him was the best way for developing children's curiosity. The goal of the MH, he believed, was 'to eliminate the arbitrary authority of the pedagogue and to substitute for it the attitude of the co-investigator ('Let's find out' and not on any verbal information is the answer given to most questions)' (ibid.: 867). Creating young 'child-scientists' was a common vision for Isaacs and Pyke. However, their emphases were very different. Pyke's unpublished writings tell us that he 'sought to help mould an aggressively intelligent race that would be able to survive the great changes which he expected science to create in our environment' (ibid.: 868). Isaacs, on the other hand, was much more interested in studying children's inner world, and by that, creating new centre-child methods for bringing them up.

In 1927 she and her husband, Nathan, decided to leave the House after some disagreements had arisen between Pyke and her. The tension could also be the consequence of an unsuccessful extramarital affair between the two, as well as another one between Nathan and Evelyn Lawrence – later to become husband and wife after Susan's death (Graham, 2009). In 1928, Pyke got into financial difficulties, after losing £73,000 in a bad deal, and the future of the House became unclear. A last effort by several scholars and

intellectuals from Cambridge and elsewhere, such as A.G. Tansley and Jean Piaget to save the MH proved to be unsuccessful. In 1929 it was closed down. The School accommodated, over the years, children between the ages of two years and seven months and eight years and six months. It started as a day school, but after a year it became a boarding school as well, and by the third year, around a third of the children were living at the school. From the second year, there were also some girls, but always far fewer than boys (Graham, 2009: 110). The children came from wealthy socio-economic backgrounds, and some of their parents were central figures in the intellectual community of Cambridge. Dr Evelyn Lawrence, a psychologist who joined the MH team in 1926 noted, ‘several [children] are the children of dons and all are above average in intelligence’ (Lawrence, 1949: 2).<sup>18</sup> For example, among these children were the daughter of Edgar Adrian, a neurophysiologist who won the Nobel Prize in 1932, the grandson of the nuclear physicist Lord Rutherford, who won the Nobel Prize in 1908, and the two sons of the philosopher G. E. Moore.<sup>19</sup> Moore’s participation in this project is particularly interesting, as he was not only one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, but also can be considered one of the main representatives of the liberal elite in Britain before and after the First World War.<sup>20</sup> He was also very much identified with the Bloomsbury Group, and his philosophical ideas played a central role in the intellectual development of its members.<sup>21</sup> He was a major contributor to the creation of a new philosophical set of ideas, which was warmly adopted by the Bloomsbury milieu.

Raymond Williams claimed that the members of the Bloomsbury Group ‘were a true fraction of the existing English upper class. They were at once against its dominant ideas and values and still willingly, in all immediate ways, part of it’ (Williams, 2001: 236). Bloomsbury members, he claimed, were a new type of an ‘intellectual aristocracy’ (ibid.: 240) and, like their predecessors, they were part of an older liberal tradition and liberal

ideology (or ‘bourgeois enlightenment’, to use Williams’ words): ‘It was against cant, superstition, hypocrisy, pretension and public show. It was also against ignorance, poverty, sexual and racial discrimination, militarism and imperialism. But it was against all these things in a specific moment of the development of liberal thought’ (ibid.: 244).

A major example of a Bloomsbury scholar – and an enthusiastic reader of Freud – is John Maynard Keynes, who showed his commitment to his social affiliation by saying:

When it comes to the class struggle as such, my local and personal patriotisms, like those of every one else, except certain unpleasant zealous ones, are attached to my own surroundings. I can be influenced by what seems to me to be justice and good sense; but the *class* war will find me on the side of the educated *bourgeoisie*. (Keynes, 1972[1925]: 297)<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, it is on this type of Cambridge ‘educated *bourgeoisie*’ that Susan Isaacs’s work at the MH School can shed light. The children were free to decide whether and what to learn and how to do it, and the team was there to observe the children with minimum intervention. Isaacs’s guiding principle was to avoid playing any authoritative role in the children’s educational process. As the influential psychoanalyst John Rickman – who knew Isaacs in Cambridge – explained many years later, Isaacs did not perceive the child as a ‘lump of wax to be moulded but [as] a research worker in need of material and equipment’. The teachers were ‘both the children’s “lab-boys”, aiding them when asked, and their observers whose prime duty was to make their records unobtrusively without interference with the real work of the place—the pupils’ own discoveries and experiences’ (Rickman, 1950: 280).

