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# Robert Zimmermann and Herbartianism in Vienna: The Critical Reception of Brentano and his Followers

**Abstract:** This study concerns an aspect of the reception of Herbartianism in Austria that has not been thoroughly investigated so far. It pertains to a controversy opposing Robert Zimmermann and Franz Brentano in the context of discussions that took place in the Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna. This study looks more specifically at three important episodes involving the Philosophical Society: first, the controversy over Herbartianism, second, that over the evaluation of Schelling's philosophy, and finally, the reception of Bolzano in Austria. I will first describe the circumstances that led Zimmermann to get involved in the Philosophical Society and the source of his controversy with Brentano and his followers. I will then comment on Zimmermann's address as chairman of the Philosophical Society and Brentano's reaction to Zimmermann's remarks on Schelling and the historical period to which he belongs. I will complete my analysis of Brentano's reaction with a summary of his evaluation of Herbart's philosophical program to which Zimmermann adhered. The last part focuses on Zimmermann's decisive role in the reception of Bolzano in Vienna in connection with the Bolzano Commission established by the Philosophical Society. I will conclude with brief remarks on Zimmermann's legacy in Vienna.

## Introduction

In "My Last Wishes to Austria", written just before he left Vienna in 1895, Franz Brentano describes the state of philosophy in Austria when he arrived in Vienna in 1874:

I came in a time when it had become completely clear about the emptiness of pompously inflated doctrinal systems, but where the seeds of true philosophy were still almost entirely

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lacking. The minister Ausperg (Stremayr) believed that he found in me the man who was most suitable for bringing such a germ to Austria. I was called and I followed the call. I found the situation extremely sad: a Herbartian doctrine, but no Herbartian school (the hour had already passed for them); and that nothing was everything.<sup>1</sup>

Brentano undertook to implant the seed of an authentic philosophy through his program of philosophy as science, which he first exposed publicly in his inaugural address at the University of Vienna in 1874 (Brentano 1929a). Brentano's efforts were very successful considering that, after his departure from Vienna, most of the important chairs of philosophy in the Habsburg Empire were occupied by his students. But to achieve this goal, it was first necessary to dislodge Herbart's followers who, after the reform of 1849, held key positions in Austrian universities. Besides Brentano, who replaced Franz Karl Lott, an influential disciple of Herbart in Vienna (see Dahms, forthcoming; Dahms/Stadler 2015, p. 83–88), his student Carl Stumpf took over Wilhelm F. Volkmann's chair in 1879, another influential disciple of Herbart in Prague. The following year, Anton Marty obtained Johann Heinrich Loewe's chair, which marks the beginning of the school of Brentano in Prague that lasted until the late 1930s. Finally, Alois Höfler, a student of Brentano and Meinong, replaced two influential disciples of Herbart in Austria, namely Otto Willmann in Prague in 1903, and Theodor Vogt in Vienna in 1907.

One of the main proponents of Herbartianism in Austria, to whom Brentano refers in the excerpt above, is Robert von Zimmermann, who held a chair of philosophy at the University of Vienna from 1861 to 1896. Zimmermann began his studies in philosophy by attending Bolzano's lectures in Prague, and he then turned to Franz Serafin Exner, a student and supporter of Herbart, to supervise his dissertation in Prague in 1846. In 1849, Zimmermann was habilitated by Franz Karl Lott in Vienna, and in the same year, he inherited the extraordinary professor chair at Olmütz, a position he would keep until 1852, just before his appointment in Prague for a chair of ordinary professor. In 1861, he returned to Vienna where he was appointed ordinary professor. After Brentano's resignation from his chair in 1880, Zimmermann spent more than fifteen years in Vienna as the only full professor in the philosophy department and he therefore had to assume most of the administrative tasks. He also assumed the position of Rector of the University of Vienna during the 1866–1867 academic year, and he contributed to the foundation of two important societies in Vienna, namely the Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna in 1888 and the Grillparzer Society the following

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<sup>1</sup> Brentano 1895a, p. 64. Brentano describes the situation in the same terms in a letter to Hugo Bergmann dated June 1, 1909 in which he adds the names of Franz K. Lott and Anton Günther (Brentano 1946, p. 125).

year. After 35 years of loyal service in Vienna, he was appointed professor emeritus in 1896. He died on August 31, 1898 in his hometown of Prague.<sup>2</sup>

During the thirty years he spent in Vienna, Zimmermann taught philosophy to most students in the Faculty of Philosophy, and the influence he has had on some of them is due in part to the fact that he was, for a long period, the only examiner (*Prüfer*) in the philosophy department. He is known to have taught the composer Gustav Mahler and the physicist Ludwig Boltzmann, for example, and he had a great deal of influence on the art theorist and leader of the Vienna School of Art History, Alois Riegl (see Gubser 2006; Trautmann-Waller 2009; Wiesing 2016), as well as on the classical music theorist Eduard Hanslick (Zimmermann 1885; Blaukopf 1995, 2000; Payzant 2002). Most of Brentano's students, including Husserl<sup>3</sup> and K. Twardowski,<sup>4</sup> attended Zimmermann's lectures. Moreover, Zimmermann left us a rich and diversified contribution to several areas of philosophy, including the history of philosophy in Germany and Austria<sup>5</sup> and the field of aesthetics, in which he became known for his anti-idealist orientation (see Zimmermann, 1854) and his defence of aesthetic formalism inspired by Herbart.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, several aspects of Zimmermann's philosophy are known today thanks to the long-

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2 There are several biographies on Zimmermann, including these: *Jahresbericht* 11, 1897–1898; E. Reich 1899; H. Spitzer 1900.

