Philanthropy and politics : strategies of Jewish bourgeois in Italy, France and England between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries

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Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Traverse : Zeitschrift für Geschichte = Revue d'histoire**

Band (Jahr): **13 (2006)**

Heft 1

PDF erstellt am: **26.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-29552

PHILANTHROPY AND POLITICS

STRATEGIES OF JEWISH BOURGEOIS IN ITALY, FRANCE AND ENGLAND BETWEEN THE END OF THE 19TH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURIES

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This article proposes a comparative analysis of the strategic political uses of Jewish philanthropy between 1880 and 1914 in various countries of Western Europe. It should be pointed out that a functional political interpretation of Jewish philanthropy is not exhaustive: many other motivations and layers of explanation concur in explaining the important contribution of Jews to Jewish and non-Jewish philanthropy. Yet this aspect must be taken into consideration. This article goes beyond an analysis of Jewish philanthropy in terms of social control and paternalistic attitude and explores the relation between philanthropy and politics as one of the explanations of Jewish philanthropy at the end of the 19th century.[1] It first discusses Jewish political emancipation in France, Italy and England, before turning to the connection between the concepts of *tzedaka* and of 19th century Jewish "regeneration". It then moves on to present several case studies: different native Jewish reactions to Jewish immigration, with particular attention to the mediating position of Samuel Montagu in the East End of London; secular philanthropy as a strategy of "republican" political defence for French Jews at the end of the 19th century, and the use of philanthropic institutions by Jewish Italian MPs to create political networks.

POLITICAL EMANCIPATION IN FRANCE, ITALY AND ENGLAND

French Jews were the first European Jews to enjoy full political rights, which were granted in 1791. Political emancipation preceded social and economic integration, which was subsequently enhanced by the acquisition of civil rights. However, "in spite of the state-led emancipation of the Jews, their real political integration in France was quite limited" until the middle of the 19th century.[2] Only at the beginning of the Second Empire were French Jews able to benefit from social and economic mobility and to secure their integration into the French bourgeoisie. After 1870, they were increasingly drawn to republicanism, as was demonstrated by the enthusiastic celebration of the centenary of the French

Revolution in 1889.[3] With the founding of the Third Republic, new sectors within the state opened up to Jews.[4] A large number of Jews were appointed to the civil administration, but far fewer were elected as Members of Parliament (MPs) or senators. Other sectors, such as diplomacy, remained inaccessible to Jews until after World War One.

This was not the case in Italy, where the Jewish politician Isacco Artom (1829–1901) was involved in the founding of the Italian state.[5] Artom came from Piedmont, where Jews had been granted political and civil emancipation in 1848. Jewish emancipation was extended to other parts of Italy as they were incorporated into the new national state. Italian-Jewish political integration was contemporaneous with the beginning of Italian history as a unified state. Since the First Emancipation – granted by Napoleon between 1796 and 1799 – Italian Jews and a number of gentile authors had linked Jewish emancipation to the regeneration of Italy: the *rigenerazione israelitica* was closely connected to the *rigenerazione italiana,*[6] as the large Jewish participation in the Italian *Risorgimento* demonstrated.[7] With the Second Emancipation (1848–1870), when the Jews of the Papal States finally saw the end of the ghetto and became citizens of a unified Italy, Jews participated fully in the process of nation building. This early political commitment has been explained through the concept of "parallel nationalisation", which expresses a twofold connection between Italian regeneration and Jewish emancipation.[8]

In England, the reforms carried out between 1830 and 1870 abolished all legal discriminations against Jews. Jewish emancipation was part of a wider process of "decomposition of the confessional state".[9] Together with Catholics and Nonconformists, Jews had been discriminated against because they were not part of the Church of England. In the English case, Jews were an acculturated and socially integrated group endowed with political rights. Anglo-Jewish historiography and contemporary Jewish commentators have seen the comparatively favourable situation enjoyed by English Jews – characterised by weak anti-Semitism and a benign environment – as closely connected with the strength of middle-class liberalism;[10] a happy narrative of the Anglo-Jewish past that has been recently called into question.[11] This critical reinterpretation has suggested that liberalism was a source of oppression, obliging Jews to demonstrate that they were worthy of emancipation.