Thus, at the MH, 'learning by experience' replaced traditional authoritarian punishment, and the team forced children to comply only when the child could risk harming themselves or others. Rather than using old authoritarian methods, the team aimed to be completely honest with the children, taking full seriously all their questions and encouraging them to explore their own interests by themselves. But learning by experience also included letting 'them find out, for instance, what it feels like to hit and be hit, to have one's beautiful tower knocked down by someone else who is careless or angry, or to suffer the anger of the owner of the tower if one knocks his down' (Isaacs, 1930: 29).

The children's 'needs', too, were not determined only by their carers or teachers: the children themselves took part in running every aspect of their lives. Thus, for instance, the children were in charge of many necessary tasks in the house, like deciding on weekly menus for the kitchen and getting in touch with suppliers; but in some other cases, when the children forgot to order their food from the kitchen, as they did every week, they were compelled to eat only apples and oranges for the whole week. The junior housekeeper, Miss Mary Ogilvie, felt that this experiment 'went on far too long'. She also added: 'I came to The Malting House having worked with boys in the East End of London, and while I did not possess all the theoretical knowledge that the staff of The Malting House had, I had lots of practical experience of dealing with children' (Van der Eyken and Turner, 1969: 38).

Writing was a skill that many children willingly acquired, because they understood that it was vital for being more involved in managing the house. For Isaacs, however, reading and writing was not the most important part of the education of the child:



[I]t is much simpler to teach them reading and writing, even by modern individual methods, to tell them stories, or even to teach them rhythmic movement, than it is to go with them to see a bridge being built or a road being mended, to trace the course of the telephone wires or water-pipes, or to wait patiently while they experiment with water or gas or fire or cooking things.

(see Isaacs, 1930: 19-20)

It was the child herself, then, who needed to follow her own natural tendencies when choosing her study interests. Nathan Isaacs claimed that ‘most normal children... show a lively, inquiring curiosity in the world around them, and want to know how things work, what they are, how they are made’ (quoted in Isaacs, 1930: 351). Thus, children's natural curiosity was equal to the inclinations of the scientist: education means allowing their scientific tendencies to flourish. Therefore, encouraging children to explore their ‘biological interests’, i.e., plants, flowers, and animals was a first priority in the House (ibid.: 171-213). Exploring nature perceived as an opportunity to disenchant the mystery behind the most difficult existential questions of the child, and to turn them into a scientific interest:

The rabbit had died in the night. Dan found it and said: ‘It's dead – its tummy does not move up and down now’. Paul said, ‘my daddy says that if we put it into water, it will get alive again’. Mrs I. said, ‘Shall we do so and see?’

(Isaacs, 1930: 182)

The teacher's role was not so much to impart an allegedly necessary knowledge to the children, but more to make sure that the children's 'ideas of values shall be their own' (Lawrence, 1949: 4). Exploring the conditions of a dead rabbit was not something to be learnt by books, but something to be explored by a personal experience, as if this was the first time such thing happened. As Nathan Isaacs described it, '[reality would teach the child] "its own discipline, its own morality, which are the method, temper and spirit of science"' (quoted in Cameron, 2006: 861).

The child, however, had not only to explore nature but also his or her own core of individuality, and here again the teacher or guide was only there to encourage her to do so. The search for the child's own way, however, was not limited to teaching, but also to the way the children were encouraged to develop a sense of privacy and to respect other children's privacy. Thus, for example, each child had his 'bed-sittingroom':

These rooms are charming. Each is painted in some bright colour, and each has a gas fire and a settee bed, gay curtains and cushions, and low tables and cupboards. In its own room the child is absolute master. The doors will lock from the inside, and no one is allowed to enter without knocking. (Lawrence, 1949: 3)

We can see how the child at the MH was entitled to enjoy the basic rights of the 'adult-citizen' in a liberal society: being the 'absolute master' in his own room. Although it was a school, and therefore a public domain, it was still important to Pyke and Isaacs to keep the

liberal separation between the 'private' and the 'public' within the House, and to provide the children a bit of both.

Lawrence draws a clear distinction between the common 'old disciplinary methods', where 'the child was forced to wear a mask of seemliness and respectability in the presence of grown-ups, and behind that mask his own inner life bubbled unseen', and the MH, where 'the children's crudities, the disorder of their emotions, their savagery even, are allowed to show' (Lawrence, 1949.: 4). It is because children are *not* 'little angels'(ibid.: 5), as their parents tend to think, that it was so crucial for Isaacs and her team to know the children's true feelings, tendencies and interests. But according to the educational philosophy of the House, in order to know children as they really are, one must also let their anti-social tendencies and their internal destructive inclinations to find their expression.