3 In his mathematical curriculum from 1881 to 1883, the young Husserl studied philosophy in Vienna as a second discipline and it was then that he was examined in philosophy by Zimmermann and Vogt (see Rollinger 1999, p. 16f.). But as Brentano pointed out to Stumpf in a letter from October 18, 1886 on the occasion of his recommendation of Husserl to Stumpf in Halle, Husserl has in no way been influenced by Zimmermann (Brentano/Stumpf 2014, p. 260). However, P. Varga (2015, p. 101) claims that Zimmermann had for the young Husserl “die gleiche Bedeutung” as Brentano!

4 Twardowski (2017, p. 2) explicitly acknowledged Zimmermann's influence on his thought.

5 Let us note his marked interest, in his early publications and in three academic addresses in Prague, Olmütz, and Vienna, in the philosophy of Leibniz (Zimmermann 1847, 1849b, 1850, 1852b, 1861). Let us also mention his numerous studies published in the session reports of the Vienna Academy of Sciences, including those on Kant and Auguste Comte (Zimmermann 1886b, 1874) as well as his numerous reviews, from 1870 to 1898, of the German philosophical literature for the British journal *Athenaeum*.

6 See especially Zimmermann 1858, 1865. For a detailed exposition of Zimmermann's aesthetics and art history, and his discussions on the musical aesthetics of his time, see Blaukopf 1995, 1997, 2000; on Zimmermann's critique of the aesthetics of the Hegelians, see Zimmermann 1854; on his program of an aesthetic as science, see Zimmermann 1862.

lasting influence of his work in the field of aesthetics and to recent studies on this important aspect of his work.<sup>7</sup>

This study concerns an aspect of the reception of Herbartianism in Austria that has not been thoroughly investigated so far. It pertains to a controversy opposing Robert Zimmermann and Franz Brentano in the context of discussions that took place in the Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna. I am mostly interested in three important episodes in the history of philosophy in Vienna that involve the Philosophical Society: first, the controversy over Herbartianism, second, that over the evaluation of Schelling's philosophy, and finally, the reception of Bolzano in Austria. I will first describe the circumstances that led Zimmermann to become involved in the Philosophical Society and the source of his controversy with Brentano and his followers. I will then comment on Zimmermann's address as chairman of the Philosophical Society and Brentano's reaction to Zimmermann's remarks on Schelling and the historical period to which he belongs. I will complete my analysis of Brentano's reaction with a summary of his evaluation of Herbart's philosophical program, to which Zimmermann adhered. The last part focuses on Zimmermann's decisive role in the reception of Bolzano in Vienna in connection with the Bolzano Commission created by the Philosophical Society. I will conclude with several brief remarks on Zimmermann's legacy in Vienna.

## 1 Zimmermann and the Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna

Let us first introduce this venerable institution which has been a privileged witness of the evolution of the history of philosophy in Austria and the theatre of many discussions, including that between Zimmermann and Brentano (Fiset 2014). The Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna owes its creation to Brentano's seminars taught to a large public composed of philosophers and non-philosophers of all horizons.<sup>8</sup> The circumstances surrounding this foundation are

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<sup>7</sup> There are many valuable works on Zimmermann's aesthetic, including the recent work of C. Maigné (2017) and some collective works on formalism in aesthetics: Maigné 2013; Maigné/Trautmann-Waller (eds.) 2009; see also Gubser 2006; Wiesing 2016; Moro 2009; Paysant 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Alois Höfler, a philosophy student of Brentano and Meinong, provides further information about Brentano's lectures from which the Society originates (Höfler 1917). Another important testimony regarding the origins of the Philosophical Society is that of K. Twardowski in his autobiography, in which he mentions, in addition to Brentano's lectures, a reading group composed of Brentano's students, including Hans Schmidkunz, Alois Höfler, Christian von Ehrenfels, and

described in detail in several annual reports of the Society and by some of its members.<sup>9</sup> Although the names associated with most of its founding members are Brentano's students and, for the most part, sympathizers of Meinong's philosophy in Graz,<sup>10</sup> this organization would not have been recognized as a society of the University of Vienna without the support of several professors from the Faculty of Philosophy. This is because at that time Brentano's academic position as a lecturer in Vienna since 1880 and his tense relations with the ministry deprived him of all academic power and his support to this initiative was merely moral. This academic support came initially from two influential members of the Faculty of Philosophy, namely the psychiatrist Theodor Meynert (1833–1892), a close collaborator of Brentano and Freud, and one of the founding members of the Society,<sup>11</sup> and Zimmermann, who was in 1888 the only ordinary professor in the philosophy department, and who held the position of Rector of the University of Vienna during the academic year prior to the foundation of the Society. In several of the Society's annual reports, including the one marking its tenth anniversary, Zimmermann's contribution is highlighted:

Since 1889, Zimmermann was chairman of the Philosophical Society, which owes him valuable advice and claims since its foundation. It was counsellor Zimmermann who, at the founding of the Society (in spring 1888), represented the interests and needs of the Philosophical Society in the high academic senate of the University of Vienna in the warmest and most convincing manner, and only thereby enabled to bear the title "Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna" more than just by name. [...] The connection between the Philosophical Society and the University, which was thus formally achieved, was a reference

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Josef Kreibitz who met regularly to discuss Aristotle's texts (Twardowski 2017, p. 5). These four philosophers were the most active members in the activities of the Society.