JEWISH PHILANTHROPY BETWEEN CHARITY AND REGENERATION

The need to demonstrate Jewish "worthiness for emancipation" was related to projects of economic, social and religious transformation. Such projects were central to emancipation debates and philanthropic endeavours. To gain a better understanding of national differences in strategies of political and social integration, it is useful to address the common features that characterised the attitude of the Jewish upper-middle class towards philanthropy.

Jewish philanthropy can be explained as a combination of traditional *tzedaka* and more recent strategies for maintaining the social order and reforming Jewish life. *Tzedaka*, from the Hebrew word for justice, was traditionally conceived as a means of social justice. Religious charity had been of crucial importance within the corporate communities of the ghetto era. Charity was channelled through many institutions inspired by a form of "constructive assistance" intended to enable the recipients to become independent. However, with the growth of secularisation in the 19th century, the religious basis of charity was replaced by other motivations.[12] Ostentatious publicity now superseded the anonymity of *tzedaka:* giving was used to gain status and to maintain the social order. In the Jewish context, the use of philanthropy as a means of deterring social unrest and political dissent assumed a particular dimension in relation to the concept of regeneration. Charitable giving reflected concern for the community as a whole: the civil and social regeneration of poor co-religionists was a fundamental goal in the process of the social integration of the benefactor.

By taking care of their poor co-religionists, wealthy leaders demonstrated that they were worthy of emancipation and capable of managing themselves and their own poor in "a rapid path of acculturation and integration".[13] In all three countries under analysis, Jewish concepts of regeneration were influenced by and implemented through secular philanthropy. At the same time, these concepts assumed different national characteristics, specific to the relationship between the state and Jewish welfare institutions, the density and structure of local civil society, local versions of anti-Semitism, the impact of immigration, and the place of religion and women within civil society.

REACTION TO JEWISH IMMIGRATION

In 1881, Jewish migrants started leaving Eastern Europe in search of a safe refuge because of economic and anti-Semitic pressures. Between 1881 and 1914, while two million Jewish immigrants arrived in the US, 120,000 settled in

England. In addition 150,000 to 200,000 transited through London. 35,000 Eastern European Jews settled in Paris, particularly after 1905, when the Alien Bill limited access to England.[14] Differences in the rate and timing of immigration are crucial factors to take into consideration when analysing the reactions to Jewish immigration in different countries, such as England and France, yet other factors must also be considered.

Although French immigration policy was one of the most liberal in Western Europe, the French Jewish native community distanced itself from Jewish immigrants.[15] This reaction may be understood in the context of a specific French path to emancipation and of rising anti-Semitism. As the emerging anti-Semitic discourse depicted Jews as foreign, disloyal and "alien", native Jews generally perceived the immigrant Jew as a threat. This explains in part the reluctance of French-Jewish politicians to "come to the political defence of immigrant Jews".[16] As a consequence of the internal and external pressures to conform to French society, and fearing attacks on their own status as French citizens, French Jews limited their involvement with immigrant Jews. Concerned with the increase of anti-Semitic campaigns in Russia and Romania, French Jews preferred to help their co-religionists in their countries of origin through organizations such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle,* or directed them towards other countries of asylum in order to prevent their threatening presence in France. The refusal of the native community to deal with the immigrants resulted in the creation of a variety of institutions by the immigrants themselves, institutions that bypassed the mediation provided by the native Jewry between the immigrants and the wider society and French culture.[17] However, as immigration became a reality, the central institution of French Jewry, the *Consistoire,* had to come to terms with it. Rather than responding to the rhetoric of "Jewish solidarity", the *Consistoire* and its leaders attempted to defend themselves against anti-Semitic campaigns by reducing the visibility of foreign Jews and by "remov[ing] them from the public eye".[18] Institutions specifically designed for immigrants were created only at the beginning of the 20th century: the Jewish *Université Populaire* was created in 1902 to "bring to the Jewish immigrant workers the beneficial effects of modern civilisation and the knowledge of Judaism".[19] An *Atelier* was founded in 1906 for the training and placement of immigrants "allowing the deprived to earn their bread and live without begging".[20]

ENGLAND: THE POLITICAL AND PHILANTHROPIC ENDEAVOURS OF SAMUEL MONTAGU

The reaction of native French Jews to Jewish immigrants was very different from the English one.