Therefore, at the MH, the child's freedom to be 'herself' was respected even when 'this freedom [entailed] a certain amount of unpleasantness for the grown-ups' (Lawrence, 1949) Lawrence believed that at the MH, 'the danger of driving strong emotions underground, to work havoc in the unconscious, is avoided. The open expression of sexual interests is allowed, but where possible they are canalized by being turned into scientific channels' (ibid.). According to Isaacs and her team, the child's hidden interest in sexuality could be dangerous only if he or she feels that they are deprived of crucial knowledge by an authoritarian parental figure: this was true for any sort of knowledge, but even more so for sexual matters. Therefore, Isaacs and her team wanted to reduce any authoritarian influence on the child's mind to a minimum, thereby allowing the child to acquire any knowledge he or she wished to gain. If nothing was hidden from children and there was no authority above

them to prevent them from exploring anything they wanted, there was no reason that the unconscious would be dangerous at all.

Isaacs and her team did their best to spare the child the harm of negotiating his or her desires with some oppressive ‘superegoistic’ figures. They particularly tried to save the child from the frustration children can feel if they are forced to obey other quasi-parental authorities. In *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, Isaacs described how the children ‘were never asked “to obey” but always to *do this*, or *not to do that*’ (Isaacs, 1930: 27). Whenever authority had to be enforced, the team tried to ‘persuade’ the children to do as they were told, and not just force them to do so. This description was also confirmed by Lawrence, who said that at the MH ‘discipline is very free. There is no punishment, and little admonition. Prohibitions, when unavoidable, are of particular acts, not of whole classes of conduct’ (Lawrence, 1949: 4).

Yet one may ask whether it is possible to avoid all power relations between the child and the grown-ups? Lawrence herself was aware of the fact that ‘however much [the educator] may want his human plants to flower freely’, he still aims to influence the development of the child in one way or another, and therefore must ‘decide what kind of people he would like to produce’ (Lawrence, 1949: 2). According to Lawrence,

The kind of people that the promoters of this school want to produce will have a scientific attitude to life. They must have intellectual curiosity and vigour, and be averse to taking their opinions ready-made. They must also be as

physically healthy as is possible. I think this is as far as Dr. Isaacs would go in particularisation. (Lawrence, 1949: 2)

We can see that Lawrence had a very specific description of the MH's 'ideal' child. As noted before, the child at the MH was encouraged to develop his inner world according to liberal core values such as authenticity and independence. The child was also entitled to enjoy some liberal privileges, such as freedom of thought and the right to privacy (being the master in his or her own room). But from Lawrence's description we can also learn about the criteria for choosing the MH children: the child was required to have a very specific personality, namely a 'scientific attitude to life', and also needed to be 'as physically healthy as is possible'. Indeed, we know that although many of the children had some extreme emotional and behavioural problems, they were nonetheless highly intelligent. Lawrence, who had some qualifications in psychological testing, assessed the children's intelligence, and found that they were, on average, in the top 5% of the population (Graham, 2009: 111). We can also assume that at least some of the children were very capable of physical activity (outdoors activity was one of the most important principles for Isaacs, and for some of these activities the child had to be physically fit).<sup>23</sup> One may argue that Lawrence – on behalf of Isaacs – suggested very exclusive criteria, and surely not all children in 1920s Britain had even the potential to fit this project. Intelligence tests, for instance, had class bias built into them.<sup>24</sup> In that case, it is doubtful that the children in the East End – where the housekeeper, Miss Mary Ogilvie, used to work before coming to Cambridge – could have been accepted into the MH. These criteria are to some extent a reflection of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century conservative, liberal, and 'new-liberal' views of the lower-classes, and especially the underclasses (or the so-called residuum), as ill-fitted mentally and physically to

fully engage with the challenges of democratic citizenship (Welshman, 2006:1-20; Harris, 1995, Pick, 1989; Stedman Jones, 1971). As not all people were perceived as capable of conducting virtue citizenship and to benefit from its potential freedom, so not all children could be educated for that.

As Julia Stapleton (1999a: 259) has pointed out, ‘British intelligentsia visibly fractured after the First World War’, first of all by rejecting ‘the educational and material privileges which had spawned an intellectual elite in previous decades’. But some Victorian tendencies continued, especially in the educational field. One may find in the psycho-medical profile of the MH’s children an echo to Isaacs’s support of intelligence tests, and her views about the importance of heredity to child’s development (Graham, 2009: 316). It can also tell us something about the survival of some late Victorian perceptions also in the post-WWI era: ‘while a culture of the left may have been strong at a popular level, it famously yielded to “apostasy” in a number of high-profile elite case’ (ibid.).

