

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SIENA

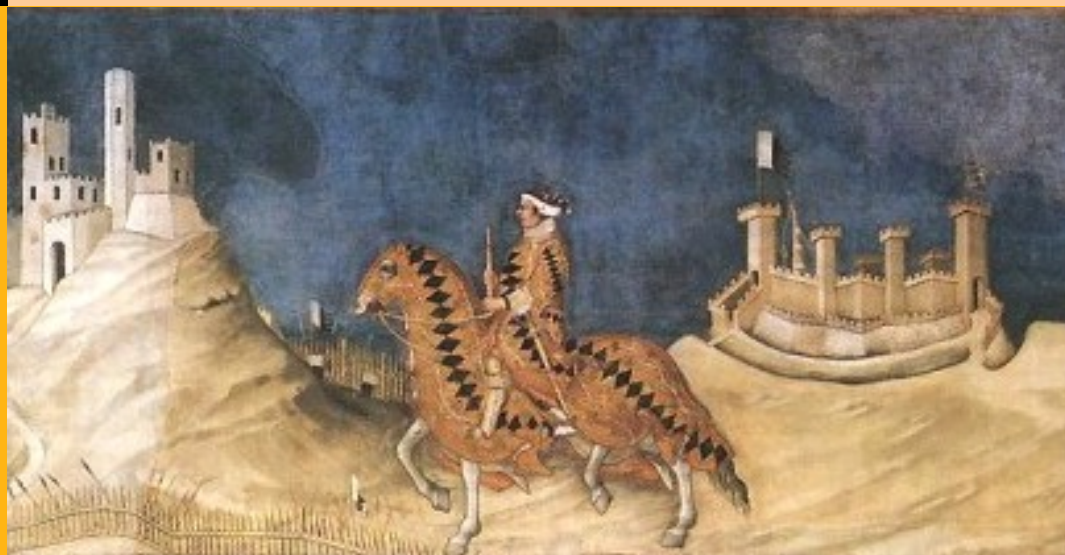


QUADERNI DEL DIPARTIMENTO
DI ECONOMIA POLITICA E STATISTICA

Luca Fiorito
Cosma Orsi

Anti-Semitism and Progressive Era Social Science
The case of John R. Commons

n. 658 – Ottobre 2012



Abstract - This paper explores Commons' views toward Jews in order to assess whether his published writings contain assertions that today would be stigmatized as anti-Semitic. The evidence we provide shows that Commons' racial characterization of Jews was framed within a broad and indiscriminate xenophobic framework. With other leading Progressive Era social scientists, in fact, Commons shared the idea that the new immigration from Eastern and southern Europe would increase competition in the labor market, drive down wages, and lead Anglo-Saxon men and women to have fewer children, since they would not want them to compete with those who survive on less. Within this general xenophobic context, Commons developed assertions regarding immigrant Jews that show traces of explicit anti-Semitic accusations.

Keywords: Commons, John Roger; Anti-Semitism; Race; Immigration.

JEL Classification: B1; B15

Luca Fiorito, Università di Palermo - luca.fiorito@unipa.it.
Cosma Orsi, Università della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano - cosma.orsi@usi.ch

One can hardly agree with the author [Werner Sombart] that “unheard of hatred of the Jews” is commons in the United States, and one’s confidence in his conclusions is affected by this and other evidences of the inadequacy of his information about America (Goldenweiser 1912, 679).

1. The publication of Melvin W. Reder’s 2000 paper, “The Anti-Semitism of Some Eminent Economists” (Reder 2000), had the unquestionable merit of tearing the veil of silence surrounding a topic which had (and still has) deliberately received inadequate attention by the community of historians of economic thought at large. In that article, Reder faces the question of what he defines as “ambivalent anti-Semitism” and whether it is a term that can be applied, to a different extent, to John M. Keynes, Joseph A. Schumpeter, and Friedrich von Hayek. Reder’s contention is that all of these individuals had expressed attitudes that today would be stigmatized as anti-Semitic. The adjective “ambivalent” becomes crucial for Reder’s case, for it allows those alleged of anti-Semitism to be close to certain Jews and even to count Jews among their closest friends – as Keynes, Schumpeter, and Hayek clearly did in their professional and personal lives. Not surprisingly, Reder’s essay attracted considerable criticism. For instance, Ronald Hamowy (2002, 255), on the basis of personal acquaintance with Hayek, refuted Reder’s claim about Hayek’s attitudes toward Jews as biased and unsubstantiated arguing that “[n]ot only was he not anti-Semitic but in most regards he was in fact pro-Semitic.” “Professor Reder’s comments on Hayek” – Hamowy (2002, 260) harshly concluded – “are an insult both to Hayek and to those many Jews, like myself, who worked closely with and under him and should be dismissed as the somewhat jaundiced views of a writer intent on finding malevolence where none exists.” In his rejoinder to Hamowy, Reder (2002) addressed not only Hayek but also Keynes and Schumpeter, providing further evidence concerning the expression of their prejudices towards Jews, and stressing again the *ambivalent* nature of their anti-Semitism – a qualifying descriptor that Reder thought had been misinterpreted by Hamowy.

In commenting upon Reder’s claim and the several controversies it triggered, E. Roy Weintraub (2003; see also Weintraub 2012) poured more oil on the fire suggesting that Reder’s proposed characterization of ambivalent anti-Semitism “could well describe many of the past intellectual ‘giants’ in economics.” The present writers do agree with Weintraub and feel confident enough to add a fourth name to the triumvirate of twentieth century economists discussed by Reder, namely, that of the leading American institutionalist John Roger Commons.² While one may well question whether or not Commons belongs to the Olympus of “past intellectual giants in economics,” there appears to be valid reasons to review in some details his published views towards Jews. In his recorded reminiscences, Mark Perlman – the son of Selig Perlman, Commons’s celebrated student and colleague at Madison – affirms that his father was deeply irritated by what he perceived as Commons’s veiled hostility towards Jews – an attitude that conditioned the course of their friendship. Mark Perlman, for instance, reports his father’s embarrassment when he had to bring his parents to the United States after the collapse of their economic activity in Russia. The following passage is quite enlightening:

My father went to Commons, bringing up what he thought to be his horrendous personal problems. Commons gave him a massive salary increase, with which my father brought his parents to America and tried to plunk them down with his mother’s siblings in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, where they were very unhappy. Much to his further embarrassment, he decided he had to bring them to Madison, where they all would live in what was called Greenbush, the ghetto or Jewish section of

¹ Corresponding author: Luca Fiorito at luca.fiorito@unipa.it.

² Commons, who was born in 1862, was considerably older than Keynes, Schumpeter and Hayek and may be properly defined as a “turn of the century” rather than a twentieth century economist. It should be taken into consideration, however, that his major writings, including the ones under scrutiny in this note, appeared during the first decades of the last century. On Commons’ life and career see Harter (1962).

Madison. My father realized all of this emphasis on the Jewishness of his family put him at a great disadvantage with Commons. But, he had no choice. Instead of enrolling his brother in the public high school, he spent his limited graduate assistant's monies putting him through the costly University High School, where he thought the education to be better. To conserve money, he lived with his parents and this very clearly stamped him again ... The changes stamped my father not only as a Jew, or as an immigrant Russian Jew, neither of which he ever denied, but as a poor Russian Jew rather than as an intellectual Russian Jew. That, as I understand it, was the great problem for him. Commons, as one can quickly glean from his book, did not like Jews, something which his Jewish students had to live with (Fink 1991b, 512-13).

Interestingly, Mark Perlman points out that two other Jewish students – William Leiserson and David Saposs – were part of Commons' inner circle, the famous "Friday nighters" who would regularly meet once a week at the Commons' house (Fink 1991b, 517; see also Rutherford 2006). Both Leiserson and Saposs, however, were more "Americanized" and drawn away from religious practice than Perlman, and this made them more "acceptable" to Commons' eyes.³ The final rupture between Commons and Selig Perlman happened in 1931 when, at one of the usual Friday night meetings, Commons publicly announced that Edwin Witte had been appointed his successor at Wisconsin.⁴ As Mark Perlman reports: "At that Friday night, Commons gratuitously said in my father's presence and in the presence of my father's new wife (my father had just remarried), that Witte was coming into the department as his successor because he did not want Perlman to be his successor." In the following passage, Mark Perlman cautiously (but still significantly) adds: "Now, his [Commons'] grounds for saying that, my father thought, were unadulterated anti-Semitism. I suspect that the grounds were more complex. For instance, my father had never had the public service activity life which Witte had had" (Fink 1991b, 521).

We are perfectly aware that Mark Perlman's recollections about his father – as all oral history sources – must be taken *cum grano salis*.⁵ Nonetheless, they cast a somewhat dark shadow on Commons and provide a pertinent rationale for investigating whether Commons' putative anti-Semitism was to some extent also reflected in his published writings. The aim of this paper is to accomplish this task. It is important to point out from the outset, that our scrutiny of Commons' views is based here only on two sources: a "Special Report on Immigration and Its Economic Effects" drafted for the Industrial Commission in 1901, and a series of articles published in 1903-1904 in the *Chautauquan* magazine under the title "Racial Composition of American People," later published in slight altered form as *Races and Immigrants in America* (1907a). While the racist implications of these contributions have been analyzed in some detail (Cherry 1976; 1989; Leonard 2003; Ramstad and Starkey 1995), their explicit anti-Semitic character have been ignored or simply relegated to passing

³ Mark Perlman's interview contains also a few interesting comments referring to Mrs. Commons' attitude towards Jews. For instance: "Billy Leiserson married a non-Jew, and my father thought Mrs. Commons never fully approved of his marrying a Christian, and he intimated her displeasure had something to do with Leiserson's move to the University of Chicago" (Fink 1991a, 514). And in a following passage he insists: "Mrs. Commons did not fully approve of my mother. I think Mother was responsible for that; mother was a very strong personality. Mrs. Commons objection to mother purportedly was that Mother was too Jewish, not that she was not Christian" (Fink 1991a, 517). While no mention of anti-Semitic feelings from the Commons is made by J. Michael Eisner in his biography of Leiserson, Saposs placed entirely on Commons' wife the responsibility for his own personal estrangement from his mentor: "Mrs. Commons indirectly hated Jews. Commons never did." Interview with David Saposs by William C. Haygood and Theron Schlabach, September 8, 1964, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Quoted in Fink (1991a, 414 n70).

⁴ According to Arthur Howe there seem little doubts that the appointment of Witte was Commons' sole responsibility: "Commons' commanding personality and views dominated departmental deliberations for several decades and nothing of substance, including his choice of Edwin E. Witte, the director of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, as his successor" (1991, 478 n25).