The "Cousinhood" – a highly interconnected group of elite Anglo-Jewish families – was deeply involved in the leadership of representative and philanthropic institutions.[21] Leadership of the different Jewish institutions was passed down from one generation to another as a sort of "family affair".[22] Families of the Cousinhood also had their "fiefdoms" in religious institutions, as is demonstrated by the Montefiore/Sebag-Montefiore's patronage of the Bevis-Marks Synagogue, the Rothschilds' ascendancy over the United Synagogues, and the creation of the Federation of Synagogues by Samuel Montagu. Patronage of religious institutions does not indicate *per se* the persistence of religious orthodoxy, but since religious institutions were instrumental to communal social policy, secular leaders were interested in maintaining an active role within them. Although often reduced to forms of formal observance, this concern for religious institutions was specific to England and did not exist as such in France or Italy.

Anglo-Jewry was renowned for its philanthropic institutions. Assumption of a leadership role within a communal institution was considered a successful strategy for social recognition and, in some cases, of political power both within and outside the community. Unlike French and Italian Jewry, members of the Anglo-Jewish elite were involved in Jewish philanthropy – not only in honorary positions or as donors – but also as active administrators and managers. Historians have linked this phenomenon to the attitude of the English upper-middle-class toward philanthropy, its ethos of voluntarism in charity work and social responsibility.[23] Others have pointed out the significance of the relationship between state and voluntary institutions and the specific evolution of the Jewish group.[24] Through their involvement, leaders wished to create an image of communal self-sufficiency: by demonstrating that Jewish philanthropists could care for their own poor, the Jewish elite was conveying a public image of worthy and responsible citizens who did not depend on the surrounding gentile society for the welfare of their co-religionists. These issues became more complex when waves of immigration commenced in the 1880s.[25] The concept of regeneration was re-elaborated as a reaction to the threat that the foreign poor posed for the social integration of the elites. As in France, policies towards immigrants reveal the complexity of the relationship between the impulse towards Jewish solidarity and the perceived need to reduce the visible foreignness of co-religionists. But in contrast to France, the Anglo-Jewish elite mobilised many resources for the new immigrants. This can be seen in the philanthropic endeavours of Samuel Montagu (1832–1911), an

important banker and bullion broker in the City.[26] His philanthropic policies can be divided into two major phases: in the first phase (1860s and 1870s) Montagu challenged the existing organisations from within. From 1885 onward, when he was elected MP, Montagu created new philanthropic institutions.

From its inception in 1859, the Jewish Board of Guardians (JBG) was a "Cohen family enterprise", a family into which Montagu married in 1862. This family connection, together with his expertise in finance, led him to be involved with the Loan Committee of the Board, over which he presided from 1873 to 1885. In the 1880s, thanks to Montagu's attempts to rationalise it, the Board "became the classic philanthropic Victorian pioneer" based on concepts of "self-help" and rational methods of inspection and investigation.[27] Montagu's strategic use of the JBG allowed him to enter the upper strata of Jewish leadership with its organisations and its symbols. Once a part of it, he implemented changes influenced by contemporary debates on scientific philanthropy: he stressed ideas of self-help and self-management and promoted a detailed enquiry into the applicants for charitable relief, distinguishing between the saveable and the unrecoverable poor.

Montagu insured his position in Anglo-Jewish leadership in another philanthropic institution, the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), which represented a platform allowing all Anglo-Jewish leaders to share in the management of British Jewry. Created in 1871 as the English branch of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle,* it aimed at defending Jewish interests and protecting persecuted Jews throughout the world by means of education and diplomatic pressure on governments.[28] The AJA's philanthropic activity centred on Jewish schools overseas, such as the Evelyna de Rothschild schools in Jerusalem and Baghdad. The AJA also assisted emigrants from outside Europe, "deterring [them] from crowding into this or other countries in numbers unduly to embarrass their predecessors".[29] This policy was common to various agencies within Anglo-Jewry. It was a response to concerns about the social consequences of immigration both within Anglo-Jewry and the wider society, and to fears of anti-Semitism. The Anglo-Jewish elite perceived immigrants as a potential threat to the social and political status they had obtained. To protect themselves, they adopted policies towards immigrants that were intended to "slow the alien influx, promote immigrant Anglicisation, and reduce tensions between the newcomers and their neighbours".[30] Montagu was active in promoting these policies, both within the AJA and in other Anglo-Jewish institutions.[31] Relation to Jewish immigrants is at the heart of Montagu's second phase of philanthropic policy. In 1885, he was elected Liberal MP for Whitechapel, a constituency in the East of London heavily populated by Jewish immigrants. Montagu's political career was secondary to his business in the City, but particularly significant in his mediation for the Jewish East End.[32]