In the case of the MH, it is true that many of the children had some severe behavioural problems, and Isaacs was aware of this. When one person in Cambridge said that ‘she had taken the ten most difficult children in Cambridge and turned them into ten lambs’, she thought that ‘this was no little exaggeration in both directions. Not more than five of the children were really difficult, and as the records plainly show, they were not turned into “lambs”’ (Isaacs, 1933: 22).<sup>25</sup> But while in other places some of these children would have been considered as having severe anti-social tendencies and treated accordingly by strict authoritarian methods of education, at the MH authority itself was perceived as an obstacle for these children. Isaacs and her team saw their challenge as helping these children channel their aggression into creativity.

## **The Malting House as a liberal lab**

Isaacs and Pyke thought of their work not only as an educational mission but also as a research project. They had some very ambitious plans of turning the MH into a research centre of progressive education. Before going bankrupt, Pyke made a great effort at bringing professional researchers to observe the children of the MH from a scientific point of view. Indeed, both Isaacs and Pyke were in touch with many leading educational psychologists and psychoanalysts in Britain and abroad, and some of them came to visit the House.

One of the prominent figures who visited the House in 1927 was the influential Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, of whom Isaacs was very critical (Isaacs, 1930: 44; for her critique see, Isaacs, 1929a). Another visitor was Melanie Klein, who came from Berlin in 1925 to give a series of lectures on child psychoanalysis in London, and was taken by her hosts to visit the MH. This was the first time she met Isaacs, and both women were very impressed by each other (see Grosskurth, 1995: 138). Although Klein appreciated what she saw, she still thought that Isaacs and her team were too tolerant of aggressive behaviour, which created unnecessary pain for some of the children and feelings of guilt in the offenders. Isaacs accepted this critique, and decided to exercise some discipline in cases of aggressive behaviour (Graham, 2009: 120). Pyke was also impressed by Klein, and for a while she also analysed his son, David, who later argued that he was Klein's first child analysed in England (Cameron: 2006: 362).

Another visitor was the psychoanalyst, James Strachey.<sup>26</sup> He also noticed the aggression and violence among some of the children, and was much less impressed than

Klein about the House. In a letter from 17 February, 1925, he wrote to his wife, Alix (whose nephew, Tony, was one the children in the House):

I must say I can't make out the point of it. [...] [All] that appears to happen is that they're 'allowed to do whatever they like' [...]. There's one particular boy (age 5) who domineers, and bullies the whole set. His chief enjoyment is spitting. He spat one morning onto Mrs Isaacs's face. So she said: 'I shall not play with you, Philip', – for Philip is typically his name – 'until you have wiped my face'. As Philip didn't want Mrs Isaacs to play with him, that lady was obliged to go about the whole morning with the crachat upon her. Immediately Tony appeared Philip spat at him, and in general cowed and terrified him as had never happened to him before. That may be a good thing; but it doesn't precisely seem to be the absence of all repressive influences. (Meisel and Kendrick, 1986: 205)

It should not be a surprise that Freud's English translator did not like this new experiment. Firstly, Strachey disliked Isaacs personally, as the correspondence with Alix shows (ibid.: 270, 280-81). Secondly, Isaacs's understanding of repression was not a very Freudian one. According to Freud, there is no way of avoiding the intergenerational confrontation, there is no way to avoid authority, and there is no way to avoid the frustration of confronting authoritarian figures. It is true that what Lawrence described as their effort at 'canalizing [the] sexual interests [of the children] into scientific channels' echoes Freud's notion of sublimation. But according to Freud, sublimation can be achieved only by overcoming the Oedipus complex. That is to say that sublimation is the result of the child's confrontation



with sexual knowledge as essentially 'hidden'. Therefore, for Strachey, Isaacs and her team were in denial regarding children's frustration when dealing with topics such as authority and sexuality. Finally, Strachey's dismissal of the MH experience had something to do also with his elitist-liberal identity. The liberal circles in Cambridge were split in their opinions over Isaacs and her project. On the one hand, the MH was a project of these 1920s liberal milieus: they sent their children to the House, were committed to the project financially and tried to save it when Pyke went bankrupt in 1927, and provided the cultural legitimacy for some of the radical educational experiments of the school. On the other hand, however, not all Cambridge liberals supported Isaacs: the Cambridge Psychoanalytic Group (CPG), for example, of which Strachey was a member, was much more sceptic about her methods.

The CPG was established in 1925 by a group of scholars (with a strong inclination to the natural sciences) who had a deep interest in Freud and psychoanalysis (on CPG see Cameron and Forrester, 2000). They spent a lot of time together and presented papers on psychoanalysis to one another. The group included John Rickman, Arthur Tansley, Harold Jeffreys, Lionel Penrose and Frank Ramsey. Isaacs attended some of the meetings of the CPG, but Strachey was not the only one who did not get on with her: 'Someone referred to the view that boys and girls in other, warmer climates, proved to be ineducable (in the scholastic sense) after puberty and that this was perhaps due to the fullness of their sexual freedom, so the question arose whether the freedom in this school might not have some of the quality of a "pre-genital brothel"' (Rickman, 1950: 281-82). Isaacs never attended this forum again.

