

treating people with mental health conditions—like the controversy over physical restraint—to legal aspects or the ideas and implementations of alternative methods, for example, family care and colonies (254–63). It is worth noting that Lafferton not only shows the perception and adaptation of thoughts from abroad but she also pays attention to locally developed ideas. For instance, she dedicates a subchapter to explaining the theory of Ferenc Schwartz, the founder of the private asylum mentioned above (116–26).

Reconstructing arguments of the various debates, Lafferton shows how doctors from different backgrounds held very different views. For example, practical-minded psychiatrists working in asylums saw their discipline differently than their colleagues in academia.

Among the ideas mentioned, Lafferton refers to the concept of “degeneration,” which also gained popularity among Hungarian psychiatrists (330–32) and was closely related to eugenic thinking (340–44). In my opinion, however, Lafferton underestimates the influence of eugenics on *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century Hungary (363).

A merit of the book is the bigger picture of the societies and inequalities of both post-revolution Hungary of the 1850s and the liberal era following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. Of course, uneven access is unsurprising in the case of the Schwartz Asylum, a private enterprise, which was mostly available for patients from a more affluent background. It is quite fascinating, however, how social stratification shaped the Lipótmező state institution, too, where patients were not only separated by sex or by the severity of their illness but also by their financial status (151).

Given the ethnic and religious diversity of pre-Trianon Hungary, passages discussing their effects on mental health care are particularly interesting. Nationalism comprises another compelling layer. For instance, it is notable how nationalistic arguments were used in advocacy for the creation of the National Asylum, connecting the national goal with civilizational ambition (20–21). As expected, gender discourse also appeared prominently within Hungarian psychiatry.

Chapter 8 is the last substantive chapter that covers the turn of the century years. Its topic deserves a dedicated book due to its intriguing complexity. Psychiatry was already an established speciality, with decades of experience and a settled institutional system. The country had already undergone a dramatic transformation, and new problems had emerged that impacted mental health. Prostitution and syphilis paresis, alcohol abuse, crime, and finally, during World War I, war neurosis or shell shock were all concerns psychiatrists had to deal with both intellectually and in practice.

Emese Lafferton’s complex work demonstrates how medical history transcends its disciplinary boundaries: in addition to psychiatry, readers will learn just as much about its historical and social context. Students of medical history may also find the book of value, as the case of Hungary can provide insights that are not found in the discussions of psychiatry in the core Western countries that comprise the majority of the English language literature on the topic.

doi:10.1017/S0067237823000577

## Lehmann, Matthias B. *The Baron: Maurice de Hirsch and the Jewish Nineteenth Century*

Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022. Pp. 380.

Todd M. Endelman

Emeritus of History and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan  
Email: [endelman@umich.edu](mailto:endelman@umich.edu)

The banker, railway entrepreneur, and philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch (1831–96) was the consummate cosmopolitan. Son of the Bavarian court Jew Joseph von Hirsch, he grew up in Munich, was

educated in Brussels, and married Clara Bischoffsheim, whose banking family had branches in Brussels, Paris, and London. Hirsch made his fortune building railroads, most notably the lines connecting Central Europe with the Ottoman Empire. In 1879, he exchanged his Bavarian citizenship for Austrian citizenship, a strategic move, probably, to bolster his status when negotiating with Ottoman officials. While Paris remained the center of his social life, he also acquired town houses in London and Vienna and country estates in France, Austria, the Czech lands, and Hungary. He was close to two crown princes—Rudolf, heir to the Habsburg throne, and Edward, Queen Victoria's eldest son—and belonged to the entourage of Jewish financiers with whom the latter surrounded himself. (The circle included Rothschilds, Sassoons, and Ernst Cassel.)

Hirsch's cosmopolitanism complemented the geographical breadth of his economic activities and philanthropic ventures. Matthias Lehmann's new biography of Hirsch does justice to both these subjects: that is, his railway building and his extraordinary philanthropy, which focused largely on easing the plight of East European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century.

Hirsch first became active in the Ottoman Empire in 1869, at a point when the reform-minded leaders of the Tanzimat regime saw the absence of a robust transportation system as an impediment to economic modernization. His Turkish clients, it turned out, were difficult. They suspected that he was taking advantage of them, so his relations with them, which stretched over two decades to 1889, were extremely fraught. Still, the project was enormously profitable. Lehmann carefully unwraps this complicated story, detailing its many twists and turns, especially the constantly shifting terms of the concession. He also highlights how social and economic conditions in Turkey—shoddy work habits, graft and corruption, primitive transportation, and lack of skilled workers—constantly threatened to derail the project. Lehmann also shows how, from the start, the building of the railroad became entwined with the rivalries of the great European powers. It also became a lightning rod for antimodern antisemitism in Vienna, which was then becoming a powerful force everywhere in Central Europe. Hirsch himself was repeatedly vilified as predatory, deceitful, and grasping.

Lehmann devotes the second half of the biography to Hirsch's remarkable philanthropy. His only child, his son Lucien, died in 1876, at age thirty, and with no male heirs, Hirsch gave much of his enormous fortune to projects that targeted the distress of East European Jewry. He supported elementary and vocational schools in Galicia and Bukovina, the aim of which was to "civilize" the "backward" Jews of those regions, and he funded trade schools, English language classes, and legal aid for Russian Jewish immigrants in the United States. His most ambitious project was the establishment of agricultural colonies in Argentina for Russian Jews. Here he aimed both to relieve Jewish poverty and to demonstrate to the world that Jews were capable of agricultural labor and not limited to petty trade alone. His conviction that the redemption of the Jews depended on their transformation into agriculturists was not a personal quirk. Since the beginning of the century, Jewish reformers and their Christian allies repeatedly advocated economic restratification as the answer to the Jewish Question. In the late nineteenth century, the most vocal advocates of the return to the soil were the early Zionists. Hirsch's dream of transferring the mass of Russian Jews to Argentina and turning them into farmers was naïve, of course. The colonies, at their peak in 1927, were home to only thirty-three thousand Jews, and there was always leakage from the colonies to the cities. The greatest obstacle to the scheme was not the acquisition of suitable land or the transfer of Jews from Russia to South America but rather their unfamiliarity with and lack of enthusiasm for agriculture.

One of the strengths of Lehmann's account is his contextualization of Hirsch's Argentinian fantasy, which historians usually treat as a misguided philanthropic scheme. Lehmann argues that this was much more than an example of charitable assistance on a colossal scale. He views it as a political response to the crisis of Russian Jewry, as one whose rivals included Jewish nationalism, revolutionary socialism, and liberal assimilationism. He also makes clear that Hirsch, an unobservant Jew, was not concerned with the fate of Judaism or the Jewish collectivity. He was a radical assimilationist, whose goal was the normalization of Jewish life as preparation for full integration into the non-Jewish world. Contrary to what one might expect, he saw no value in the preservation of Jewish collective life, religious or otherwise.