**9** See in particular *Jahresbericht* 1912–1913, p. 3f.; 1888, p. 1).

**10** But Meinong's name does not figure in these testimonies, and the day after the official foundation of the Society, Meinong wrote to Höfler: "I can hardly imagine that he could have silently invented a philosophical society without even letting me know a word about it." (Meinong an Höfler, 23.2.1888, Meinong-Nachlass, Karton LV, Nr. 4503). His friend Höfler quickly corrected this situation by adding Meinong's name to the list of the first members of the Society. Meinong maintained his membership in the Society until his death in 1918 (Dölling 1999, p. 74).

**11** In a lecture delivered to the Philosophical Society on the occasion of Meynert's death, Höfler (1892, p. 6) emphasized the importance of his central contribution to this organization not only through his lectures and his active participation in the evening discussions, but also as a scientist interested in philosophical issues. Meynert's active participation in the Society had in fact a driving effect on several other scientists from the Faculty of Philosophy who decided to join the Society.

not to be underestimated for the organization of the membership and the scientific activities of the Society.<sup>12</sup>

During the Society's first year of existence, Alois Höfler presided mainly because of his competences in sciences and philosophy, but also because, like most of the other founding members of the Society, Höfler was closely related to Meinong. This student of Boltzmann and Stefan could thus serve as a mediator in the exchanges within the Philosophical Society between scientists and philosophers. But after only three semesters, Höfler resigned as chairman due to overwork (Höfler 1921, p. 10) and he was replaced by Zimmermann, who would chair the Philosophical Society from 1889 until his retirement in 1896.

In addition to presiding over the Society during this late period in his career, Zimmermann gave a few lectures, the most important of which, for our purposes, are that on the occasion of his appointment as chairman of the Society on November 16, 1889, and that on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (Zimmermann 1893/1894, p. 5–8). He also delivered some lectures, the first of which, in 1889, on the beginnings of mathematical psychology in Vienna (Zimmermann 1889a), a second on the aesthetics of G. Semper (1893), and the third on Spinoza's politics (1895). His first lecture on the beginnings of mathematical psychology in Vienna is typical of his treatises on the history of philosophy. He claimed that Herbart was not the first, with his mathematical psychology, to have applied mathematics to psychology. Christian Wolff and the young Kant during his pre-critical period had already shown that one could quantify over the properties of mental phenomena. But Zimmermann was particularly interested in an Austrian precursor of mathematical psychology named Joseph Misy, <sup>13</sup> namely "because he belongs to Austria, and in the narrow sense, to Vienna itself, and yet or perhaps for that very reason has remained almost unknown by his real name" (Zimmermann 1889a, p. 3).<sup>14</sup> Herbart nevertheless remains for Zimmermann "the first and true instigator in the exact sense of mathematical psychology" (Zimmermann 1889a, p. 5).

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<sup>12</sup> *Jahresbericht* 1912–1913, p. 3. Compare with the first annual report in which Zimmermann is warmly thanked "for the effective representation of the Society's interests within the academic senate, and the high academic authorities for the trust which they granted to the newly founded Society by granting a space to the philosophical faculty" (*Jahresbericht* 1888, p. 6).

<sup>13</sup> The Viennese Joseph Misy was the author of a book on the application of mathematics to purely mental objects (Misy 1818). This book was considerably expanded in the following years, the last edition dating from 1830.

<sup>14</sup> By "his real name" because, as Zimmermann (1889a, p. 3) points out in this article, Ribot (1879, p. 35) misspelled his real name by calling him Riesley.

## 2 The Controversy over the Name of the Philosophical Society

Several indications show that there were overt tensions in Vienna between, on the one hand, Zimmermann as a supporter of Herbart's philosophy and, on the other hand, Brentano and his followers. The first clues can be found in two reports of the Philosophical Society which clearly indicate that the source of this conflict lay in Zimmermann's bias in favour of Herbart's philosophy and his endeavour to impose his views on the Philosophical Society.<sup>15</sup> In the first report, which highlights the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Zimmermann's birth, the theologian L. Müllner, then Rector of the University of Vienna, discusses some rumours related to two major conflicts within the Philosophical Society, namely a bias towards Herbartianism and the status of philosophy as science:

When the Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna was founded, many saw in it the creation of a party; and if that were the case, then the rumour would probably have been right that it was not the Herbart school that was supposed to rule it. They had in *their* hands the responsibility whether the young society would find a firm place at the first university of the empire: and you have carelessly considered sufficient to foster, without considering any other point of view and with the serious express intention, philosophy as science and only as such, in order to promote the granting of premises to the Society by the high academic senate.<sup>16</sup>

Müllner knew for sure that it was not merely a rumour, as confirmed by the Society's 25<sup>th</sup>-anniversary report, which emphasizes the monopoly of Herbart's philosophy since the reform of education. J. K. Kreibig, a student of Brentano and one of the authors of this report, welcomed the opportunity, twenty-five years after the foundation of the Society, to more freely discuss Zimmermann's peculiar attitude towards the Philosophical Society in general and philosophy in particular:

Since the reform of high and middle schools around the year 1850, Herbartianism had become as much the official philosophy in Austria as Hegelianism had been in Prussia. However, in the decade when our Society was founded, such a monopoly had become more and more outdated. In the axis of this reversal were the person of Zimmermann, on the one hand, and Franz Brentano with his numerous pupils, on the other hand, as if they were two poles. Even though the independent thinking of those pupils had developed far beyond the doctrine of their teacher, so that there could no longer be any talk of a unified "Brentano School," they were nevertheless considered, from the outside – especially by Brentano's

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<sup>15</sup> On Zimmermann's program for a renewal of philosophy in Austria, see Seiler 2009.