In order to understand why the members of the CGP were so dismissive of her work, we have to look at their cultural background and at the reasons for their interest in

psychoanalysis. Many of the CGP members had strong connections with the Bloomsbury Group and identified with the Bloomsbury values and lifestyle. James Strachey was perhaps the most committed among them to this ethos, and this was also a main element in the way he read Freud: that is, his understanding of Freud as a liberal thinker. It is not a coincidence that the three main translators of Freud into English – Joan Riviere and James and Alix Strachey – were part and parcel of this very unique ‘hothouse of the avant-garde: Bloomsbury’, to use Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester’s words (Appignanesi and Forrester, 1993: 352). For the Stracheys, psychoanalysis was not only a medical or educational set of ideas, but mainly a cultural *Weltanschauung*. In her study of the Stracheys, Barbara Caine claims that ‘Psychoanalysis brought the Stracheys into close contact with new ways of looking at and understanding sexuality, desire and emotion – but seems to have reinforced their own sense of the importance of reserve and control’. Psychoanalysis helped the Stracheys to preserve a ‘connection with a Victorian and Edwardian cultural heritage’ (Caine, 1998: 165).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, It was this ‘Victorian and Edwardian cultural heritage’ that Isaacs challenged. On the one hand, the MH was part of the ‘experimental psychoanalytic atmosphere that the Cambridge Psychoanalytic Group formed’ (Forrester, 2005: 5). On the other hand, Isaacs was too experimental for many of the liberal psychoanalytically oriented figures of the CGP. She understood some liberal notions in a too literal a way, turning this experiment in free education into a ‘pre-genital brothel’.

For her part, Isaacs was very critical of Cambridge liberalism and of some of the liberal parents of her MH children:

In all the changes that have taken place in educational practice in recent years, in the movement towards what is called ‘freedom’ and ‘self-government’, in spite of all the endless discussions that have centred in the function of authority in education, there still exists much confusion of actual fact and obscuring of exact psychology by the struggle between traditional fears and sentimental liberalism, in other words by political images. (Isaacs, 1927: 116)

This distinction between ‘traditional fears’ and ‘sentimental liberalism’ is particularly interesting for our purposes. It seems that Isaacs was well aware of the division in the liberal community of Cambridge in its approach to the MH between ‘traditionalists’, such as members of the CGP, and those who were misguided by their own false liberal ‘political images’, such as many of the parents of children at the MH. She was particularly critical of the latter, arguing that their understanding of the affinities between ‘freedom’ and ‘education’ is ‘extremely naive and misleading’ (ibid.: 123). In a statement that can be understood also as a critique of some of her own theoretical premises in the early days of the MH itself, she said:

The educational problem is no more one of a utopian non-interference with the child, a belief that if we leave the child alone all will be for the best in this best of possible worlds, than it is one of pulling and pushing an inanimate puppet into our traditional standards [...]. What is needed is, thus, an educational realism that sets aside equally the misleading, however alluring, image of freedom and the cramping bonds of uncritical tradition. (Isaacs, 1927: 123)

Isaacs's critique of the 'misleading image of freedom' is particularly illuminating in the context of progressive education after the First World War. One place where this understanding of freedom can be found is *The New Era* – probably the most influential journal of progressive education in the 1920s (co-edited for a short period by the founder of Summerhill School, A. S. Neill). The growing critique of authoritarianism in British society after the war was a main trigger for a demand of a radical revision of the educational system. As Jenkins points out, the old system was perceived as one that 'fostered aggressive, competitive and materialistic attitudes that ultimately encouraged warfare; thus aspirations for the future depended upon granting children the necessary freedom' (Jenkins, 2000: 140). Therefore, 'the concept of educational freedom adopted in *The New Era* in the early 1920s meant specifically individual freedom, implying release from previous restraints and freedom to develop naturally' (ibid.: 141). To some extent, Isaacs was indeed part of this educational effort. On the other hand, she did criticize, in the late 1920s, the post-First World War generation of psychologists, educationalists and parents who were willing to provide young children with radically much more freedom without necessarily understanding some essential contradictions between the notions of 'freedom' and 'education' as such. Hence her observation that 'educational realism' was what was missing in progressive educational experiments, including her own.