⁵ Mark Perlman himself suggests such a caution: "Let me finish what I have to say about Commons. I have mentioned the difficulties of that relationship, but what I have said has to be seen within the underlying important context. The underlying important context is that I described the personal relationship, the intellectual relationship, and the long-term historical relationship. But each of these long anteceded me—long preceded my awareness of it, and surely my physical existence. So, it is very important to keep in mind that what I have is a much clearer perception of the period after their long collaboration than during it" (Fink 1991b, 524).

comments (Fink 1991a; Solomon 1972). Moreover, Yngve Ramstad and James L. Starkey – the authors who have most systematically dealt with Commons’ racial theories – deliberately left Commons’ report for the Industrial Commission out of the picture, on the ground that they could not find “any facts or analysis in the report specifically pertaining to the Negro ‘race’ or even a hint of the racial analysis he would be forwarding in ‘Racial Composition’” (1995, 53-54). It is our contention, instead, that Commons’ report contains several ambiguous passages regarding Jews as a race and that, as far as a proper assessment of his anti-Semitic views is concerned, it should be considered as an *unicum* with his later *Chautauquan* articles.

Before launching into the discussion a further preliminary consideration is worth making. Although Commons remains the primary focus of this study, other Progressive Era authors will be also dealt with in order to analyze their possible influence on Commons and to place his views concerning Jews in proper historical context. Likewise, it should be pointed out that in addition to the central theme of anti-Semitism, other related issues, mostly associated with Progressive Era debates on immigration, will be incidentally discussed or simply touched upon. As documented in a series of seminal works by Thomas C. Leonard (2003; 2005; 2009), these debates made a consistent use of a hierarchical ontology of human nature in order to affirm the inherent inferiority of certain nationalities or ethnic groups – especially Southern and Eastern Europeans, Asians, and Blacks. Preexisting prejudices were bolstered by “the increasingly systematic use of a biological, deterministic discourse to explain and to remedy, often using racial categories, the root causes of economic problems, especially labor and immigration.” Cloaked in a mantle of respectable science, progressive era racial rhetoric was instrumental to “buttress the reformist thought and legislation that was so characteristic of the time” (Leonard 2003, 688). Hostility toward Jewish immigration, mostly from Russia and Poland, was part of this general discourse. The present paper is organized as follows: the first two sections document Commons’ view towards Jew as presented in his investigation for the Industrial Commission and in his “Racial Composition” series, respectively; the third section discusses other views on Jewish immigration which are to be found in the socioeconomic literature of the period; the fourth section pulls together some final considerations.

2. In the fall of 1900, Edward Dana Durand, later Director of U.S. Census Bureau, offered Commons to finish for him a report on immigration and its effect on labor unionism for the U.S. Industrial Commission.⁶ Commons, who had been dismissed the previous year from Syracuse University, immediately accepted. To gather the necessary knowledge of the facts, Commons traveled around the country for six months investigating firsthand the working conditions of immigrants in urban sweatshops. For this tour, as Commons states in his autobiography (1934a, 68-69), he needed “an interpreter who knew economics.” He found him in Abram Bisno, a Russian Jewish immigrant, at the age of twelve, who “had grown up in the American sweatshops of the clothing trade.” “Bisno,” Commons states, “opened up a new world for me, not only in the life of the immigrant but also in economic theory—Karl Marx and trade unionism.”⁷

Commons’ investigation on “Immigration and Its Economic Effects” was published in 1901 as part III of volume XV of the Reports of the Industrial Commission. Most of the report consisted of a detailed presentation of the facts as to who immigrated, in what numbers, and when. Emphasis was placed on the circumstances that led each of the different immigrants groups to leave its native country. What Commons documented was the dramatic shift in the character of immigration that took place in the early 1880s from Western to Southern and Eastern Europe, from Protestant to Catholic Europe, from subjects of democratic government to subjects of absolute governments, and from skilled to unskilled labor force. Detailed case studies devoted to specific industries were also discussed. What mainly concerns us here is the chapter on “Foreign-Born Labor in the Clothing Trade,” in particular section II, where Commons discusses the sweatshop as a form of productive organization. There, Commons (1901, 319-320) defined the “sweating system” as a “system of subcontract” where competing manufacturers give work to the lowest bidding contractors, who make their profit from the

⁶ Durand had been a student of Commons at Oberlin. On Durand’s involvement with the U.S. Industrial Commission see Durand (1902).

⁷ On Bisno’s life and career see Seidman (1967).

margin between the contract price and the lowest possible labor costs. Such a system of contracting and subcontracting dramatically degraded working conditions: contractor shops located work in the homes, while strict piece-rate payment systems forced workers into competition with one another. Moreover, as Commons (1901, 320) pointed out, the subcontracting itself rendered the workers more vulnerable: “[i]n the factory system the workmen are congregated where they can be seen by the factory inspectors and where they can organize or develop a common understanding. In the sweating system they are isolated and unknown.”⁸

Of central import in the present instance is that Commons came to see the sweatshop as reflective of some distinct “racial” characteristics of immigrants. Commons’ targets were the Eastern European Jews – the group who had virtually monopolized the garment industry and the sweatshops. In his report Commons explained that Jews are physically unfit for manual labor and agriculture, while their original nature is too “individualistic” for the discipline of the modern American factory. Instead, Jews seem willing to accept the uncivilized conditions of the sweatshop because of its lax discipline. Commons even blamed Jews supposed racial inclination to speculation and trade, rather than the effects of unrestrained competition, for the proliferation of strict piece rate-payment systems and the lengthening of working days in the sweatshops. Jews were seen as exceedingly ambitious and always eager to rise to the position of employer. Let me indulge in a few quotations from Commons’ report in order to illustrate the point:

It is possible that the racial characteristics of the Jew have entered as a factor in bringing about the above mentioned results. The Jew likes to be “his own boss,” even if it merely in name; from the operator and tailor he becomes a contractor, and from the contractor he becomes a small merchant manufacturer, working for jobbers and wholesalers until in time he becomes a jobber and wholesaler himself. While this is true of other nationalities to some extent, it is very largely true of the Jews [...] (1901, 323).

The Jew occupies a unique position in the clothing trade. His physical strength does not fit him for manual labor. His instincts lead him to speculation and trade. His individualism unsuits him for the life of a wage-earner, and especially for the discipline of a labor organization. For these reasons, when the Jew first lands in this country he enters such light occupations as sewing, cigar making, shoemaking, etc. (1901, 325).

The standard of living of nationalities has been gradually raised after their immigration to this country. Probably the Jewish immigrant changes his standard of living soonest. When the Jew wants to make more money he will leave his former occupation as operator or baster, etc., and will become a contractor and store-keeper. So that, instead of trying to raise the standard of living in the trade, he will try to leave the trade and throw his lot in with people whose standard of living is somewhat higher. In this way his commercial instinct militates continually against making active efforts to better the conditions of his trade (1901, 327).

One reason why piecework and high speed have become the framework of the contractors’ shops is probably because the Jewish people are peculiarly eager to earn a big day’s wages, no matter at what sacrifice. The Jewish workman is willing to work very hard for this, and does not want to have it said that there is a limit to his earning capacity. It is the desire of the Jew to have his employment so arranged that he can speculate and bargain upon his earning capacity, and can make use of the seasons. Piecework gives him that opportunity. In a rush season he will demand a decrease in the number of coats to the task, making more tasks per week and consequently earning higher wages.⁹ If the work is slack and the number of coats in the task is increased, he will speculate upon his

⁸ For a discussion of the sweatshop in historical perspective see Bender (2003) and Felts (1992)

⁹ The “task system” was a variant of the sweatshop. Under this method of organization, the production process was divided into distinct phases, each performed by one “concentrator.” As described by Commons (1901, 345-46), in the coat shop the operator did all the stitching on the sewing machine, the baster put together the various parts of the coats, and the edge baster or finisher prepared the edge for the operator. Assisted by a presser, a trimmer, and a few women who performed minor operations, a team of three worked in synchrony and turned out a specific number of coats, the number having been set as a “task” for the team. The team was paid at a normal day rate, regardless of how much time it took to complete the task.

ability to work harder and still earn high wages. Usually is anxious to accumulate money and open up a contractor's shop for himself, or go into some kind of business. It is not for love of hard work nor because of lack of other enjoyment that the Jew is willing to work so hard, but for the sake of getting rid of work. At the same time it is true regarding green immigrants of all races that the conditions of a strange land stimulate them to the hottest exertion of which they are capable. The Jewish immigrant is peculiar only in that he is not by nature a wage-earner, and he keeps before himself continually the goal of emancipation from hard work (1901, 346).

This characteristic of the Jew shows itself in his irritation under the discipline of the factory. He is willing to work long hours, but does not like to have anyone dictate the time when he shall begin work or stop work. He does not like to be driven nor have his attention called to the fact that he has not made much work. He wants to have freedom. This he usually has in the contractor's shop. He is very nearly "his own boss;" he can smoke, talk, run around, stay at work an hour longer, come in an hour earlier, or come later. The conditions of sweatshop employment which favor this are piecework, with an almost complete absence of factory regulations and factory management. The contractor's shop is a sort of ideal worked out by this individualistic people, which holds out a fair hope to everybody of some day becoming his own boss, and, to a certain extent, of being his own boss while still at work in the shop (1901, 346-347).

Commons' description of Jewish attitudes is characterized by an ambiguous blend of cultural and "racial" considerations – a point which will be discussed below. On the one hand, for example, we find Commons (1901, 320) explaining the success of the Russian Jew in the clothing industry, not merely in terms of his proclivities, but as the consequence of his "willingness to change the mode of production by using the sewing machine and division of labor against which the native tailor showed a decided aversion." Similarly, in some places (1901, 325), he imputes the Jews' preference for the sweatshop to its flexible schedule that, differently from the factory system, allows them to work on Sundays while keeping Saturdays idle. On the other hand, as shown in the passages quoted above, Commons' insisted reference to Jews' specific instincts and innate propensities seems to suggest an unequivocal racist mentality.

As importantly, Commons' analysis contains also a thinly veiled normative message. Commons in fact regarded the sweatshop as the center of a rising immigrant economy, threatening to undermine not only the wages and the well-being of "American" workers, but also the stability and efficacy of the union movement. Accordingly, Commons argued that the Jew's individualistic and uncooperative (but also abstract and metaphysical) nature would weaken the development of permanent unions. Also in this case, I cannot forbear quoting the relevant passage at full length:

The problem has been the nature of the Jew himself. The Jew's conception of a labor organization is that of a tradesman rather than that of a workman. In the manufacture of clothing, whenever any real abuse arises among the Jewish workmen, they all come together and form a giant union and at once engage in a strike. They bring in ninety-five percent of the trade. They are energetic and determined. They demand the entire and complete elimination of the abuse. The demand is almost unanimous and is made with enthusiasm and bitterness. They stay out a long time, even under the greatest of suffering. During a strike, large numbers of them are to be found with almost nothing to live upon and their families suffering, still insisting, on the street and in their halls, that their great cause must be won.