<sup>16</sup> *Jahresbericht* 1893/1894, p. 12.

enlightened opponents – as forming a homogeneous group. Even if the first instigators and participants of the Society had never tried to give it a one-sided character – incidentally, adherents of completely different philosophies soon joined our circle from outside – Zimmermann had ample opportunity, simply through the composition of the membership, to use his full objectivity and also his good will. We may say today that this spirit of impartiality at once has remained the good scientific spirit of our Society.<sup>17</sup>

Kreibig claims that the motivation of Brentano's students in this conflict with Zimmermann was in no way to substitute one school for another, since, as this excerpt makes clear, there was, strictly speaking, no "Brentano school" in Vienna.<sup>18</sup> In addition, there were open conflicts between Brentano and Meinong, and between Meinong and Brentano's most orthodox students, namely Anton Marty in Prague, to name only a few.

One of the sources of this controversy lies in the name of the Philosophical Society, as Alfred Kastil, a student of Marty in Prague, later confirmed in one of the last lectures delivered before the Philosophical Society in 1936, under the title "Franz Brentanos Kritik der Antimetaphysiker", which is a reflection on the state of philosophy in Vienna nearly fifty years after the foundation of the Society (Kastil 2020). The first part of his talk focuses precisely on the Brentano-Zimmermann controversy and Brentano's lecture on Schelling (Brentano 1929c). Kastil confirms that what triggered this controversy lay in Zimmermann's reluctance to append the term "scientific" to the name of the Society<sup>19</sup> and the fact that he would have used all his authority, as Brentano confirms in his talk on Schelling, to make sure that the term "scientific" be banned forever from its program (Brentano 1929c, p. 131). Zimmermann's manoeuvre was indirectly intended against the philosophical program advocated by Brentano and his followers of philosophy as science

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<sup>17</sup> *Jahresbericht 1912–1913*, p. 6f.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, after his departure from Vienna in 1895, Brentano's name is mentioned nowhere in the Society's annual reports, and unlike most members of the Society, his death in 1917 was not even mentioned in the annual reports or in the meetings of the Society. Later, A. Kastil, a student of Marty in Prague, would deliver lectures on Brentano in the Philosophical Society. Nevertheless, Brentano's correspondence shows that he was aware of the activities of the Philosophical Society after 1895 and was aware of the controversy surrounding his succession in Vienna (Fiset 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Kastil wrote: "Zimmermann was not as alone in that judgment as he seemed to think. And so he did not advertise in vain to recognize in these heroes a certain equality to the sober research of his time. It was suggested, in order not to give rise to the spirit of those a priori systematisers, to include the word 'scientific' in the title of the Society. It should be called the Society of Scientific Philosophy but his authority had enforced the rejection of the proposal, so that it remained simply a philosophical society." (Kastil 2020, p. 393).



(see Fisette 2021b), and we shall see that this controversy goes far beyond a semantic issue.

### 3 Zimmermann's Address on the Occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday

The other source of this controversy is Zimmermann's inaugural address as chairman of the Society, delivered on November 16, 1889, (*Jahresbericht* 1889–1890, p. 2) to which Brentano reacted a month later in his talk on Schelling. Although Zimmermann's address was not published in the *Jahresberichte*, Brentano's critical remarks in his lecture on Schelling contain several references to Zimmermann's talk that allow for several overlaps with the other address delivered by Zimmermann some years later, again before the Philosophical Society, on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (Zimmermann 1893/1894). Brentano's references also help establish several links with Zimmermann's historical studies published during the same period (Zimmermann 1888/1889, 1888, 1886a). This controversy relates more specifically to two divergent views on the history of philosophy in the nineteenth century, and it derives more specifically from Zimmermann's remarks in his address regarding the status and place of Schelling and Kantianism in the history of philosophy. This presumably constitutes Zimmermann's motivation in his opposition to the formulation of the title of the Society and that of Brentano in the choice of his conference's topic as he confirms in this quote: "I did not choose Schelling simply because our dear President [Zimmermann] has named him in particular but also because he represents most typically the philosophy of this bygone era" (Brentano 1929c, p. 105).

The subject of this dispute pertains to the evaluation of the period in the history of philosophy to which Schelling's philosophy belongs, and which Zimmermann describes as a golden age of philosophy, as shown by the following excerpt from Brentano's lecture:

It is a fact that there cannot really be any stronger contrast than between great glory and deep contempt. And we understand the nostalgia well with which our esteemed President, at our last assembly, turned his eyes to the past time saying that the golden age of our German literature had also been that of the golden age of German philosophy, and he told us how much it affected him during his youth, and how he had still been able to look into Schelling's eyes, one of the epoch-making thinkers.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Brentano 1929c, p. 104.

We shall see that, for Brentano at least, the stake of this controversy lies in his philosophy of history and his theory of the four phases in the history of philosophy.