The relationship between Montagu and the Jewish part of his constituency was forged through various philanthropic institutions that he founded and funded in the East End. The first one was the Jewish Working Men's Club, founded in 1874, on which he "looked with quite a paternal affection".[33] Although the Club was in theory "not political in character", Montagu himself attributed his first electoral victory in 1885 to the unanimous vote given to him by Club members. In the course of the years, the Club became one of the main platforms for his electoral speeches, allowing Montagu to win immigrants to the Liberal cause and to cultivate his constituency.

The second institution through which Montagu secured his political networks in the East End was the Federation of Synagogues, an umbrella institution that federated orthodox *chevrot* (synagogues) in the East End.[34] Using the Federation, Montagu "effected a union between Liberal politics and orthodox Judaism in the Jewish East End"[35] and attempted to bridge the gap between immigrant conventicles and the central rabbinical authority. The Federation of Synagogues was devoted both to Jewish religious education and Anglicisation policies. It encouraged the study of Jewish subjects and the preservation of orthodoxy, demanding at the same time the use of English as the language of business and the abandonment of Yiddish. It encouraged self-help rather than "pauperising philanthropy", and valued practices of independence and self-government despite still being under the patronage of Anglo-Jewish leadership. Historians have argued that the Federation was merely an instrument used by Montagu to assert his own leadership within Anglo-Jewry.[36] However, the Federation also provided him with a means through which a compromise with the immigrants was achieved as they were gradually incorporated in Anglo-Jewry, it was a platform for Liberalism in immigrant politics, and it represented an audience of his policy on immigration.

Montagu's intermediary position between the established philanthropic institutions, the immigrants' needs, and the state is also illustrated by his involvement in the Russo-Jewish Committee and the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter. The Russo-Jewish Committee was run as a sub-committee of the Jewish Board of Guardians, presided over by Montagu from 1882 until 1909. The Committee tried to disperse the immigrants in England, subsidised transmigrants going on from England to other countries, and repatriated the refugees who failed to demonstrate that they were "deserving". The Committee's policy resulted from a complex balance between Jewish solidarity and attempts to avoid a "pull" effect on new immigrants. This delicate equilibrium was also the basis of the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter, which was founded in 1885 to cater for transmigrants and immigrants in the first two weeks of their arrival in London. By doing so, the Temporary Shelter provided relief aid that the Jewish Board of Guardians,

with its six months' residency requirement, did not offer. In line with Montagu's philanthropic and religious views, men had to work in order to receive free shelter and were also expected to attend daily prayers. The Shelter provided food and beds, and assisted immigrants in locating other relatives or friends in London; it also organised the continuation of their journey elsewhere. From its inception, the Shelter was also an agent of repatriation. This was part of a broader policy of repatriation and propaganda in Russia, meant to reduce the number of new or potential immigrants.

In order to rapidly integrate the majority of the immigrants, Anglo-Jewry adopted policies of Anglicisation. As an instrument for transforming the foreignness of co-religionists, Anglicisation was central to Anglo-Jewry's self-representation as a group of Englishmen capable of dealing with their own poor. Anglo-Jewry implemented its schemes for Anglicisation mainly through education and clubs. In Montagu's view, Anglicisation consisted essentially in making "foreigners give Yiddish up, to endeavour to acquire knowledge of the English language and English habits so that their children might know English thoughts and ideas".[37] Montagu's political career in Whitechapel was closely connected with the immigrants: he opposed anti-immigrant legislation, and in the Select Committee of the House of Commons he defended East End Jews from the accusation of living in "immorality [and] unhealthy, dirty and unsanitary conditions".[38] In other instances he argued that legislation was unnecessary because leading Jews were dealing with immigration: it was up to philanthropic organisations and their leaders to look after "their" immigrants, so as to reduce their visibility, and the possibility – if immigrants became a burden on the public rates – that they would arouse resentment. State intervention was also to be restricted because it would have undermined Anglo-Jewish authority over immigrants. Thus, communal, domestic, and foreign policies overlapped.