But when once the strike is settled, either in favor of or against the cause, they are contented, and that usually ends the union, since they do not see any practical use for a union when there is no cause to fight for. Consequently, the membership of a Jewish union is wholly uncertain. The secretary's books will show 60,000 members in one month and not 5,000 within three months later. If, perchance, a local branch has a steady thousand members from year to year, and if they are indeed paying members, it is likely that they are not the same members as during the year before. A German union, on the contrary, will have the same members year after year, well or ill, with little change. The Jew joins the union when it offers a bargain and drops it when he gets, or fails to get, the bargain.

The Jew is also exceedingly abstract and metaphysical and greatly interested in general principles. His union is always, therefore, except in time of a strike, a forum for the discussion of socialism and the philology of the labor movement. The socialist element acquires control when the workingmen stay away from the union, and they urge an organization devoted mainly to

propaganda on the principles of solidarity of all labor, without much attention to trade differences. The Jewish labor press, pamphlet, and speakers, nearly all recruited from the socialists, have continually engaged in these discussions, neglecting the formation and straightening of their unions. These statements are substantiated again and again in the history of the trade in New York. It is a saying on the East Side that there is always a strike going on somewhere" (1901, 327-328).

Such a description of Jewish attitudes towards unions did not pass unnoticed. Writing in 1904, Harvard's railroad economist William Z. Ripley observed that the condition of trade unionism in the garment and cigar-making industries "plainly reflects certain racial peculiarities of the Jews." Drawing almost verbatim upon Commons' "excellent report on immigration," Ripley reiterated that the "Jewish conception of organization is that of a tradesman rather than a workman" and that the "Jew will join a union only when there is a bargain directly in sight in the shape of material advancement." Differently from Commons, however, Ripley concluded with a word of optimism, observing that "the Jews are rapidly learning, under the leadership of peculiarly able men; and no more splendid service in uplifting the lot of the lowly can be found than that rendered by the warfare of the United Garment Workers of America against the sweatshops" (Ripley 1904, 302-303).

In a similar vein, Jesse E. Pope from the University of Missouri, noted in his *The Clothing Industry in New York* (1905) that Jewish trade unions find it extremely difficult to maintain a stable membership in times of peace and prosperity.¹⁰ Referring to Commons' Industrial Commission report, Pope (1905, 213-214) explained that the Jew "considers his employment in the clothing industry as merely temporary," and attributed this circumstance to the fact that his "instincts [...] for industrial pursuits became dormant, owing to the fact that trade and not industry had been his occupation for generations." In addition, Pope noted that the typical Jewish worker looked to socialism rather than to unionism for a betterment of his condition. As a consequence, "the weaning of the workers from their desire for political agitation had to be accomplished before effective trade unionism was possible," and this was a goal to be pursued only by enlightened union leaders. Pope was instead skeptical as to whether the individualism of the Jews, as described by Commons, did actually affect their attitude towards unions. He admitted that "the Jew is individualistic," but he also emphasized that he has an unquestionable inclination for cooperation.¹¹ This led Pope to reject Commons' conclusions concerning the precariousness of Jewish unionism:

His [the Jewish worker's] economic position made him feel that the union was too slow a process, but as he advanced economically he outgrew this feeling. When we take into account the obstacles which they have had to overcome, the growth and efficiency of trade unions in the clothing industry is nothing less than marvelous (1905, 213-14).

3.1. In 1902, after his work for the Industrial Commission had ended, Commons accepted a position with the National Civic Federation (NCF). It was Ralph M. Easley – then secretary of the NCF – who personally invited Commons in, and initially put him to work on taxation problems. Subsequently, Easley moved Commons to work together with Samuel Gompers (Commons 1934a, 82; Gonce 2002, 759). While working for the NCF, Commons wrote a series of nine articles that appeared during 1903-

¹⁰ In the opening pages of his volume (1905, iv) Pope expressed his indebtedness to Professor Edwin R. A. Seligman of Columbia University, "at whose suggestion the study was undertaken and who has inspired and encouraged the writer at every stage of its progress." Seligman was the son of Joseph Seligman, a German Jewish immigrant to the United States who in 1846 founded the prominent investment bank J. & W. Seligman & Co. In 1877, Joseph Seligman was involved in one of the most famous anti-Semitic episodes of the time, being denied entry into the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York (Birmingham 1967).

¹¹ As Pope put it in another passage: "Much has been written to the effect that the extreme individualism of the Jewish workman stands in the way of social cooperation. It is true that this is a Jewish characteristic but that it does not prevent him from cooperation with his fellows is shown by the fact that among no other class of industrial workers do we find so much cooperation and organization for mutual benefit, and among no other nationality do we find such sympathetic cooperation of the well-to-do classes in the attempt to raise those below them" (1905, 185).

1904 in the *Chautauquan* Magazine under the heading “Racial Composition of the American People.”¹² These articles, which drew extensively on the investigation Commons had prepared for the Industrial Commission, were subsequently republished, with only minor modifications, as a volume on *Races and Immigrants in America* (Commons 1907a). We will refer throughout to *Races and Immigrants* rather than to the “Racial Composition” articles.

Commons’ main objective in *Races and Immigrants* was to investigate whether and to what extent “non-English” immigrants possess the capacity for acquiring the personal characteristics needed to assimilate into American ways of democracy and cooperation. “We are trying to look beneath the surface” – he wrote (1907a, 5) – “and to inquire whether there are not factors of heredity and race more fundamental than those of education and environment.” It was Commons’ determination to provide an “objective” answers to this question that accounts, in Ramstad and Starkey’s judgment (1995, 8), for the particular manner in which “theories” and “evidence” about racial stocks are introduced and utilized over the course of *Races and Immigrants*. Commons himself warned the reader that he was utilizing the term “race” in a “rather loose and elastic sense,” and that he would consider “only those large and apparent divisions which have a direct bearing on the problem of assimilation” (1907a, 12-13). What concerns us here is his treatment of Jewish immigrants. First of all, Commons affirmed that human population may be divided into “five great racial stocks,” all of which are now represented in the United States: 1) the Aryan, within which he distinguished several branches including the Greeks, Latin, Slavs, Celts, and Teutons, the latter in turn divisible into the Germans, the Scandinavians, and, above all, the English; 2) the Semitic; 3) the Mongolian, from which the Magyar, the Chinese, and the Japanese are derived; 4) the Negro; and 5) the Malay. As to the Semitic race, differently from other authors of the time, Commons emphasized its common roots with their Aryan “cousins.” As he put it:

In the fertile valleys of Mesopotamia and the Tigris the Semitic race had separated from its cousins, the Aryans, and one remarkable branch of this race, the Hebrews, settling on a diminutive tract of land on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and finally driven forth as wanderers to live upon their wits, exploited by and exploiting in turn every race of Europe, have ultimately been driven forth to America by the thousands from Russia and Austria where nearly one-half of their present number is found (1907a, 15).

In a following sentence, Commons (1907a, 16) insisted that while the Aryan, the Semitic, and the Mongolian races “had in early times met one another and even perhaps had sprung from the same stock,” there seems to be “no traces of affiliation with the black race.”¹³

Having established his own taxonomy of races, Commons went on to describe the distinguishing attributes of each different stock. His characterization of the Jewish or Semitic race substantially follows the same line of stereotyping arguments advanced in the Industrial Commission report. Let us, once again, quote from Commons in order to illustrate the point:

It should not be inferred that the Jews are a race of pure descent. Coming as they do from all sections and nations of Europe, they are truly cosmopolitan, and have taken on the language, customs, and modes of thought of the people among whom they live. More than this, in the course of centuries, their physical characteristics have departed from those of their Semitic cousins in the East, and they have become assimilated in blood with their European neighbors. In Russia, especially in the early centuries, native tribes were converted to Judaism and mingled with their proselytes. That which makes the Jew a peculiar people is not altogether the purity of his blood, but

¹² The *Chautauquan* was a liberal source of information for the programs and activities of the Chautauquan Assembly Institute, an adult education movement in the United States highly popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

¹³ Writing a few years later Arthur T. Abernethy in his *The Jew A Negro* tried instead to demonstrate the common origins of the Negro and Semitic races. According to Abernethy, “thousands of years of effort to throw off their nigrescence have failed to eradicate those race characteristics, and the Jew of to-day is essentially Negro in habits, physical peculiarities and tendencies” (Abernethy 1910, 105 quoted in Goldstein 2001, 401). Abernethy’s book, a striking example of vile and shameful early nineteenth century racism, was regularly signaled among the new publications on immigration in the pages of the *Journal of Political Economy*.

persecution, devotion to his religion, and careful training of his children. Among the Jews from Eastern Europe there are marked intellectual and moral differences. The Hungarian Jew, who emigrated earliest, is adventurous and speculative: the Southern Russian keeps few of the religious observances, is the most intellectual and socialistic, and most inclined to the life of a wage-earner; the Western Russian is orthodox and emotional, saves money, becomes a contractor and retail merchant; the Galician Jew is the poorest, whose conditions at home were the harshest, and he begins American life as a pedler. That which unites them all as a single people is their religious training and common language (1907a, 93-94).

The Jewish immigrant, particularly, is unfitted for the life of a pioneer. Remarkably individualistic in character, his field of enterprise is society, and not the land. Of the thirty thousand families sent out from New York by industrial and agricultural removal societies, nine-tenths are located in industry and trade, and the bulk of the remainder, who are placed on farms, succeed by keeping summer boarders. Depending on boarders, they neglect agriculture and buy their food-stuff. Their largest colony of hoped-for agriculturists, Woodbine, New Jersey, has become a clothing factory. Yet the factory system, with its discipline and regular hours, is distasteful to the Jew's individualism. He prefers the sweat-shop, with its going and coming. If possible, he rises through peddling and merchandising (1907a, 133).

But ambition has its penalty. It is equivalent to an increase in the supply of labor. As an ambitious proprietor the increase goes into his permanent property, but the ambitious wage-earner accepts a lower rate of pay. His fellows see the reduction and go still lower. The see-saw continues until wages reach the level of necessities, and there is nothing left for ambition. The Jewish sweat-shop is the tragic penalty paid by that ambitious race (1907a, 148).