That said, in this address, Zimmermann describes himself “as a living witness of half a century of the development of philosophy”:

I participated in this change, I saw the last glow of the Hegelian school with my own eyes; I saw the break happen within the school. I saw with my own eyes the last hero of the heroic age of philosophy, Schelling. I saw him in his youth and his eyes still sparkling despite his old age.<sup>21</sup>

But Vienna and Austria are not appanages of Germany in terms of culture and philosophy when one considers

that the city, which gave birth to a poet such as Grillparzer, a painter such as Schwind, composers like Schubert, gave a second home to Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and despite the circumstances, does not deserve any inglorious participation in the German science.<sup>22</sup>

However, Vienna’s contribution to German philosophy largely depends on the Viennese philosopher Karl Leonhard Reinhold,<sup>23</sup> to whom Zimmermann assigns a central place in the history of post-Kantian philosophy in Germany. In his inaugural address as Rector of the University of Vienna, which mainly stresses Reinhold’s contribution, Zimmermann (1886a, p. 40) even considers him “the second scholar of German philosophy”, the first being Kant. Kant’s philosophy obviously comes first because it represents the threshold of German philosophy:

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<sup>21</sup> *Jahresbericht* 1895–1896, p. 8. Compare with his inaugural address in Vienna (Zimmermann 1861, p. 5) in which Zimmermann says substantially the same thing.

<sup>22</sup> Zimmermann 1886a, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> In his correspondence with Marty, Brentano wrote about Zimmermann’s inaugural address as Rector: “Zimmermann has recently held his inaugural address as Rector. But was it good? According to the reports I received – who was not present –, it seems doubtful. He talked about Vienna’s contributions to the history of philosophy and especially about a man who is not honored enough, a pure, sweet soul [Reinhold = rein hold]. And who was, he asked, this pure graceful (*Holde*)? It was Reinhold! At least Hartl, who made a lot of fun of this handy illustration of Zimmermann’s Aesthetic. Maybe it’s a fable, and we do well to wait for the print of the speech.” (Brentano, Brief an Marty, 28-10-86).

Kant's philosophy is like the threshold on which you cannot stand still, but which one must have taken. Only the one who went through the gates of it is in the hallway of contemporary philosophy, which is still in the process of being built.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever Reinhold's merits and contribution to Kantianism and the history of German philosophy, his connection with Austrian philosophy is rather thin and it is questionable whether he is truly representative of Austria's contribution to the history of philosophy in the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, Zimmermann's treatises on the history of philosophy in Austria contain a wealth of first-hand information on the main figures in the making of Austrian philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Among the important figures in Zimmermann's narrative, the most significant is undoubtedly Bolzano, who represented for the history of philosophy in Austria what Kant represented for German philosophy during many decades. Zimmermann acknowledges the major influence that Bolzano had on him and the history of philosophy in Austria (1893/1894, p. 7) and maintains that he is at the origin of a significant tradition in the history of philosophy in Austria. But in this work, at least, he merely evokes the memory of the author of *Wissenschaftslehre* who initiated him to philosophy:

When we turn the focus towards the professorship here and in Prague in earlier times, then other pictures appear before our eyes, and Bolzano's venerable figure shines forth in the midst of his auditors full of admiration, dominating not only the minds, but also the souls; he had a major and lasting influence – the traces are still apparent today; but he was taken away from them because he was forced to resign from his professorship after a sixteen-year career, never to enter it again.<sup>26</sup>

That said, Zimmermann is best known as the most important advocate of Herbart's philosophy in nineteenth-century Austria.<sup>27</sup> As he repeatedly points out, one of the most significant moments in the development of philosophy in Austria was the reform of education in 1849 that the ministry entrusted to Count Leo Thun, who was also a close friend and the sponsor of Bolzano, and Franz

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<sup>24</sup> Zimmermann 1886a, p. 32. "Even though Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is perhaps the key to philosophy, it is not philosophy itself." (Ibid., p. 37). On the reception of Kant via Herbart, see Zimmermann 1882.

<sup>25</sup> In his 1888 article "Wissenschaft und Literatur", which bears on the history of philosophy in Austria, Zimmermann briefly discusses most of the important figures in the history of philosophy in Austria, from Bolzano to his contemporaries.

<sup>26</sup> Zimmermann 1893/1894, p. 7. See Zimmermann 1888/1889, p. 184–198, and 1849a for a detailed description of Bolzano's life and work.

<sup>27</sup> On Herbart's influence on Zimmermann's philosophy, see Zimmermann (1871, 1872, 1873, 1876, 1877) and Bauer (1966).

Serafin Exner, a student and disciple of Herbart. The aim of this reform was to secularize philosophy in educational institutions and to implant Herbart's philosophy in Austria just as the Prussians had done a few years earlier with Hegel's philosophy. Zimmermann also saw in his master Exner the "founder of a Herbart school in Austria", and the

counselor and friend of the leaders of the first Ministry of Education in Austria, Chr. v. Feuchtersleben and Count Leo Thun, together with likeminded men such as J. A. Zimmermann, Bonitz, Lott, who became the intellectual instigators of the radical reform of higher education.<sup>28</sup>

It is known that this reform also made it possible to disseminate Bolzano's ideas thanks, among other things, to Zimmermann's *Philosophical Propaedeutic* which, for several decades, became the canonical textbook of philosophy throughout the Habsburg Monarchy. In addition to Bolzano and Exner, Zimmermann also stresses the name of the theologian and philosopher Anton Günther, another student of Bolzano, who also exercised much influence in Austria (Zimmermann 1888, p. 146).<sup>29</sup>