In contrast with Rozin and Gutwein's view that Montagu's political career allowed him to pursue a strategy of opposition within communal institutions,[39] Montagu's philanthropic endeavours can be seen as a means of social mobility within Anglo-Jewry and as a platform for his political career, mediating between the Jewish immigrants in the East End, Jewish institutions, and the British State.

FRANCE: PHILANTHROPY AS A STRATEGY OF "REPUBLICAN" POLITICAL DEFENCE

French Jewish politicians were reluctant to "come to the political defence of immigrant Jews",[40] and French Jews were less involved with immigrant institutions than their English co-religionists. However, French Jews were also generous

philanthropists, giving to Jewish and non-Jewish causes. Even families said to be assimilated, such as the Pereires and the Lazards, donated to Jewish institutions and made substantial donations to secular organisations.[41] Jewish philanthropy became a fundamental form of Jewish belonging.[42] Some institutions were inherited from pre-revolutionary France, but the majority were founded with the aim of regeneration through work, education, and vocational training.

Although other French institutions shared these aims, they also reflected Jewish concerns.[43] The learning of "useful trades" as opposed to "traditional" ones had been one of the major themes of Jewish emancipation as of the end of the 18th century: Jews were expected to be useful members of the national economy as proof of their worthiness as French citizens. The issue of regeneration through work took on an even wider significance as a response to the anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jewish financial parasitism, which raged in France from the second half of the 19th century onward. This may explain the major donations of a financier such as Alexandre Lazard to the *Ecole de Travail,* which tackled the problem of peddling and homelessness among Jews.[44] The issue of the Jewish worker – which coincided with the increased concern over attitudes towards Eastern European Jewish immigrants – was useful to counterattack anti-Semitic criticism of Jewish capitalism. Indeed, as Green has argued, the discovery of the "Jewish proletariat" was the only positive aspect the French "native" community perceived in the impact of eastern Jewish immigration.[45]

French Jewish involvement with Jewish immigrant organizations was relatively rare, but from the 1880s on, Jewish philanthropists started donating more to secular causes. Secular philanthropy was understood as proof that they were concerned with the problems faced by the general population with "no distinction of religion" and as a means to build social networks in circles that had previously excluded them. French Jews participated in local *Bureaux de bienfaisance,* founded institutions such as the *Dispensaire Simon Lazard* for free medical care for poor children "without distinction of religion or origins", and implemented schemes such as the *Habitations Hygiéniques des Employés de la Banque, du Commerce et de l'Industrie* in 1905.[46] French Jews were also major art donors to the Louvre and other French national museums.[47] In doing so, they believed they were contributing to the French cultural heritage.

From 1880 to 1914, Jewish involvement in secular philanthropy acquired a specific political dimension in connection with social reform circles – what Topalov has called the *nébuleuse réformatrice*.[48] The figure of Max Lazard, the son of one of the founders of the Lazard Banque, is particularly interesting for assessing the significance of the Jewish presence in these associations. In many ways, Max Lazard was an exceptional figure among French Jews: his family wealth enabled him to dedicate all his energy and time to philanthropy. His "modernistic ideas"

were not shared by many French Jews. However, his institutional activities suggest that secular philanthropy was an instrument of social integration lending itself to a political use.

Max Lazard was first exposed to "the responsibilities of those privileged by fortune and education" during his residency in Toynbee Hall in London in 1897, while he was completing his training at the London branch of Lazard Frères. Founded in 1884 as a university settlement in London's East End, Toynbee Hall appealed to Lazard because it attempted to bring a peaceful solution to the social question by insuring working class collaboration through moral and intellectual education within a hierarchic framework of social mediation. According to Lazard, it elevated working class mentality "without descending to its level".[49] Toynbee Hall further impressed Lazard because of the different religious institutions and residents cooperating and working within it. In fact, due to its location in the East End, Toynbee Hall had close relations with many Anglo-Jewish institutions and personalities.[50]

On his return to Paris, Lazard tried to follow the Toynbee Hall example by starting "a small colony in the East End of Paris" and organising "into clubs and reading parties and a playroom, the various friends he has gathered around him".[51] But what Max Lazard had seen in Toynbee Hall could not be transposed to the French context. Here, religious organisations and associations acting as agents of social reform were viewed with suspicion by the centralised secular state.