While the passages reproduced above, albeit significant, do not provide any considerable novelty with respect to Commons' previous characterizations of Jews, they reveal more evidently his ambiguity in proposing a notion of race wherein the biological component of a certain stock also captures its socially or morally salient qualities. Such an ambiguity becomes manifest when Commons, after having included the Semites in his taxonomy of races, affirms that Jews should not be considered as a "race of pure descent," arguing that "which makes the Jew a peculiar people is not altogether the purity of his blood, but persecution, devotion to his religion, and careful training of his children." In order to resolve this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to consider that between the 1880s and 1910s, ideas about race were fluid and, for many aspects, difficult to categorize. The bulk of progressive era social scientists discussing immigration was, in fact, neither strictly "genetic racist," nor "environmentalist" – with the former term denoting those emphasizing the role of hereditary traits in determining whether a group was assailable or not, and the latter those emphasizing social and institutional factors.¹⁴ As noted by George W. Stocking (1994, 5; 1968), the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries prevailing conception of race included "numerous elements that we would today call cultural; there was not a clear line between cultural and physical elements or between social and biological heredity." Specifically, he continues, it was the widespread acceptance of the Lamarckian hypothesis of the transferability of acquired characteristics that made the notion of "race" so opaque and elusive: "Lamarckianism [sic] made it extremely difficult to distinguish between physical and cultural heredity. What was cultural at any point in time could become physical; what was physical might well have been cultural" (Stocking 1994, 9; 1968).¹⁵ Culturally conditioned

¹⁴ I borrowed the distinction from "genetic racialists" and "environmentalists" from Cherry (1976). Cherry himself, although arguably resonating along such a dichotomous distinction, is compelled to admit that, as far as economics is concerned, many of the figures "who eventually supported the genetic racial position, such as Fisher, Fetter, and Carver were environmentalist during much of this period" (Cherry 1976, 158).

¹⁵ While at Syracuse, Commons devoted a short essay to the issue of evolution where he asserted that "social selection" had long ago supplanted the Darwinian notion of "natural selection," as the fundamental explanation for the evolution of "personality" attributes. "In social selection," he wrote, "society enters between the individual and the physical environment, and [...] transforms its pressure upon the individual, and he alone survives who is fitted to bear the social pressure." This pressure reaches the individual "through the educational media of language and social institutions," especially the family, the state, and private property. These institutions rest upon commonly shared ideas and beliefs that are "epitomized in language." Language in turn,

behavior patterns would thus tend to become part of the “genetic” endowment of subsequent generations in the form of innate tendencies or proclivities.

According to Stocking, thus, the Progressive Era’s prevailing uses of “race” denoted groups with socially relevant differences of character, morality, and intelligence that were both *hereditary* and *changeable*.¹⁶ The present writer finds Stocking’s analysis convincing and, albeit mostly centered on anthropology, also pertinent to the racial discussions taking place within the economic and sociological camps. Indeed, it cannot be denied – as ably documented by Thomas C. Leonard (2003; 2009) – that many Progressive era thinkers rejected immigration on strictly eugenic grounds, i.e., on the basis of the threat it imposed to the quality of American racial stock. On the other hand, it also true that many other figures of the time argued that customs and institutions, as parts of the external environment, could react upon the new immigrants’ inherited racial traits, so to facilitate their assimilation into American society. In this connection, Commons clearly affirmed that differences in hereditary racial mental structure are both the *cause* and the *effect* of differences in social customs and institutions. Accordingly, he distinguished between “inferiority” and “backwardness,” i.e., “between that superiority which is the original endowment of race and that which results from the education and training which we call civilization.” Significantly, Commons added: “while there are superior and inferior races, there are primitive, medieval, and modern civilizations, and there are certain mental qualities *required for* and *produced by* these different grades of civilization (1907a, 210-211: emphasis added). Commons admitted that in the case of inferior races – a term by which he essentially referred to the “Negro” race – their innate mental qualities may prevent a complete and successful assimilation, independently on the extent of immersion in the American “environment.”¹⁷ On the other hand – and this is what mainly concerns us here – even though Commons repeatedly argued that the “civilizations” of south and central Europe were “backward” and that Jewish immigration from these nations was increasingly from the undesirable lower strata of society, he made a special effort to emphasize that Jewish immigrants from these nations do not come from inferior racial stocks (1907a, 93, 94-5). For backward civilizations, hereditary traits provided a foundation or perhaps a challenge, but not a cage from which one could not escape. Commons made explicit this position when discussing the importance of the union for the assimilation of “backward” adult immigrants. “To them” – he held (1907a, 220) – “the labor-union is at present the strongest Americanizing force.” And in describing the attitude towards unions of the various racial groups he wrote:

“by giving names to things and relations, and by thus transmitting to each individual the accumulated race experience, gradually brings him to the consciousness of himself” (Commons 1897, 90-91). Commons reference to the transmission of “accumulated race experience” reveals once again his ambiguous use of the notion of race. Commons also advocated the “segregation of degenerates to prevent propagation” (1897, 96). Accordingly, Commons distinguished between those degenerate who are “congenital” and those who are the product of environmental influence such as “social injustice and degraded education.” Commons’ preoccupation that this second group could transmit its “degeneracy” to the next generation seems to suggest that he was reasoning along Lamarckian lines. See, however, Ranstad and Starkey (1995, 47-48) for a non-Lamarckian interpretation of Commons.

¹⁶ In a similar vein Kathy J. Cooke (2008) argues that while frequently acknowledging the role that environmental concerns played in various national eugenics discourses, historians generally have not paid adequate attention to the role of nurture in early American racial debates. Echoing Stocking she affirms that “early-twentieth-century conceptions of heredity were varied and complex, making it difficult to differentiate clearly between hereditarian and environmental eugenics.” As she documents, before 1915 “many biologists had not rejected the possibility that the inheritance of acquired characteristics could act as one among many mechanisms for long-lasting changes in the biology of one’s offspring – according to neo-Lamarckian theory, environment could change heredity.” These early twentieth-century conceptions “indicated that eugenic reform could impact one’s heredity by changing environment or by changing the biological traits of the parents” (2008, 264). On American racial thought during the Progressive Era see also, among others, Brown (2004), Frankel and Dye (eds.) (1991), and Piott (2011).

¹⁷ Speaking of inferior races Commons sentenced: “Amalgamation is their door to assimilation” (1907, 213). A few pages before Commons had explained that the term amalgamation “may be used for that mixture of blood which unites races in a common stock,” while assimilation refers to “that union of their minds and wills which enables them to think and act together” (1907, 209). On Commons’ treatment of inferior races see the discussion in Ramstad and Starkey (1995).

The trade-union is often represented as an imported and un-American institution. It is true that in some unions the main strength is in the English workmen. But the majority of unionists are immigrants and children of immigrants from countries that know little of unionism. Ireland and Italy have nothing to compare with the trade-union movement of England, but the Irish are the most effective organizers of the American unions, and the Italians are becoming the most ardent unionists. *Most remarkable of all, the individualistic Jew from Russia, contrary to his race instinct, is joining the unions* (1907a, 153: emphasis added).

This passage represents a significant retreat from the position Commons had held in the Industrial Commission Report, and it bears witness to his belief that, in spite of their inherited racial “instincts,” Jewish immigrants can in all likelihood be fully “Americanized” so long as their new environment includes the necessary social institutions for their assimilation.

3.2. In the previous two sections we have presented lengthy evidence of Commons’ views towards Jews and the “Semitic race.” As anticipated in the introduction, our scrutiny was based only on two sources: the 1901 Industrial Commission report on the economic effects of immigration, and the 1903-1904 series of articles on the “Racial Composition of American People,” later reprinted as *Races and Immigrants in America*. We have searched in Commons’ other writings – especially in his later institutionalist works (1924; 1934b; 1950) – for expressions indicating some form of aversion towards Jews or any attempt to characterize them in terms of racial or cultural stereotypes. We must report that we failed to find even a single significant passage.¹⁸ Commons’ use of racial arguments seems thus to be confined to the years 1901-1907 and to disappear with the fading of the Progressive era. In this connection, it is enlightening to note that in 1919 Commons expressed his dissatisfaction with then contemporary attempts to forge a comprehensive industrial psychology based on the notion of instinct (Commons 1919) – a term he had indiscriminately used to describe the innate propensities of different racial stocks. Even more significantly, a few years later, in introducing his celebrated *The Legal Foundations of Capitalism* – the work that marked his enrollment among the institutionalist ranks – Commons (1924, xxxv) stated that “the aim of this volume is to work out an evolutionary and behavioristic, or rather volitional, theory of value” (emphasis added). Albeit quite different from the original version advanced by John B. Watson, Commons’ own brand of behaviorism emphasized the role of the institutional framework in determining the “expectational” dimension of human conduct and further distanced him from any crude form of biological determinism (Asso and Fiorito 2004; Hodgson 2003; Fiorito 2010).¹⁹

4.1. The discussion of Commons’ treatment of Jewish immigration does not exhaust our task. The final issue, to be dealt with in this section, is to investigate whether Commons was a “man of his times,” i.e., whether and to what extent Commons’ stereotypical characterization of Jews was shared by other academic writers of the time. The starting point of our (by no means exhaustive) survey is William Z. Ripley, whose *Races of Europe* (1899) was probably the most influential American work on race during the early years of the last century. Ripley (1899, 32-33) began asserting the Jews provide “the best illustration of the greeter force of religious prejudice to give rise to a distinct physical type.” Social ostracism, largely based upon differences of belief, has in fact contributed “to keep them truer to a single racial standard, perhaps, than any other people of Europe.” According to Ripley (1899, 373) racial traits explained why Jews everywhere tended to congregate in cities and invariably displayed a strong aversion to agriculture, manual labor, and “physical exercise or exertion in any form,”

¹⁸ Similarly, Ramstad and Starkey (1995, 2) affirm that “one cannot find even a single passage in Commons published writings, other than those in ‘Racial Composition,’ suggestive of a racist mentality. As pointed out, however, Ramstad and Starkey fail to take into adequate consideration Commons’ 1901 Report for the Industrial Commission.

¹⁹ The anti-racist content of behaviorism is epitomized by Watson’s oft-quoted peremptory assertion: “Give me a dozen healthy infants and I’ll guarantee to take anyone at random and train him to become any kind of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors.”

preferring “to live by brain not brawn.” Ripley rejected strictly environmentalist arguments like those advanced by Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu (1895) who attributed these common characteristics of the Jews to the mediaeval prohibition of land ownership or their segregation in the ghetto.²⁰ “To us” – Ripley explained (1899, 373-74) – “it appears to be too constant a trait the world over, to justify such an hypothesis.”

Ripley (1899, 373) went on to portray the Jews mostly in terms of bodily characteristics, rather than inherited instincts or proclivities, tending to assume that racial mental differences were related to racial physical differences. European Jews were described as undersized and, more often, “absolutely stunted.” “Narrow-chested and deficient in lung capacity,” he insisted, Jews were “distinctly inferior to Christians in lung capacity, which is generally an indication of vitality.” This physical degeneracy – an “acquired” characteristic caused by unfavorable “sanitary and social environment” – over time had become an inherited “unalterable characteristic of this peculiar people.” Such a physical fragility notwithstanding, Ripley noted, Jewish people show a high birth-rate and a low death-rate which place them well above the average. As he put it in a passage that caught Commons’ attention:

Suppose two groups of one hundred infants each, one Jewish, one of average American parentage (Massachusetts), to be born on the same day. In spite of the disparity of social conditions in favor of the latter, the chances, determined by statistical means, are that one-half of the Americans will die within forty-seven years; while the first half of the Jews will not succumb to disease or accident before the expiration of seventy-one years. The death-rate is really but little over half that of the average American population (Ripley 1899: quoted in Commons 1907a, 95).