Zimmermann did not pay much attention to contemporary philosophy in this address, but he claims elsewhere (Zimmermann, 1888/1889) that the main trend in philosophy at that time was decidedly empiricist, emphasizing in this regard the contribution of his colleagues from the Medical School

where both the realistic school of Herbart and the Vienna School of Medicine, which was based on an empirical foundation, had paved the way, in a grandiose manner and more than anywhere else, to the same approach in the foundation and method of experience.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, Zimmermann also expresses his reservations regarding his colleagues' empiricist orientation:

Philosophically trained Vienna naturalists such as Rokitsansky, Stricker, Meynert among others, have set the tone: thinkers familiar and friendly with Comte's positive philosophy and the inductive method of the Englishman, such as the publisher and translator of John Stuart Mill, the learned interpreter of Herculean documents, Th. Gomperz, in logic, F. Brentano who

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**28** Zimmermann 1888, p. 146. However, in the fourth part of the study "Philosophie und Philosophen in Österreich" in which Zimmermann examines the outlines of the philosophy of his teacher Exner, he stresses again the importance of the reform of philosophy in Austria but denies this time that this reform was aimed at implanting the philosophy of Herbart in Austria (Zimmermann 1888/1889, p. 246). On Zimmermann and the reform of education, see Payzant 2002.

**29** On A. Günther, see also Zimmermann (1888, p. 259–264) and Bauer (1966, p. 80–104).

**30** Zimmermann 1888/1889, p. 268; Lesky 1976.

has affinities of thought with A. Bain, in philosophy, the latter transplanted it in his pupils, the author of *Tonpsychologie*, C. Stumpf (now in Halle), A. Marty in Prague, A. Meinong in Graz, etc. A new, empirically-minded generation of young thinkers, perhaps more than wished for, seems to be developing, as their organ, and at the same time as a good sign of a free philosophical movement which can no longer be repressed in the future, and which most recently prevail at the University of Vienna on the model of the “Philosophical Society” in Berlin.<sup>31</sup>

This excerpt sheds new light on Zimmermann’s reservations regarding the designation of the Philosophical Society as a “scientific” organization.

## 4 Brentano’s Lecture on Schelling

Let us now turn to Brentano’s reaction in his lecture on Schelling, which is actually composed of two different presentations dating from two different periods. The first is his probationary lecture for his habilitation at the University of Würzburg that he defended in July 1866; the second was delivered before the Philosophical Society on December 17, 1889 (Brentano 1929c). The circumstances surrounding the writing of the first version are well known: one of the jury members, Franz Hoffmann, a disciple of Schelling, had imposed that topic on Brentano’s probationary conference entitled “On the main stages in the development of Schelling’s philosophy and the scientific value of the last phase of his philosophy”. The second lecture incorporates the text of the first version, which he uses this time in the context of his controversy with Zimmermann, to whom he refers in this talk without referencing him by name but by using his title of President of the Philosophical Society, and it pertains to the place of Schelling in the history of philosophy.<sup>32</sup>

As I pointed out above, the main stake of this controversy lies in Brentano’s four-phase theory and his views on the past and future of philosophy. This theory is based on the idea that regularities that can be observed in the course of the history of philosophy since the Pre-Socratics obey a law according to which each of the three main periods in the history of philosophy evolves according to four distinct phases. The first phase is ascendant, and it is characterized by the philosophical orientation of philosophers such as Anaxagoras and the Ionian philosophy of nature, Aristotle and Plato in Antiquity, Alexander the Great and Thomas

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<sup>31</sup> Zimmermann 1888/1889, p. 269.

<sup>32</sup> In their correspondence from 1889–1890, Brentano and Zimmermann also exchanged views on space, time, and causality.

Aquinas in the Middle Ages, or Descartes, Leibniz, and John Locke in modern philosophy. Brentano's theory is based on two criteria: the first is based on the method which, according to Brentano's fourth habilitation thesis, is the inductive method used in empirical sciences (Brentano 1895b). The second criterion is based on the primacy of theoretical over practical reason or, as Brentano puts it, a philosophy guided preferably by theoretical rather than practical interests. Philosophers who meet both of these criteria belong to an ascendant phase, like Aristotle, Aquinas, or Locke do, while the philosophers who depart from these criteria belong to one of the three declining phases in the history of philosophy. We are interested here in the phase of extreme decline which is called mysticism, and which is characterized by the invention of artificial means of knowledge acquisition and "a mystical elevation of intellectual life". It favours fantasies about facts. Its main advocates are Plotinus and Neoplatonism in Antiquity, Master Eckhart and Nicolas de Cues in the Middle Ages, and the partisans of German idealism in modern philosophy, including Schelling. Brentano's philosophy of history constitutes, somehow, a justification for his severe judgment on Schelling's philosophy as paradigmatic of philosophy's extreme decline.