After this failure, Lazard left in order to finish his banking training in New York; but at his father's death he decided to quit his banking career definitively. With the inheritance from his father, and finally free from family pressures, he dedicated himself completely to the problem of unemployment. Back in Paris, he founded the *Association pour la lutte contre le chômage,* one of the various institutions created in the first decade of the 20th century to deal with the social question.[52] Another institution in which Lazard's involvement was conspicuous was the *Société des visiteurs pour le relèvement des familles malheureuses,* founded in 1896 and based on methods of "scientific charity" *à l'anglaise.* As Dab has shown, the *Société* was an example of Republican and *Dreyfusard bienfaisance militante.*[53] By the end of the 19th century, active Jewish involvement in and support for these associations was substantial.[54] This may be interpreted as a reaction to the debates raging during the Dreyfus affair, when in 1894 the Jewish captain Alfred Dreyfus was unjustly accused, convicted, retried, and finally rehabilitated only in 1906.[55] As historians have shown, most Jewish families were unwilling to recognise the extent of anti-Semitism in France or that Dreyfus had been victimised as a Jew. This was reflected in the Jewish press. A November 1896 article in the *Archives Israélites* noted: "We have always argued that there does not exist a Jewish question in France, we argue with the same energy that the Affaire Dreyfus is not a

question israélite."[56] It was the anti-Semites – the article went on to say – which had made it so. This line of interpretation induced contemporaries and historians to criticise the passivity of French Jewry: Herzl considered the Dreyfus affair as evidence of French Jewry's fear and of the impact of assimilation upon its members.[57] Indeed, the *Consistoire* and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* did not officially defend Dreyfus, and Jewish notables and politicians refused to support Dreyfus publicly in terms of Jewish solidarity.

However, explaining the political silence of French Jews during the Dreyfus affair solely in terms of assimilation and fear of anti-Semitism is not sufficient. The argument that French Jews were passive must be challenged.[58] Philanthropic activism is probably the key to understanding what has often been described as mere political apathy. Contrary to narrowly "political" accounts of the Dreyfus affair, the history of Jewish philanthropy reveals the varieties of Jewish integration into a specifically Republican public sphere. The 1900s were to some extent the "moment of associations", when the French public sphere was increasingly shaped by such organisations. The 1901 law on *associations à but non lucratif* followed a movement that gained momentum after the Dreyfus Affair and that was crucial to French civil society.[59] Through these associations, Jews defended their rights not as Jews but as adherents to the universalistic values of the secular Republic. French Jews expressed their public defence of Dreyfus not through a specific Jewish political discourse, but through their involvement in associations such as the League of the Rights of Man and the *Universités Populaires*.[60] These institutions constituted a specifically republican public sphere in *fin de siècle* Paris. They allowed Jews to defend "Jewish interests acting as French citizens, participating in the political process [helping to] realize France's highest ideals embodied in the legacy of the Revolution".[61] It is in this sense that we can understand Max Lazard's involvement with the *Universités Populaires*.[62] As an attempt to peacefully resolve the social question through the paternalistic intellectual and moral education of the working class, the movement was short-lived. For us, however, the significance of the *Universités Populaires* and of other secular philanthropic institutions resides in its political use as a means through which Jews could express their adherence to the universalistic values of the Republic.