This favorable condition was ascribed to the Jews’ sanitary meat inspection, their sobriety, temperance, and self-control. In spite of these common traits, however, Ripley reached negative conclusions as to the racial purity of the Jews. A study of skull measurement, in fact, showed that Jews from various areas of the world were more similar in cephalic shape to their non-Jewish neighbors than to each other, thus dismissing the hypothesis of a homogeneous Jewish stock of Semitic descent. Ripley held that the great majority of Jews residing in Europe showed signs of extensive inter-mixture with other European stocks of lighter complexions, and showed scant resemblance to modern-day Arabs, who were thought to retain the African traits of the ancient Semites. How then the persistence of certain characteristic facial features of the Jews could be explained in presence of a lack of racial uniformity? The answer was found in “artificial selection,” which Ripley considered “operative as ever only in those physical traits which appeal to the senses” (1899, 398). Artificial selection in a socially or geographically isolated community occurs when the choice of the sexual partner is exercised in accordance with certain standards of attractiveness that had become generally accepted in that community. Artificial selection was seen as a consequence of the Jews’ “consciousness of kind,” a collective identity awareness which in turn was derived “from the circumstances of social isolation, dependent upon the dictates of religion” (1899, 398). All this led Ripley to conclude:

The Jews are not a race, but only a people, after all. In their faces we read its confirmation: while in respect of their other traits we are convinced that such individuality as they possess—by no means inconsiderable—is of their own making from one generation to the next, rather than a product of an unprecedented purity of physical descent (1899, 400).

²⁰ Anatole de Leroy-Beaulieu (1842-1912) was a historian who wrote extensively on anti-Semitism, which he repudiated as unfounded prejudice and insidious doctrine of hatred. Among his many activities on behalf of the Jews, stirred by renewed outbreak of persecutions in Russia, he founded in 1894 the “Comité de Defense du Progres Social.” In his *Israel Among the Nations* (1895) Leroy-Beaulieu argued that in so far as there is a distinctively Jewish type manifesting itself in specific physiological and psychological features, it has been solely the result of the conditions under which the Jews lived during the Middle Ages and down to the disappearance of the ghettos. Race has nothing to do with this result, and the religion of the Jews only enters as a factor because it formed part of the conditions in question.

Commons' contention that "Jews are a race of pure descent" appears thus to be in line with Ripley's main conclusions.²¹

Another progressive social scientist who extensively dealt with racial issues Edward A. Ross. Like Commons, Ross had studied economics under Richard T. Ely's tutelage at Johns Hopkins University, and it was the Ely connection that eventually brought both Commons and Ross at the University of Wisconsin, in 1904 and 1906 respectively.²² Compared to Ripley's, Ross' characterization of the Jews seems to lean more markedly toward an overt environmentalist approach. Writing in 1902 in the pages of the *Quarterly journal of Economics*, Ross, who by that time had shifted to sociology, expressed his appreciation for Leroy-Beaulieu's "brilliant success in using isolation as the key to the Jewish enigma." While the "vulgar" persisted to regard the racial traits of the Jew as unmalleable to the influences of cultural environment, he asserted, Leroy-Beaulieu "perceived that the Jews are not a race, but a people," and made a special effort to explain "how their characteristics have risen naturally from work and surroundings" (1902, 103). Accordingly, Ross then went on to explain the characteristics of the Jews as the consequence of the medieval restrictions that confined them in the Ghetto, and the Mosaic law which separated them from the Gentiles by "a fence of rite and ceremonial observance." As he put it:

The Jew has an incomparable value sense because for generations he was forced into trade and money changing. He esteems learning because the distinction of the scholar was open to him, but not that of the warrior or statesman. He clings to his religion as all dispossessed peoples cling to the rock of ancestral tradition amid the devouring waves of assimilation. He has his passions and impulses under prudent control, as happens always with unwarlike people long schooled in trade, city life, and money dealings. He lacks in sense of honor because the impulses radiating from chivalry had no access to him. He takes to ruse and hypocrisy because so long treated as a social pariah. If he has a double code of ethics, it is because persecution has developed in him an intense tribal consciousness and a vivid sense of difference from Christians. He has the domestic virtues because family life has been his refuge from the injustices and insults of social life. The Jew is, then, a product; and many of the peculiarities charged to his Semitic blood will disappear with the complete disappearance of the conditions that produced them (1902, 103-104).

Ross further elaborated his views as applied to the "East European Hebrews" in 1914. Albeit more environmentally oriented than Ripley and Commons', Ross' discussion of Jewish features exhibits the same tendency to confuse social and physical heredity, and to assume some degree of physical inheritance of complex cultural characteristics. For instance, writing about the tendency of Jewish workers to live in crowded urban centers, Ross wrote: "Centuries of enforced Ghetto life seem to have bred in them a herding instinct. No other physiques can so well withstand the toxins of urban congestion" (1914, 145). Similarly, he considered equally complex traits of the "Jewish mind," such as intellectuality, tenacity of purpose, or even the gift for mathematics, as the to be carried in the "blood," if only as instincts or temperament proclivities. Speaking of the Jews' alleged "abstractness," Ross observed that "to the Hebrew things present themselves not softened by an atmosphere of sentiment, but with the sharp outlines of that desert landscape in which his ancestors wandered" (1914, 159-60). Like Commons, Ross emphasized the malleability of Jewish traits under the influence of the new American environment, but at the same time he placed a clear ceiling upon America's capacity to

²¹ Albeit phrased in "scientific" terms, Ripley analysis was not immune from xenophobic contaminations. Anti-Semitism, he argued, originated primarily from the legitimate fear that Western Europe would eventually be submerged by these undesirable immigrants. "Germany shudders at the dark and threatening cloud of population of the most ignorant and wretched description which overhangs her eastern frontier." Ripley warned that this is also become an American problem: "This great Polish swamp of miserable human beings, terrific in its proportions, threaten to drain itself into our country as well, unless we restrict its ingress" (1899, 372).

²² Differently from Commons, who failed to complete his graduate studies under Ely, Ross received a Ph.D. in economics from Johns Hopkins University in 1891. Given his influence on both Commons and Ross, we have also searched for Ely's explicit pronouncements on Jews and Jewish immigrants. Interestingly enough, the only relevant passage we could find is an explicit condemnation of the strident anti-Semitism of the German social Christian leader Adolf Stöcker whom Ely had personally heard speaking in a meeting during his brief visit in Berlin (1883, 256-57).

assimilate Eastern European Jewish immigrants: “No doubt thirty or forty thousand Hebrews from Eastern Europe might be absorbed by this country each year without any marked growth of race prejudice; but when they come in two or three or even four times as fast, the lump outgrows the leaven, and there will be trouble” (1914, 165).

4.2. A few words should be also spent on Prescott F. Hall, founder and executive secretary of the Immigration Restriction League (IRL), a non-academic figure that significantly contributed to animate the early nineteenth century debate on race and immigration.²³ In 1906, Hall – who has been described as “an anti-Semitic lawyer with a love for the music of Richard Wagner and the writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain” (Spiro 2009, 197) – published his controversial *Immigration and its Effects Upon the United States*. The book was received in the academic literature of the period with some harsh criticisms, both on methodological and policy grounds (see for instance Willcox 1906). In 1907 Commons decided to review Hall’s volume in the pages of the *Charities and the Commons*, a reformist periodical closely affiliated with the Social Gospel movement. In his review Commons overtly took Hall’s side. According to Commons, the claim that the book is written “from the standpoint of one who has made up his mind to favor the restriction of immigration” and is therefore “not a scholarly or impartial statement of the facts” is based on a distortion of Hall’s actual position. Commons could not find any omission or misstatement in the essential facts reported by Hall, and he considered his main conclusions to be unbiased and clearly stated. “Altogether” – he affirmed – “the book stands out as the most important contribution that has been made to the study of this most important American problem” (1907b, 504).

Commons’ defense of Hall’s book deserves careful examination. It is undeniable that for many aspects Commons and Hall’s analyses proceeded along similar paths – and this also confirmed by Hall’s insisted reference to Commons’ *Chautauquan* articles. As far as the characterization of Jewish immigrants is concerned, Hall closely followed Ripley and Commons. He repeated that Jews have extraordinary longevity despite their outward appearance of physical degeneracy; that they have an inherent dislike for outdoor and manual labor; that they have a “keen personal ambition,” and “such lawbreaking as they do is usually in the breach of sanitary regulations or in trying to gain some monetary advantage by craft and deceit” (1906, 51). Leaving aside such a portrayal of the Jew (which should sound familiar now), we can affirm that in general terms Commons and Hall shared the intense conviction that the country that was their birthright was being overrun by a mass of undeserving and backward foreigners. Differently from Commons, however, Hall phrased his arguments in an explicit deterministic fashion, emphasizing the unchangeability of inherited racial traits and their direct effect on the institutional framework of a society. “Recent discoveries in biology” – he wrote (1906, 99) – “show that in the long run heredity is far more important than environment or education; for though the latter can develop, it cannot create.” In a following passage he explained:

[A] new nation derives its whole character and has its whole future determined by its first settlers; and when subsequent immigration takes place on a scale large in relation to the total population, equally far-reaching changes may be made in the nation's institutions and ideals. [...] What is impressed upon two men will produce widely different results, according to the way they react towards it; and this reaction depends upon those vast, vague undercurrents of life, as Professor William James calls them, little understood, often hardly noticed, which are largely determined by heredity. Education, imitation of others, will do much to produce outward conformity, but racial characteristics will withstand the influence of centuries (1906, 100-101).

Interestingly, in spite of such differences in style and emphasis, Commons did not hesitate to express his approval of Hall’s restrictionist agenda. “Naturally” – he wrote (1907b, 504) – “the distinguishing value of the work is in the parts dealing with those aspects of the question which Mr.

²³ In addition to Hall, the original leaders of the IRL included Robert De Courey Ward, who became America’s leading professor of climatology at Harvard, and Charles Warren, who served as assistant attorney general in the Wilson administration. Hall, Ward and Warren were all graduated from the Harvard class of 1889 – the same class that produced the leading American eugenicist Charles B. Davenport (Spiro 2009, 197).