In his lecture on Schelling, Brentano agrees with Zimmermann that Schelling's philosophy is constructed on fantasies and favours speculation over induction, thus moving philosophy away from science and towards the arts (Brentano 1929c, 125). He also agrees with Zimmermann that "the near future is just as certainly that of a philosophy of facts as Schelling's time was that of speculations and fantasy" (1929c, p. 123). However, Brentano's reservations concern Zimmermann's evaluation of this segment of the history of philosophy as the golden age of philosophy, particularly in the following quote from Zimmermann's address:

When I last spoke at this place, gentlemen, the last veteran of that heroic philosophical time, the philosophical Proteus, was still alive, and, of fatality it seemed, was left out almost to the utmost limit of human existence, in order to show himself the changes in the most comprehensive train of thought of modern times. [...] I can still see him in front of me, the short man, with his eyes still ardent in old age and the powerful forehead, the sardonic smile on his lips over the changing time, which once idolized him as a youth and turned away from the man and almost mocked the old man as he moved from the faithful silent Munich inebriated with art to the doubting, noisy, sober, intellectual Berlin. It was the fate of philosophy itself that was depicted in Schelling: marvelled like a prophet, used and needed like obedient, persecuted and feared like a harmful instrument, finally laughed at and sidelined, like a brainless dreamer. That is then what happened to him [...]. It is worth

investigating whether the philosophy itself is to blame for this aversion, or more likely it seems, a misguided orientation of philosophy.<sup>33</sup>

Note, however, that Zimmermann's evaluation of Schelling in this excerpt may surprise when one considers his sympathy for Herbart's philosophy and his critical positions towards Schelling in his writings on aesthetics, especially in his book *Schelling's Philosophie der Kunst* (Zimmermann 1875). The question indeed arises whether Zimmermann changed his positions in these late writings, a question which I cannot address in this study (see Maigné 2017).

In any case, Brentano clearly dissociates himself from Zimmermann's evaluation and he opposes his own program of philosophy as science, which is at the basis of his theory of the four phases (see Fiset 2021b). Brentano argues that the philosophical value of this program is immeasurably greater than that of speculative philosophy, which historically coincides with its decline (Brentano 1929c, p. 130). That is why Zimmermann is wrong in his characterization of Schelling's philosophy as the heroic time and the golden age of philosophy.

It seems that I am here in strong opposition to our dear president [Zimmermann], whom I have been able to so often approve with all my heart. He called this time of philosophy the time of its glory, he named it the golden age of philosophy. But the opposition should be more apparent than real. Philosophy never shone as much as it did at the time, even if it was a superficial and ephemeral shine. And he had the right to use the expression "heroic time" if, as I would not doubt, it was for him to designate by that the immense personal gifts and the titanic power of the efforts of a man who once arose as well as the victories by which they subdued the world.<sup>34</sup>

However, after this modest concession, Brentano turns against Zimmermann the testimony of two of his heroes against the philosophy advocated by the idealists, starting with that of Herbart himself, who defended a form of realism in reaction to the kind of idealism advocated by Schelling, for example, and who once said about this kind of philosophy that it was totally lacking in the scientific sobriety required by a rigorous philosophy and that it had fallen "into the hands of an inebriated generation" (1929c, p. 130). The second testimony is that of the Austrian poet Grillparzer that Zimmermann evokes in his presidential address and in memory of whom he founded, with Emil Reich, the Grillparzer Society. Against Zimmermann, Brentano quoted Grillparzer's narrative of a meeting that he once had with Hegel: "I found Hegel as enjoyable, understandable, and conciliatory as his system then seemed *abstruse* and *intolerant*." And in one of his epigrams,

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<sup>33</sup> Zimmermann 1893/1894, p. 5f.

<sup>34</sup> Brentano 1929c, p. 130.

he says, “I believe more readily in any miracle, than in such a system (the Hegelian system)” (1929c, p. 127).

Brentano concludes his lecture on Schelling by evoking the quarrel over the name of the Philosophical Society, and he strongly denounces the “authoritarian manoeuvres” by which the term “scientific” has been deleted from the Society’s program; he warns against the direct or indirect influence that Schelling’s and Hegel’s offspring might exert on its orientation (1929c, p. 131). Brentano insists everywhere in his Vienna publications that the era of a priori construction of grand speculative systems is a bygone era and that the future of philosophy belongs only to philosophers engaged in a sublunary philosophy exercised in the spirit of empirical sciences.

## 5 Brentano and Herbart’s Philosophical Program

Considering Brentano’s criticism of Zimmermann’s evaluation of Schelling’s philosophy, the question arises as to Brentano’s attitude towards Herbart’s philosophical program, which represents one of the stakes of his controversy with Zimmermann. This is especially so since Brentano does not directly discuss Zimmermann’s works, although he comments extensively on several aspects of Herbart’s philosophy, especially in his lectures on practical philosophy, in which he discusses several aspects of Herbart’s ethics (Brentano 1973).<sup>35</sup> Brentano also discusses several aspects of Herbart’s psychology in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. But Brentano is much less critical of Herbart’s ethics<sup>36</sup> than he is of his psychology. He claims that what is lacking above all in Herbart’s psychology is a foundation in experience.<sup>37</sup> Brentano nonetheless welcomes Herbart’s efforts

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<sup>35</sup> It is worth mentioning that the German version of Brentano’s manuscript of these lectures has been much abridged by the German editor, and it contains more materials on Brentano’s discussion with Herbart. See Ethikkolleg, MSS., Eth. 21 (p. 20563–20613), which is kept in the Houghton Library at Harvard University in Harvard.

<sup>36</sup> In *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (p. IX), Brentano says about Herbart’s ethics: “Still his teaching remains in a certain aspect truly related with mine, while, on other sides, other celebrated attempts to discover a basis for ethics find in it points of contact” (see also p. 44).