ITALY: PHILANTHROPY AND POLITICAL NETWORKS

In Italy, the three processes of the Italian *Risorgimento* as a nation, of political Jewish emancipation, and of the regeneration of the Jewish poor were strictly interwoven. Each Italian Jewish community had inherited its own philanthropic institutions from the ghetto.[63] During the 19th century, other institutions were

created whose phases of expansion and decline reflected the appropriation of concepts of regeneration by the community leaders. Widespread among Catholic liberals, concepts of regeneration and social harmony assumed a special meaning for Jews: philanthropy was understood not only as a remedy for social unrest but also as a means of community cohesion.[64] Most of the new institutions were created at the time political emancipation was granted: regeneration of poor co-religionists allowed the elite to show they were worthy of political emancipation. Hence, between 1848 and 1860, one witnesses the expansion of philanthropic institutions concerned with education and vocational training whose general aim was to "transform despised sons of parasitic rabble into blooming trunks of fruit-bearing trees [by] encouraging industriousness and prudent restraint, within the bounds of religion and morality. [...] To make the life of the Jew correspond to the present intellectual and moral condition, to render him worthy, in everything and always, of the name he bears and of the country to which he belongs."[65]

Regeneration of the Jewish poor was intimately connected with the regeneration of Jews as Italian citizens. This connection between emancipation and regeneration is further demonstrated by the phase that followed, which was characterised by the progressive decline of Jewish philanthropic institutions in Italy and the increasing distance from them of many upper class Italian-Jews. However, this ongoing institutional decline does not reflect a complete and simple renunciation of Jewish identity on their part. This is particularly the case for post-emancipation Jews in search of an identity no longer compulsorily defined in institutional terms. Forms of Jewish solidarity continued to exist, as is attested by involvement with the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU). The significance of the AIU resided not only in the fact that it was the only Jewish institution that existed throughout the entire national territory until 1909, but that it was also the only form of Jewish institution on whose behalf Jewish-Italian politicians negotiated with the state.[66] As in France, the cause of poor Jews was mainly defended when they were far from home.

The decline of Jewish philanthropic institutions was mostly due to changes in the socio-economic structure of Italian Jewry. Even if Jewish communities still had to assist large numbers of the Jewish poor, as in Rome and Leghorn, they experienced social mobility and acculturation more rapidly than the majority of the non-Jewish Italian poor, whether rural or urban.[67] These non-Jewish masses attracted the majority of philanthropic deeds of wealthy Jewish elites. While continuing to be affiliated with the communities, and to "remember their own poor" in their wills and donations, Italian Jews became more involved in secular philanthropy. The weakening of the struggle for regeneration was central to this process. Once upper-class Jews felt socially integrated, their need to demonstrate their worthiness and ability to care for their own poor faded. It

is in this respect that the Italian case differs dramatically from the English and French situations. The absence of massive immigration from Eastern Europe into Italy, with the challenging issues immigrants posed to the respective host communities in terms of religion, visibility, and integration, allowed for the decay of Jewish institutions.

A disproportionately high number of Italian Jews were among the promoters of secular philanthropy in Italy. This is attested by the existence of many theoretical and practical works revolving around the social question written by Jewish personalities such as Prime Minister Luigi Luzzatti (1842–1927), Leopoldo Franchetti (1847–1917) in Umbria, Baron Raimondo Franchetti (1829–1905) in Venice and Tuscany, and Prospero Loria (1814–1892) in Milan.[68] Their political views differed in many ways, but they all believed in the duty of the elite to advocate economic and moral progress in society. Jewish involvement in secular philanthropy also provided an efficient means of integration into the local elite. As in France and in England, the image of Jews as benefactors allowed for their self-representation as integrated citizens and members of the elite.

In analysing the connection between philanthropy and politics for Italian Jews, another element emerges: the use of philanthropy and institutions to create a territorial basis of networks of political clientele. This phenomenon only partly accounts for the actions of some Jewish Italian philanthropists and is related to the context of Italian politics in the second half of the 19th century. Historians of Liberal Italy have argued that because of its recent formation and its weak hold over society, the Italian political representative system worked with notability networks.[69]

Unlike non-Jewish Italians, Jews did not inherit notability networks from the past, as their parents were born in ghettos and had not even been recognised as citizens with full political rights. When they were finally recognised as citizens and granted the right to vote and be elected, Italian Jews had to create their political networks anew. Philanthropic institutions became an important tool to build up a territorially-based political clientele.

This phenomenon appears clearly in the political career of Ulderico Levi (1842–1922), an active promoter of important philanthropic causes in Reggio Emilia.

Born into a wealthy Jewish merchant family, and after having completed a successful military career, Ulderico was elected Liberal MP in Reggio Emilia in 1880. By then, he had promoted a whole series of philanthropic initiatives.