Hall has himself been for many years directly concerned.” Commons’ main reference here is to the proposal to introduce a literacy test in order to restrict undesirable immigration – a measure that the IRL had publicly advocated since its founding and that Hall amply discusses in his volume. The importance attached to literacy in large part reflected the sense that a literate citizenship was necessary to vote and fulfill other civic duties required in a democratic society (Higham 1969). Literacy in any language was also important because it would provide a sign of the immigrant’s character and intelligence. Indeed, the literacy test proposed by Hall and the IRL, which required that immigrants read and demonstrate comprehension of a selected piece of text translated into their own language or dialect in order to enter the country, was partially based on this logic. “While it should be clearly understood that it is not claimed that ability to read and write is an evidence of good moral character,” – Hall wrote – “this test would, nevertheless, practically operate to exclude a very large part of the immigration which is destitute of resources either in money, or still more, in ability and knowledge of a means to support itself; which is generally ignorant; which has criminal tendencies; which is averse to country life and congregates in our city slums; which has a low standard of living and little ambition to seek a better; and which has no permanent interests in this country” (Hall 1906, 273). Such a test would have not only lowered the total number of immigrants entering the country every year; it would have also – without having to mention any nationality by name – allowed to discriminate against the new immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, where illiteracy was much higher than in Northwestern Europe. Jewish immigration was certainly one of the main targets. Hall leaves no doubt in this connection:

From manifests examined by the writer at New York in 1902 the illiteracy of Hebrews was 44.9 per cent [...]. It is asserted that the Hebrew illiteracy arises from the immigrant’s misunderstanding of the question whether he can read and write, and that, in fact, all Hebrews can read and write Yiddish. Actual tests made at New York by the Immigration Restriction League do not, however, entirely sustain this contention” (Hall 1906, 82).

As we learn from Barbara Solomon (1956, 132), Commons himself testified in support of a literacy test a number of times as a representative of the IRL. The difference in approach between Commons and Hall pointed out above, however, surfaces once again when we scrutinize their actual motivations for proposing such a test. Hall’s condemnation of illiteracy is in fact tainted of a racist determinism – albeit phrased in Lamarckian terms – that is absent from Commons. Hall in fact believed that the illiteracy of Eastern and Southern Europeans in their own languages was also an indication that they were inherently less capable of acquiring the superior traits associated with English-speaking races. Indeed, Hall was ready to admit that “undoubtedly some illiterates would make desirable citizens and undoubtedly mere illiteracy as such can be conquered, in the second generation at all events, with much labor and expense;” but he nonetheless expressed his firm belief that “the hereditary tendencies of the peoples illiterate abroad, and especially of their uneducated classes, cannot be overcome in a generation or two” (1906, 273). In Commons’ writings, instead, we could find no mention of the “biological” implications of illiteracy. Commons did not conceive literacy as an indication of the actual or potential capacities of a determinate “racial” stock. His approval of a literacy test mostly stemmed from the conviction that knowledge of English – or the perceived ability to learn it suggested by literacy in any language – was a necessary prerequisite for the new immigrants in order to begin a sound and effective process of assimilation. Commons made clear his position in the pages of *Races and Immigrants*. After noticing that nations with a plethora of native languages tend to have more political conflict, and less democratic development, than nations with one dominant language like the United States, he explicated:

To be great a nation need not be of one blood, it must be of one mind. Racial inequality and inferiority are fundamental only to the extent that they prevent mental and moral assimilation. If we think together, we can act together, and the organ of common thought and action is common language. Through the prism of this noble instrument of the human mind all other instruments focus their powers of assimilation upon the new generations as they come forth from the disunited immigrants. The public schools, the newspapers, the books, the political parties, the trade unions, the religious propagandists with their manifold agencies of universal education, the railroads with their inducements to our unparalleled mobility of population, are all dependent upon our common

language for their high efficiency. Herein are we fortunate in our plans for the Americanization of all races within our borders. We are not content to let the fate of our institutions wait upon the slow and doubtful processes of blood amalgamation, but are eager to direct our energies toward the more rapid movements of mental assimilation (1907a, 20-21).

“Race and heredity may be beyond our organized control” – this was Commons’ conclusion – “but the instrument of a common language is at hand for conscious improvement through education and social environment” (1907a, 21).

4.3. So far we have dealt exclusively with American Progressive Era authors. This, however, should by no means convey the idea that social scientists across the Atlantic were immune from “racialist leanings” such as those discussed above. In this connection, one excellent example of the contrary is provided by Beatrice Webb’s portrayal of the Jews of “East London” – the area of the city with the highest concentration of Jewish immigrants and where sweatshops had proliferated. In accordance with the typical stereotyping rhetoric of the period, Russian and Polish Jews were seen to differ from other immigrant “races” in being more clannish, money-loving, dishonest, ambitious, and individualistic. As she put it:

And it is by competition, and by competition alone, that the Jew seeks success. But in the case of the foreign Jews, it is a competition unrestricted by the personal dignity of a definite standard of life, and unchecked by the social feelings of class loyalty and trade integrity. The small manufacturer injures the trade through which he rises to the rank of a capitalist by bad and dishonest production. The petty dealer or small money-lender, imbued with the economic precept of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market, suits his wares to the weakness, the ignorance, and the vice of his customers; the mechanic, indifferent to the interests of the class to which he temporarily belongs, and intent only on becoming a small master, acknowledges no limit to the process of under-bidding fellow workers, except the exhaustion of his own strength. In short, the foreign Jew totally ignores all social obligations other than keeping the law of the land, the maintenance of his own family, and the charitable relief of his co-religionists.

Thus the immigrant Jew, fresh from the sorrowful experiences typical of the history of his race, seems to justify by his existence those strange assumptions which figured for man in the political economy of Ricardo—an always Enlightened Selfishness, seeking employment or profit with an absolute mobility of body and mind, without pride, without preference, without interests outside the struggle for the existence and welfare of the individual and the family. We see these assumptions verified in the Jews inhabitants of Whitechapel; and in the Jewish East End trades we may watch the prophetic deductions of the Hebrew economist actually fulfilled—in a perpetually recurring bare subsistence wage for the great majority of manual workers (1898a, 44-45; see also 1898b).

There are several interesting parallels between the analyses of Jewish traits advanced by Beatrice Webb and Commons, and this has led an acute observer such as Perlman (1952, 306) to imply a possible influence of the former on the latter.²⁴ Unfortunately, we cannot determine with certainty whether Commons was aware of and had read Beatrice Webb’s essays on the East London Jews by the time he wrote the Report for the Industrial Commission and the *Chautauquan* article series. What we learn from Commons’ autobiography (1934a, 71), instead, is that around 1900 he began to read Sydney and Beatrice Webb’s *Industrial Democracy* (1897) while on his trip to the headquarters of about half of the national trade unions in order to discover the effects of immigration on unionism. As pointed out by Richard A. Gonce, for Commons that volume turned out to be a “gold mine chock-full of glittering nuggets concerning criticism of neoclassical economic theory, tips about how to collect and

²⁴ Differently from Commons, however, Beatrice Webb made it clear that she did not consider the sweatshop a typical Jewish or immigrant institution. “No one would deny” – she wrote (1898b, 143 n1) – “that the evils of sweating are aggravated by the presence of workers, such as the Jews, with an indefinitely low standard of life and absence of skill.” On the other hand, she continued, “the evils of sweating exist where neither Jews nor foreigners have penetrated [...]; or where their competition is but little felt.” On Beatrice Webb’s views on Judaism and Zionism see Gorni (1978).

sort out evidence obtained by field investigation, a history of British labor unionism, and critical advocacy of industrial democracy” (Gonce 2002, 757).²⁵ What Gonce does not mention is that *Industrial Democracy* also contains some relevant passages devoted to Jewish immigrant workers that might not have escaped Commons’ attention. In one of these passages the Webbs wrote:

The chief importance of the immigration would then lie in its indirect effects on national character and capacity. If the immigrants, like the Polish Jews, brought in a lower Standard of Life, the result might be (besides increasing the overcrowding of the slums) a constant influence for degradation. If, on the other hand, the immigrants, like the Huguenots, introduced a higher Standard of Life, their example might produce a permanent improvement in national character. There is also the obscure question of the effect of the intermixture of races to be considered (Webb and Webb 1897, 744).

Leaving aside the reference to the “obscure question of the effect of the intermixture of races,” it is evident from the above that, like many of their contemporaries (Leonard 2003), the Webbs were assessing the effects of immigration on the labor market in terms of competing classes of workers with different standards of life. Workers with lower standards of life are disposed to accept lower wages, so that the lowest standard of life determines the prevalent wage and work conditions in each industry. For the Webbs, different races show different standards of life – although they deliberately refrained from investigating the source and nature of these differences.²⁶ Accordingly, they proposed a “hypothetical” tripartite classification based on the racial group’s willingness to accept a lower (and their ambition to obtain a higher) wage. First, there are those racial groups, epitomized by the “Anglo-Saxon skilled artisan,” which refuse to work below a customary standard of life, but who have no definite maximum, that is “they will be stimulated to intenser effort and new wants by every increase of income.” Second, there are those races, such as “the African negro,” which show no assignable minimum and a very low maximum, i.e., “they will work [...] for indefinitely low wages, but cannot be induced to work at all once their primitive wants are satisfied.” Finally, there is the Jew, who is the sole in possessing neither a minimum nor a maximum: “he will accept the lowest terms rather than remain out of employment; as he rises in the world new wants stimulate him to increased intensity of effort, and no amount of income causes him to slacken his indefatigable activity.” To “this remarkable elasticity” in standard of life, the Webbs attributed both the wealth and the poverty of the Jews, the “striking fact that their wage-earning class is permanently the poorest in all Europe, whilst individual Jews are the wealthiest men of their respective countries” (1897, 697-98 n1).

Commons developed his argument along similar lines, but with one crucial difference in emphasis. Like the Webbs, Commons described the competition between different immigrant groups or “races” as a competition between higher and lower standards of life. For Commons, in the history of American industrial evolution, the Irish had displaced the “educated sons and daughters of American stock” in the textile mills of New England, but were, in turn, supplanted by French Canadians. Then, when French Canadians acquired a higher standard of life, they were replaced by Syrians, Poles, and Italians. Similarly, in the garment industry, the Irish and German took the job of more “advanced” English and Scotch tailors. In turn, “Russian Jews” rapidly crowded them out, but their own position seems now to be threatened by the arrival of Italians (1907a, 151-52). Compared to the Webbs, however, Commons was much more cautious in proposing a strict correspondence between races and standards of life. Racial groups can improve their living standards through assimilation, as in the case of French Canadians described above, while different standards can exist within a single racial stock. More importantly, social institutions such as the trade union can promote cooperation between workers of different nationalities and help overcome “racial hostility.” This led Commons to affirm:

²⁵ For other assertions that the Webbs’ *Industrial Democracy* deeply influenced Commons see Schatz (1993, 87) and Kaufman (1994, 153). For a broader analysis of institutionalism and its British connections see Rutherford (2007).