### **Isaacs and the 'liberal-minded educator'**

After leaving the MH in 1927, Isaacs became more engaged with the ongoing activities of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. She also became closer, personally and professionally, to Melanie Klein, who by now had already moved to London permanently. In 1929, Klein and Isaacs co-authored – together with three other child psychoanalysts: Barbara Low, Nina

Searl, and Ella Sharpe – a report for a symposium on ‘education and psychoanalysis’ at the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) Oxford Congress which took place the same year.<sup>28</sup> Their document was divided into two separate sections: ‘The Training of the Child Analyst’ and ‘The Analytic Education of the Pedagogue’. The authors explicitly noted that in this document they were drawing very much ‘upon the intensive experimental work carried out by Mrs. Isaacs for over three years with a group of young children’ (Klein *et al.*, 1929a: 10).<sup>29</sup>

A main goal of the authors was to express their objection to any professional integration of the ‘child psychoanalyst’ and the ‘educator’ into a single person:

The educational and analytic attitudes rule each other out, not only at a given time, but also in relation to a given child on the part of any one person. We do not believe that it is possible to teach a child from Monday to Friday, and analyse him on Saturdays and Sundays. (Klein *et al.*, 1929a: 11; see also Isaacs, 1933: 412, for similar views)

The authors did not think ‘that psycho-analytic theory can have any direct application to the problems of the pedagogue’ (Klein *et al.*, 1929a: 4). Moreover, they believed that the two disciplines have opposite aims and means:

Wherever there is open conflict, [the educator] pulls always on the side of the super-ego and ego, as against the id. If it should appear otherwise, as in some

of the extremer so-called 'free' methods of education, the child is but lost and bewildered. (Klein *et al.*, 1929b: 11)

If at the MH Isaacs tried to avoid any confrontation between the child and 'super-egoistic' authorities, here she took part in a demand that the educator not avoid his or her role as a 'super-egoistic' figure. Furthermore, she and her colleagues maintained that

[all] pedagogical methods have in common certain fundamental characteristics, without which they cannot do their work. No matter how easy, liberal and skilful they may be, they have to represent cultural standards and a stable ideal to the child, and to demand that he accept them ... (Klein *et al.*, 1929b: 8-9).

This statement is particularly interesting, as we know that at the MH, Isaacs tried to refrain from demanding that the child accept 'cultural standards and a stable ideal', represented by the educator. She did not think any more in the widespread tendency in 'many reputable quarters' that 'repression could be lifted by lenient methods of education or as if psycho-analysis justified the complete abnegation of cultural standards' (Klein *et al.*, 1929a: 9). Two years after leaving the MH, Isaacs directly criticized what she and her psychoanalyst colleagues defined as 'the more liberal-minded educator of the present day'. To some extent, however, this was a self-critique: who exactly else could be considered at the time as a 'liberal-minded educator' if not Isaacs herself? Indeed, just at the same year, Isaacs published her guide book for parents, *The Nursery Years: The Mind of the Child from Birth to Six Years* (Isaacs, 1929b), which can be taken as a major example of the liberal-minded way of thinking.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, more ‘liberal-minded’ psycho-educational approaches reached much wider audiences through parent-education, which was now mainly targeted at middle-class parents (Jenkins, 2000: 146). Moreover, educational psychology also gave the tone in the influential child-guidance movement. This was initially a project that attempted to provide solutions to social problems such as delinquency, but became increasingly influential also in helping teachers and parents when dealing with the ‘maladjusted’ child – a relatively new category which crossed all classes and all backgrounds (Stewart, 2013: 8; Hayes, 2007). Again, it was mainly ‘liberal-minded’ educators, who became preoccupied with ‘difficult’ children, and their imaginary contrast – the ‘normal’ and ‘happy’ child. The former provided the normative scale for the latter. Isaacs was very much part of this interwar liberal educational world, and contributed in her way to many of these projects, by publishing professional literature as well as in popular magazines, mentoring and advising colleagues and students, and since 1933 as the Head of the Department of Child Development at The Institute of Education, London.

## **Conclusion**

Isaacs's work in the MH and its aftermath is can tell us a great deal about child-centred education, with all its political and cultural complexity. As we have seen, Isaacs was often perceived by interwar liberals in great suspicious. She was a different character in the interwar educational war, from a different psycho-social background (certainly not a ‘true fraction of the existing English upper class’), and she was a senior woman surrounded by senior men. Finally, not everyone liked the ways in which she played in the 1920s liberal ‘semantic field’ (Freedon, 2005: 20). She tried to reformulate the authoritarian relationships

between the children at the MH and their carers, and thereby to encourage children in a very early age to have freedom and independence from external superegoistic authorities. By doing that, some of her critics thought, she was taking liberal ideals too literally – one may even say, too dogmatic – as if she did not hear about the dramatic changes of interwar liberalism to become more flexible and pragmatic.