Ulderico's father, Amadio Levi (1796–1876), had been considered one of the major benefactors of Reggio Emilia because he donated the city's first public baths and its swimming pool. In Amadio's generation, the functional purpose of contributing to the city's welfare was seen as the general public accepting

Jews as fellow citizens. In Ulderico's case, donations contributed to consolidating his electoral consensus. The promotional and propagandistic nature of his initiatives does not undermine the philanthropic mission of his donations, which allowed the entire urban restructuration of the city of Reggio Emilia and greatly contributed to the amelioration of the condition of its residents. Ulderico contributed to the creation of a permanent industrial exposition "for the activity and progress of local manufacture and industry",[70] a theatre, the promotion of a mutual aid association for workers, and the pulling down of the city walls. In recognition of these donations, Ulderico and his brothers were ennobled in October 1876.[71] Ulderico's donations continued: in 1877 he gave £12,000 to the municipality for the public gardens and the installation of gas illumination, and two years later he gave more than £500,000 to build the municipal aqueduct. The public nature of these donations may be interpreted as a strategy to build up a popular consensus to sustain him politically against the traditional political leadership of the city. In fact, the city's political elite did not appreciate his acts of munificence and did not accept him socially within its circles. Challenging this opposition, Ulderico managed to build an electoral base and was elected MP in 1880; in 1895 he was appointed Senator. His "philanthropic" strategy was thus successful in building new political networks as a basis for his political strategy.

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of comparative Jewish history, we have shown how concepts of regeneration through philanthropy varied in each national context. Bourgeois Jews in England, France, and Italy shared a concern for their own poor, and for persecuted Jews around the world. However different approaches to regeneration existed and became evident in the reactions to Jewish immigration. There is no space here to comparatively analyse the role of Jewish women in philanthropy and politics, but this would have confirmed the hypothesis that Jewish philanthropy as a means to social and political integration varied in different countries. This conclusion contributes to challenging the argument of a uniform path to modernisation applicable to diverse realities of Western Jewry.[72]

Furthermore this essay has shown how political uses of philanthropy could work in different ways. These depended on the political and social contexts in which Jews were seeking recognition and participation. For example, the "republicanisation" of the Jews in France meant that they adapted their strategies to French institutions and political culture, within which any kind of "community-centred view" would have been counter-productive. This shows how different typologies

of civil societies and their relation with the state were reflected in the dynamics of Jewish philanthropic institutions, and how these affected their uses by Jewish philanthropists in the different countries.

More generally, this article has indicated the relation between philanthropy and power by analysing social practices of individuals in search of social and political legitimacy. Previously excluded from political power, these individuals also used their philanthropic activities to build their political strategy and to enlarge their political networks.

Notes

1 This article draws on my research as a Yad Hanadiv scholar in Jerusalem. I would like to take this occasion to thank Yad Hanadiv, Jerusalem and Professor Richard Cohen from Hebrew University, for their support. For a discussion on limits of the explanation of "social control" within Jewish modern historiography, see D. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840–1914,* New Haven 1994, 329–352.

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ABSTRACT

PHILANTHROPY AND POLITICS. STRATEGIES OF JEWISH BOURGEOIS IN ITALY, FRANCE AND ENGLAND BETWEEN THE END OF THE 19TH AND BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURIES

This article proposes a comparative analysis of the strategic political uses of Jewish philanthropy between 1880 and 1914 in various countries of Western Europe. It first discusses Jewish political emancipation in France, Italy and England, before turning to the connection between the concepts of *tzedaka* and of 19th century Jewish "regeneration". It then moves on to present several case studies: different native Jewish reaction to Jewish immigration, with particular attention to the mediating position of Samuel Montagu in the East End of London; secular philanthropy as a strategy of "republican" political defence for French Jews at the end of the 19th century and the use of philanthropic institutions by Jewish Italian MPs to create political networks. From the perspective of comparative Jewish history, the article shows how concepts of regeneration through philanthropy varied in each national context contributing to challenge the argument of a uniform path to modernisation applicable to diverse realities of Western Jewry. The article also shows how political uses of philanthropy worked in different ways. These depended on the political and social contexts in which Jews were seeking recognition and participation and indicates different dynamics between civil societies and the state.