²⁶ “We are unable here to do more than refer to the existence of these popular ideas as to the Standard of Life. How they originate—why, for instance, the English workman should always have insisted on eating costly and unnutritious wheaten bread, or why some classes or races display so much more stubbornness of standard than others, would be a fruitful subject for economic inquiry” (Webb and Webb 1897, 697 n1).

This hostility is not primarily racial in character. It is the competitive struggle for standards of living. It appears to be racial because for the most part races have different standards. But where different races agree on their standards the racial struggle ceases, and the negro, Italian, Slav, and American join together in the class struggle of a trade-union. On the other hand, if the same race has different standards, the economic struggle breaks down even the strongest affinities of race. The Russian Jew in the sweat-shop turns against the immigrant Jew, fleeing from the very persecution that he himself has escaped, and taking his place in the employment of the capitalist German Jew (Commons 1907a, 115).

Commons' attempt to attenuate attracted some criticism from the more biologically oriented writers of time. According to Charles A. Ellwood, the leading sociologist from the University of Missouri, Commons contention that "race antagonism springs from economic competition," was not supported by sufficient evidence. "While economic competition undoubtedly intensifies race antagonism," – Ellwood wrote – "the researches of race psychologists have shown it to be quite independent of economic conditions in the narrow sense; and this the author also practically acknowledges in his references to the relations between the Indians and the whites" (1908, 562).

5. In his autobiography (1934a, 80-81) Commons devoted words of praise to Abraham Bisno and, quite significantly, to his "beloved" Selig Perlman, two Jewish men to whom he felt close personally and professionally. Still, as recounted by Perlman to his son, Commons did not hesitate to express disdain towards Jews in many occasions, both public and private. More significantly, as documented in this paper, in his published writings Commons joined the bulk of Progressive social scientists in defining Jews as a race and in stereotyping their behavior in terms of innate traits and inherited propensities. Are we thus facing another case of "ambivalent anti-Semitism" – to go back to Reder's initial expression? Before venturing any answer, we think, a precise definition of anti-Semitism is needed. In his rejoinder to Reder, Hamowy (2002, 255) describes anti-Semitism as "the belief that Jews are in some way morally or socially inferior and/or that treating them as such either individually or collectively, as through the state, is legitimate." We are not completely satisfied with this definition. The very notion of "inferiority" provides in fact a weak foundation that does not capture the entire complexity of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. In this connection, Jeremiah W. Jenks and W. Jett Lauch pointed out in 1911: "[...] no one who knows the Jews considers them inferior to any other race, either physically or mentally, morally or religiously. In such countries as Russia and Austria it is frankly said that the hostility to the Jews is felt because of their mental superiority, which enables them to exploit the weaker natives" (1911, 270).²⁷ As we have seen, Commons was careful enough to exclude the Semites from the ranks of "inferior" races – a label that he reserved for those races originated from the "two belts of earth between the tropics of Capricorn and Cancer and the Arctic and Antarctic circles" (1907a, 213). Furthermore, he primarily characterized Jews in terms of their excessive individualism and ambitiousness, terms which may undoubtedly acquire a negative connotation in certain contexts, but which do not necessarily involve any strict notion of "inferiority." A more workable definition of anti-Semitism, which encompasses the concept of inferiority but does not rely exclusively on it, is provided by the historian Gavin I. Langmuir (1990). Langmuir proposes an objective distinction between xenophobic hostility toward Jews and what he calls "chimerical" hatred toward Jews. In his approach, xenophobia takes realistic, empirically based observations made about some members of a culturally distinguishable "outgroup" and transforms them into a global prejudice directed indiscriminately against all its members. Langmuir posits this generic definition of xenophobia – the improper generalization of realistic but hostile thoughts and feelings concerning outgroup members – in order to reserve the term anti-Semitism for instances of specific hatred generated from "chimerical assertions, present fantasies, figments of the imagination, monsters that, although dressed syntactically in the clothes of real humans, have never been seen and are projections of mental processes unconnected with the real people of the outgroup" (1990, 334). Langmuir thus

²⁷ Both Jenks and Lauch were associated with the Immigration Commission that the United States Congress had established on February 26, 1907 in order to investigate on the social and economic consequences of immigration.

argues that the word “anti-Semitism,” because it implies a special kind of hatred unique to Jews, should only be used when Jew-hatred is entirely “chimerical.” In other words, Jew-hatred is only “anti-Semitism” when it has absolutely no connection with reality.²⁸

Langmuir’s work provides us with a double “interpretative key” which allows a more articulate reading of Commons’ views towards Jews. First, it appears quite evident from our discussion that Commons’ racial theorizing was developed within a general “xenophobic” (à la Langmuir) framework that involved many other leading social scientists of the time. As a significant body of scholarship has argued to varying degree, American preoccupation with race in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was in fact fueled by the arrival of a new wave of immigrants, largely from Southern and Eastern Europe, who differed noticeably in appearance and customs from the Northern Europeans who had preceded them. Between 1881 and 1920, over twenty million immigrants arrived in the United States (Daniels 2004). In 1907, the highest point of this migration stream, over one million people entered the United States, roughly 150,000 of which were Jewish (Joseph 1914). The overwhelmingly Eastern European Jews who arrived in the United States formed one of the largest new immigrant populations, and they certainly played a *major* – but by no means *exclusive* – role in the racial preoccupations of the time. As correctly pointed out by an early interpreter of Progressive Era debates on immigration, the “uncharitable descriptions of the Russian or Polish Jew involved no more special discrimination than similar denunciations of the southern Italian” (Solomon 1972, 168-69). Commons’ racial characterization of the Jews in terms of their low standard of life, their tendency to congregate in urban centers, and their suitability to sweatshops life was in large part xenophobic, in the sense that, to use Langmuir’s words (1990, 328), it involved assertions that “attribute a socially menacing conduct to an outgroup and all its members but are empirically based only on the conduct of a historical minority of the members; they neglect other, unthreatening, characteristics of the outgroup; and they do not acknowledge that there are great differences between the individuals who compose the outgroup as there are between the individuals who compose the ingroup.” Commons’ discussion of the racial traits of other nationalities – Italians, Slavs, Syrians, not to mention the “Negros” – involved the similar process of isolating actions or characteristics of few individuals and let that be assertive for the whole outgroup. In this connection, it should be added, our paper has also shown that Commons’ adoption of a racialist perspective, as far as Jews are concerned, did not involve any strict form of biological determinism – and the same can be said, allowing for differences in style and emphasis, of other leading racial authors of the day such as Ripley and Ross. More generally, with the notable exception of “inferior” races, Commons did not attribute to race a major role as an independent causal variable in the explanation of social phenomena. Racial heredity, though it may help to explain certain peculiar features of a population group, was itself ultimately the (implicitly) Lamarckian product of social and environmental forces (Ramstad and Starkey 1995). Significantly, even Kate H. Claghorn, a well-known paladin of immigrants’ rights and an outspoken opponent to racism, in her unsympathetic review of Commons’ *Races and Immigrants* was willing to admit that “[i]n respect to European white immigration, instance after instance is given of exceedingly rapid effacement of the original group lines of difference, especially through the work of trade-unions, which have repeatedly shown their power to unite new arrival of different nationalities on a basis of common class interest” (1909, 136).²⁹

Given the above, should we thus conclude that Commons was immune from any mark of anti-Semitism? Our answer is negative. It is our contention in fact that, albeit phrased within a general xenophobic context, Commons’ stereotyping of Jews contains assertions that do imply, to some extent, anti-Semitism as conceived by Langmuir. It is not difficult, in fact, to detect in Commons’ depiction of the individualistic, undisciplined, speculative, and metaphysical Jew traces of three of the several historically recurrent anti-Semitic images discussed by Helen Fein (1987), namely: 1) the Jew as a betrayer and a manipulator (the Judas image); 2) the Jew as an exploiter personifying usury or modern capitalism (the Shylock image); 3) the Jew as a skeptic, an iconoclast, a revolutionary, undermining faith and authority (the Red Jew).³⁰ In this paper we have shown how these prejudices led Commons

²⁸ Langmuir’s approach to anti-Semitism has been the object of some criticism. See for instance Schäfer (1998).

²⁹ Claghorn had worked under Commons during the drafting of the Industrial Commission report.

³⁰ Fein (1987, 72) acknowledges that some of these images, albeit prevalently anti-Semitic, may also have a xenophobic connotation.

to the “chimerical” claim, presented in his 1901 Industrial Commission Report, that the innate traits of the Jewish worker would have prevented the establishment of an enduring and effective trade unionism. “The Jew joins the union when it offers a bargain and drops it when he gets, or fails to get, the bargain,” he sentenced (1901, 327). Commons’ conjectures about the future of Jewish unionism were to be falsified quite soon by historical evidence. As ably documented by Nathan Reich (1955), within ten years after the publication of the Industrial Commission report, a series of celebrated mass strikes, known under the name of “The Great Revolt,” agitated the immigrant Jewish community. General strikes by shirtwaist makers in 1909-1910, cloakmakers in 1910, furriers in 1912, men’s tailors in 1913, and others, established the unions as powers to be reckoned with in the garment industry in New York and in other Jewish trades. Entering the “Revolt” with 5,000 members in 41 constituents organizations, the United Hebrew Trades, a federation of predominantly Jewish unions, claimed 250,000 members and 111 affiliated by 1914. “Jewish unionism had arrived,” emphatically concludes Reich (1955, 267; see also Soyer 2002). We have seen that by the time Commons wrote his *Chautauquan* articles, then published as *Races and Immigrants in America*, he had somehow changed opinion acknowledging that even “the individualistic Jew from Russia, contrary to his race instinct, is joining the unions” (1907a, 153). But for the definitive recantation of his original position we have to wait until 1934, when in the pages of his autobiography, Commons felt compelled to admit:

I visited with him [Abraham Bisno] in New York one of the garment workers’ strikes which occurred at the semi-annual opening of the busy season. It was certainly a mass movement. All of the workers in that branch of clothing were out. Thousands were on an open space, listening to the eloquence of Emma Goldman, while the organizers of the upstart union were negotiating with their employers. He said that within a month these masses would quit paying dues and would begin secretly cutting wages by connivance with their bosses. The union rules would be evaded and the union would dissolve. So it happened, and I reached a conclusion that the individualistic Jew could not maintain a permanent union.

But I was wrong. I had not distinguished between race psychology and industrial psychology, nor between sweatshop psychology and factory psychology. Ten years later, when the factory system was coming into garment industry, the Jews organized permanent unions and became the leaders of the other races in that industry (1934 a, 70: emphasis added).