However, in 1927, after leaving the House, Isaacs adopted some elements of the Malting's critics. She became more sceptical of, and more realistic about, the possibility of avoiding any sort of authority in the child's relationships with the adults in his or her life, and hence her fierce critique of the 'liberal-minded educator'. This was not only a pedagogical observation, but also her way to describe an acute crisis in liberal ideology. Even though 'liberalism had always been seen as the naturally progressive creed', by the interwar years it became so splintered that 'it was no longer clear which faction was the truly progressive force' (Robinson, 2015: 630). Isaacs realized that the outcome of this ideological confusion was an educator or a parent, who had a 'progressive sentiment' rather than a 'conservative', 'socialist', or indeed 'liberal' political programme.

Having said that and despite her critique, Isaacs did not give up her basic belief in the need for educators to help the child become an 'independent moral being' and to encourage the child to find his or her private inner voice. She did not completely dismiss the 'progressive' perspective, but only became more worried about what she saw as a dangerous confusion among 'liberals' as to the possible applications of liberal values, and especially the idea of 'freedom', in the educational sphere. The 'liberal-minded educator' was for her, at the same time, a target of critical assessment, and an unfinished project.



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## Notes

1. Alternatively, one may define liberalism more specifically as 'an actually identifiable configuration of specified political concepts, such as liberty, progress, and individuality, that adopts a distinct pattern, or a series of family resemblances, to which the name "liberal" is designated' (Freeden, 2005: 5).

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2. Freeden and others, however, believe that the impact of new liberalism extends much further, into the second half of the twentieth century. See, for example, Stewart (2002), on the adoption of new-liberal ideas (rather than more socialist ones), in the establishment of the NHS.
  3. See, for instance, Bertrand Russell's 'Whiggish suspicion of the state' (Ironsides, 1996: 4) on the one hand, and his seeking after 'a libertarian interpretation of Socialism' on the other (ibid.: 130).
  4. On English perceptions of other national characters, mainly of the 'German' see Pick (2012); Karydaki (2016).
  5. One may compare for example the differences between Isaacs, the lower-middle class Fabian, with Bertrand Russell, the aristocratic liberal with some 'anarchistic tendencies' (Ironsides, 1996: 4, 126-45).
  6. On Susan Isaacs's life and work, see Graham (2009); Gardner (1969).
  7. The Controversial Discussions were a series of scientific meetings of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, which took place in London between January 1943 and May 1944 and aimed to resolve the fundamental disagreements between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud and their followers. See, King and Steiner (1991).
  8. For the history of educational psychology in Britain, see Thomson (2006: 110-39); Wooldridge (1994); Rose (1985).
  9. In political terms, many of them, such as Burt and Nunn (although not necessarily Isaacs) could be considered as 'new liberals'. See Wooldridge (1994: 211); Gerson, (2004: 74-6).
  10. For the shift from 'authoritative' motherhood to 'permissive' motherhood in the interwar and the postwar period, see Richardson (1993: 28-42).



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11. See Thom (2009). Historians would agree that at the turn of the century, corporal punishment was more common among the working classes and the poor (Hendrick, 1997: 23-4). See, however, Davin (1996: 129-31), who has shown that many parents of working class children in that period objected to corporal punishment by teachers at school.
  12. 'Free will' was not only a core liberal notion, but also a main subject of discussion for nineteenth-century Continental and British biologists, psychologists and philosophers. This topic was also a main concern for Freud, whose two great English heroes – Charles Darwin and John Stuart Mill – were main representatives of the two poles in the dispute on the possibility of free will. On the place of the debate on free will in the history of psychoanalytical ideas, see Pick (2007).
  13. To one of the mothers who claimed that smacking her child 'hurts me more than him' (Isaacs, 1968: 35), Isaacs replied: 'I wish I could understand how it is possible for anyone seriously to claim that smacking a child hurts her more than it hurts the child. I confess that I feel that to be complete humbug' (ibid.: 37).
  14. 'To me [Isaacs] means lots and lots of un-spanked babies and a lot more love in the world', said one of her readers many years afterwards (Quoted in Gardner, 1948).
  15. However, in their study of the educational system in Birmingham at the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, Grosvenor and Myers (2006: 232) suggested a different – and slightly overlooked – political tradition of progressivism in education, which 'manifested itself in areas of education policy, school provision, curriculum reform, curriculum practice and administration'.