Commons explicit, albeit tardy, formal disavowal of his beliefs about Jewish workers bears witness to the intellectual honesty of a man who in his autobiography declared that “[l]iberty, equality, and defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law were my birthright” (1934a, 53). As the evidence provided in this paper suggests, however, in Progressive Era America neither cultural enlightenment nor sincere commitment to social reform would work as effective barriers against prejudicial and mythical notion about Jews.

References

- Abernethy, Arthur T. 1910 *The Jew A Negro: Being a Study of the Jewish Ancestry from an Impartial Standpoint*. Moravian Falls, NC: Dixie Publishing.
- Asso, Pier Francesco and Luca Fiorito. 2004. *Human Nature and Economic Institutions: Instinct Psychology, Behaviorism, and the Development of American Institutionalism*. *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 26(4): 445-77.
- Bender, Daniel E. 2003. A Foreign Method of Working: Racial Degeneration, Gender Disorder, and the Sweatshop Danger in American. In Bender, Daniel E. and Richard A. Greenwald (eds.) *Sweatshop USA: The American Sweatshop in Historical and Global Perspective*, pp. 19-36. London and New York: Routledge.
- Birmingham, Stephen. 1967. *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Brown, Linda J. 2004. *The Literature of Immigration and Racial Formation: Becoming White, Becoming Other, Becoming American in the Late Progressive Era*. New York: Routledge.
- Cherry, Robert D. 1976. Racial Thought and the early Economics Profession. *Review of Social Economy* 34(2): 147-62.
- Cherry, Robert D. 1989. *Discrimination: Its Economic Impact on Blacks, Women, and Jews*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- Claghorn, Kate H. 1909. Review of *Races and Immigrants in America* by John R. Commons. *Political Science Quarterly* 24(1): 135-37.
- Commons, John R. 1897. Natural Selection, Social Selection, and Heredity. *The Arena* 18: 90-97.
- Commons, John R. 1901. Immigration and Its Economic Effects. In *Reports of the U.S. Industrial Commission*, Vol. 15, 293-743. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- Commons, John R. 1903-1904. Racial Composition of the American People. A series of nine articles in the *Chautauquan*: Race and Democracy, 38(1): 33-42; Colonial Race Elements, 38(2): 118-125; The Negro, 38(3): 223-34; Immigration during the Nineteenth Century, 38(4): 333-40; Immigration during the Nineteenth Century (Continued), 38(5): 433-43; Industry, 38(6): 533-43; Social and Industrial Problems, 39(1): 13-22; City Life, Crime and Poverty, 39(2): 115-24; Amalgamation and Assimilation, 39(3): 217-27.
- Commons, John R. 1907a. *Races and Immigrants in America*. New York: The Chautauqua Press.
- Commons, John R. 1907b. Review of *Immigration and Its Effect Upon the United States* by Prescott F. Hall. *Charities and the Commons* 17: 504.
- Commons, John R. 1919. Review of *Instincts in Industry: A study of Working class Psychology by Ordway Tead and Creative Impulse in Industry by Helen Marot*. *American Economic Review* 9(2): 312-16.
- Commons, John R. 1924. *Legal foundations of Capitalism*. New York: Macmillan.
- Commons, John R. 1934a. *Myself*. New York: Macmillan.
- Commons, John R. 1934b. *Institutional Economics; Its Place in Political Economy*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Commons, John R. 1950. *The economics of Collective Action*. New York: Macmillan.
- Cooke, Kathy J. 1998. The Limits of Heredity: Nature and Nurture in American Eugenics before 1915. *Journal of the History of Biology* 31(2): 263-78.
- Daniels, Roger. 2004. *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Durand, Edward D. 1902. The United States Industrial Commission: Methods of government Investigation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 16(4): 564-86.
- Eisner, J. Michael. 1967. *William Morris Leiserson: A Biography*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Ellwood, Charles A. 1908. Review of *Races and Immigrants in America* by John R. Commons. *American Journal of sociology* 13(4): 561-62.
- Ely, Richard T. 1883. *French and German Socialism in Modern Times*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Goldenweiser, Emanuel A. 1912. Review of *Die Zukunft der Juden* by Werner Sombart. *American Economic Review* 2(3): 678-79.
- Hall, Prescott F. 1906. *Immigration and its effects upon the United States*. New York: Holt.
- Harter, Lafayette G. 1962. *John R. Commons: His Assault on Laissez Faire*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press.
- Hove, Arthur. 1991. *The University of Wisconsin: A Pictorial History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Jenks, Jeremiah W. and W. Jett Lauck. 1911. *The Immigration Problem: A Study of American Immigration Conditions and Needs*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- Joseph, Samuel K. 1914. *Jewish Immigration to the United States, from 1881 to 1910*. New York: Columbia University.
- Fein, Helen. 1987. Dimensions of Antisemitism: Attitudes, Collective Accusations, and Actions. In Fein, Helen (ed.) *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Anti-Semitism*, pp. 67-85. New York: De Gruyter.
- Feltes, N. N. 1992. Misery and the Production of Misery: Defining Sweated Labor in 1890. *Social History* 17(3): 441-52.

- Fink, Leon. 1991a. "Intellectuals Versus "Workers:" Academic Requirements and the Creation of Labor History. *American Historical Review* 96(2): 395-421.
- Fink, Leon. 1991b. A Memoir of Selig Perlman and His Life at the University of Wisconsin: Based on an Interview of Mark Perlman. *Labor History* 32(3): 503-25.
- Fiorito, Luca. 2010. John R. Commons, Wesley N. Hohfeld and the Origins of Transactional Economics. *History of Political Economy* 42(2): 267-95.
- Frankel, Noralee and Nancy S. Dye (eds.). 1991. *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Goldstein, Eric L. 2001. The Unstable Other: Locating the Jew in Progressive-Era American Racial Discourse. *American Jewish History* 89(4): 383-409.
- Gonce, Richard A. 2002. John R. Commons's "Five Big Years:" 1899-1904. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 61(4): 755-77.
- Gorni, Yosef. 1978. Beatrice Webb's Views on Judaism and Zionism. *Jewish Social Studies*, 40(2): 95-116.
- Hamowy, Ronald. 2002. A Note on Hayek and anti-Semitism. *History of Political Economy* 34(1): 255-60.
- Higham, John (1969) *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*. New York: Atheneum.
- Hodgson, Geoffrey M. 2003. John R. Commons and the Foundations of Institutional Economics. *Journal of Economic Issues* 47(3): 547-76.
- Kaufman, Bruce E. 1994. The Evolution of Thought on the Competitive Nature of Labor Markets. In Kerrand, Clark and Paul D. Staudohar (eds.) *Labor Economics and Industrial Relations: Markets and Institutions*, pp 145-88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Langmuir, Gavin I. 1990. *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Leroy-Beaulieu, Anatole. 1895. *Israel Among the Nations: A Study of the Jews and Antisemitism*. New York: G.P. Putnam's sons.
- Leonard, Thomas C. 2003. More Merciful and Not Less Effective: Eugenics and Progressive-Era American Economics. *History of Political Economy* 35(4): 709-34.
- Leonard, Thomas C. 2005. Mistaking Eugenics for Social Darwinism: Why Eugenics is Missing from the History of American Economics. *History of Political Economy* 37 (supplement): 200-233.
- Leonard, Thomas C. 2009 American Economic Reform in the Progressive Era: Its Foundational Beliefs and Their Relationship to Eugenics. *History of Political Economy* 41(1): 109-141.
- Perlman, Selig. 1952. Jewish-American Unionism, Its Birth Pangs and Contribution to the General American Labor Movement. *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 41(4): 297-337.
- Piott, Steven L. 2011. *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood.
- Pope, Jesse E. 1905. *The Clothing Industry in New York*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri.
- Ramstad, Yngve and James L. Starkey. 1995. The Racial Theories of John R. Commons. *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology* 13: 1-74.
- Reder, Melvin W. 2000. The Anti-Semitism of Some Eminent Economists. *History of Political Economy* 32(4): 833-56.
- Reder, Melvin W. 2002. Reply to Hamowy's Note on Hayek and Anti-Semitism. *History of Political Economy* 34(1): 262-72.
- Reich, Nathan. 1955. The "Americanization" of Jewish Unionism: A Two Way Process. *Jewish quarterly Review* 45(4): 540-61.
- Ripley, William Z. 1899. *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study*. New York: D. Appleton and Co.
- Ripley, William Z. 1904. Race Factors in Labor Union. *Atlantic Monthly* 93(March): 299-308.
- Ross, Edward A. 1902. Recent Tendencies in Sociology II. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 17(1): 82-110.
- Ross, Edward A. 1914. *The Old World in the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People*. New York: The Century Co.
- Rutherford, Malcolm. 2006. Wisconsin Institutionalism: John R. Commons and His Students. *Labor History*, 47(2): 161-188.
- Rutherford, Malcolm. 2007. American Institutionalism and Its British Connections. *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 14(2): 291-323.
- Schäfer, Peter. 1998. *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Schatz, Ronald W. 1993. From Commons to Dunlop: Rethinking the Field and Theory of Industrial Relations. In Lichtenstein, Nelson and Howell J. Harris (eds.) *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise*, pp. 87-112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seidman, Joel. 1967. Foreword. In Bisno, Abraham, *Abraham Bisno: Union Pioneer. An Autobiographical Account of Bisno's Early Life and the Beginnings of Unionism in the Women's Garment Industry*, pp. vii-xvii. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Solomon, Barbara M. 1972. *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Soyer, Daniel. 1997. *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Spiro, Jonathan P. (2009) *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant*. Burlington: University of Vermont Press.
- Stocking, George W. 1968. Lamarckism in American Social Science, 1890-1915. In *Race, Culture, and Evolution; Essays in the History of Anthropology*, pp. 234-69. New York: Free Press.
- Stocking, George W. 1994. The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race. *Modernism/Modernity* 1(1): 4-16.
- Watson, John B. 1925. *Behaviorism*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Webb, Beatrice. 1898a. The Jews of East London. In Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. 1898. *Problems of Modern Industry*, pp. 20-45. London: Longmans, Green.
- Webb, Beatrice. 1898b. How to Do Away with the Sweating System. In Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. 1898. *Problems of Modern Industry*, pp. 156-91. London: Longmans, Green.
- Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. 1897. *Industrial Democracy*. 2 Vol. London: Longmans, Green.
- Weintraub, E. Roy. 2003. Prejudice and the History of Economics: A Minisymposium. *History of Political Economy* 35(4) 685-686.
- Weintraub, E. Roy. 2012. Keynesian Historiography and the Anti-Semitism Question. *History of Political Economy* 44(1): 41-67.
- Willcox, Walter F. 1906. Review of *Immigration and Its Effect Upon the United States* by Prescott F. Hall. *American Economic Review* 11(4): 921-22.