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16. One may add to this list of earlier experiences in progressive education the short-lived Little Commonwealth in Dorset (1913-1918) for delinquent children and adolescents. See, Lawson and Silver (1973: 399).
  17. The first Malting's Advisory Council the educators, Helen Wodehouse and Thomas Percy Nunn, and Pyke's own psychoanalyst, James Glover (Cameron, 2006: 858).
  18. Lawrence balanced testimony on the Malting House, given many years later, is important because of her intimate knowledge of, as well as long-lived friendship with, Susan and Nathan, who later also became her husband. However, Lawrence was a senior educational psychologist in her own right, later to become in 1943 the Director of the National Froebel Foundation. See, Graham (2009). However, a detailed study of Lawrence is yet to be written.
  19. The Malting House elitism was not so different from other interwar progressive schools that were part of 'a world shaped by white heterosexual middle-class privileges' (Hustak, 2013: 473).
  20. Another indication for the relatively liberal identity of the MH parents is that many of them, as well as Pyke, actively supported the newly established Women's Welfare Association, which opened in 1925 Cambridge's first birth-control clinic. Lella Sargant Florence, Alix Stracheys's sister (whose son Tony was in the MH) was the Honorary Secretary of the Association (Cameron, 2006: 863).
  21. On Moore and the Bloomsbury Group, see Rosenbaum (1987: 214-38). For other affinities between Bloomsbury and psychoanalysis see, Meisel and Kendrick (1986); Winslow (1990); Stonebridge (1998); .
  22. In a few paragraphs that were omitted from the printed version of this lecture (Keynes spoke to the Liberal Summer School at Cambridge, 1925), Keynes explained that the

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solutions for some economic problems in the future ‘will involve intellectual and scientific elements which must be above the heads of the vast mass of more or less illiterate voters’ (295). On the influence of Freud on Keynes – as well as on the links between Freudian psychology and Keynesian economy – see Forrester (2003); Winslow (1986); Donzelot (1980: 231-33). Forrester shows how Keynes was a major figure in bringing together ‘Cambridge economics and Bloomsbury's literary, aesthetic and moral views’ (Forrester, 2003: 73). Cambridge and Bloomsbury were also the main sites of interest in Freud throughout the 1920s (Forrester and Cameron, forthcoming).

23. The emphasis on the child’s physical fitness was common also in other progressive schools, such as the Beacon Hill School of Bertrand and Dora Russell. See Hustak (2013: 465-66).
24. For example, John Macnicol (1987: 299) argued that in the early twentieth century, one of the difficulties in defining the concept of the ‘underclass’ was that it is nearly impossible to separate it ‘from wider assumptions about the inheritance of intelligence, ability and positive social qualities that were much more commonplace before the gradual discrediting of I.Q. testing in the 1950s and 1960s’.
25. On ‘child-guidance’ and the emergence of the ‘difficult child’ as a psycho-social and medical category see Stewart (2013).
26. Strachey knew Geoffrey and Margaret Pyke from London, as the latter lived in Strachey's flat in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury – later to become the flat of Keynes – before moving to Cambridge (Cameron, 2006: 857-58).

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27. See also Linstrum (2014: 703) for an in-depth discussion on the ‘tension in Strachey’s desire to politicize psychoanalysis without democratizing it, to give it purchase in the wider world while maintaining the primacy of an expert elite’.
  28. Ernest Jones thought that the subcommittee’s document was ‘so very excellent that it would be well to publish it’ (letter from Ernest Jones to Max Eitingon, 29 May 1929, Ernest Jones Collection, London, Archives of the British Psychoanalytical Society, ([P04-C-B-16])). Nevertheless, the document was never published.
  29. Isaacs, however, denied that the Malting House was a psychoanalytic school: ‘I do not know what a “psycho-analytic school” might be, nor, I imagine, did those who so spoke of it’ (Isaacs, 1933: 18). She was particularly unhappy with Bertrand Russell’s observation that the Malting House was an ‘application of psycho-analytic theory to education’, and claimed that if anything it was an application of the ‘educational philosophy of John Dewey’ (ibid.: 19). However, she was willing to say that the only psychoanalytical finding which was confirmed in the House was ‘the great educational value of play’ (ibid.). See also Isaacs’s earlier critique (1926) of Russell’s book *On Education, Especially in Early Childhood*.
  30. The Kleinian psychoanalyst M.N. Searl, noted that ‘admonitions [...] to be “gentle and just, kind, temperate and reasonable”, admirable and entirely desirable as these qualities are, must fall on barren or already productive soil. Either one is so or one is not’ (Searl, 1929: 481). Searl might have thought that ‘this excellent and charming little book’ was addressed specifically to middle-class liberals who do not necessarily need it, as the book is advising them to be what they already are. Interestingly, Searle was also engaged with the MH by analysing some of its children (Cameron, 2006: 362).