<sup>37</sup> Brentano ironically illustrates his criticism of Herbart through Goethe’s poem entitled Cat-Pie: “A cook wants to fetch his own game in the forest, but knows little about wildlife; instead of bringing back a hare as booty, he goes home with a wild cat. He can apply all the refinements of the most elaborate cuisine: in vain!” (1895a, p. 36f.). He then quotes the last two stanzas of Goethe’s poem:

The cat that’s by the sportsman kill’d  
No cook a hare can render.



to develop psychology as a science, although he denounces the arbitrary character of the principles of his mathematical psychology (Brentano 1995, p. 50). Brentano imputes some of Herbart's errors to the lack of experimentation in his research and the need for an institute of psychology (1895a, p. 36f.). Moreover, Brentano does not entirely reject the principles of Herbart's psychology, and in particular the equivalent of the fundamental principle of *Vorstellungsgrundlage*, which is clearly formulated in Herbart's *Psychologie als Wissenschaft* (§ 103). However, Brentano sharply criticizes Herbart's classification of mental phenomena based on the Kantian division between sensibility, intelligence, and will (Brentano 1995, p. 147), his conception of the categorical judgments conceived of, after Kant, as synthetic judgments, and he blames him for his substantialist conception of the mind (Brentano 1995, p. 127). Brentano (1995, p. 94) also discusses Herbart's treatment of consciousness and its unity in connection with Herbart's hypothesis of unconscious mental phenomena (Herbart 1824–1825, § 199). In this respect, Brentano opposes Herbart regarding one of the central theses of his *Psychology*, namely that all mental phenomena are conscious, and discusses, in this context, the infinite regress argument (1995, p. 78f.).

In his discussion of Herbart's ethics, Brentano is particularly concerned with two principles: on the one hand, Herbart's main thesis that ethics is a sub-discipline of aesthetics understood as a formal discipline (1995, p. 203), and on the other, the thesis that “the end is right if the efforts directed towards it are beautiful” (1995, p. 66). Brentano discusses this last thesis at length (1995, § 37, p. 75f.) and criticizes it for not satisfying criteria that Brentano imposes on the notion of “right end”. Brentano claims that the issue is not addressed correctly in Herbart's theory: “Ought I necessarily to endeavor in a beautiful manner?” Since beauty is also, for Brentano, a question of feelings and appearance, beauty might constitute a motivation, but it cannot be decisive in the face of this question. True, Herbart distinguishes in his aesthetic the beautiful from the merely pleasant, and therefore between sensory and intellectual feeling or, in Herbart's own terms, between the content of a judgment of taste, which is purely theoretical, and the pleasure or displeasure provided by the contemplation of a work of art, for example. But why, then, asks Brentano, conceive in a purely theoretical and formal way the object that provides pleasure or displeasure to the judgment of taste? Herbart's answer is that the judgment of taste consists solely of relations constructed out of several elements, which taken individually are meaningless or indifferent in themselves. This is also the central thesis of Herbart's formalism advocated by Zimmermann, according to which relations alone determine beauty, whereas primary content and sense feelings are indifferent in this respect. Brentano sums up Herbart's theory as follows:

Herbart thinks all beauty is based upon relations: each part of what, in combination, pleases or displeases, is indifferent, taken in itself. In music, for instance, no one of the separate tones, the relations between which form an interval – say a fifth or a third that is recognized in music –, has by itself anything of the character it takes on when they all sound together. Thus, he says, the matter is indifferent; only the form determines the judgment of taste.<sup>38</sup>

Brentano's main objection against Herbart's formalism is similar to the one on the basis of which he is opposed to British empiricists in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. It consists in questioning the distinction between sense feelings, which have no object besides themselves, and intellectual emotions, which are intentional and have relations as their object. Brentano argues that it is not because mere feelings are not about relations that they have no object at all. That is why Brentano considers the Herbartian concept of judgment of taste to be contradictory insofar as it assimilates two very different things, namely moral and aesthetic taste, which, for Brentano, are matters of feelings, and feeling is not judging. It is in this sense that Herbart's judgment of taste transgresses Brentano's criteria (Brentano 1973, p. 75f.).

## 6 Zimmermann and the Reception of Bolzano in Austria

Another important aspect of Zimmermann's contribution to the history of philosophy in Austria lies in his role in the reception and transmission of Bolzano's ideas there. We saw that Zimmermann granted Bolzano a special status in the history of philosophy in nineteenth-century Austria, and we have emphasized that he himself contributed in several ways to the diffusion of Bolzano's ideas in the country. In this regard, several commentators of Zimmermann (Winter 1933, 1976; Morscher 1997; Künne 1999) have emphasized the importance of his *Philosophical Propaedeutic* as the textbook commissioned by the Ministry of Education after the education reform aimed at teaching the two main philosophical disciplines in most high schools in Austria, namely logic and psychology.<sup>39</sup> The first edition of the volume on logic was so influenced by Bolzano that some careful readers of Bolzano even accused him of plagiarism (Winter 1976; Morscher 1997). Be that as it may, it is through their philosophical training in Austrian high

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<sup>38</sup> Brentano 1973, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> Hence the division of Zimmermann's propaedeutic into two parts: the first deals with psychology and it was published in 1852, while the second is on logic and it was published the following year. It is the latter volume on logic whose content is largely inspired by Bolzano's *Wissenschaftslehre* (see Morscher, p. 161–165). However, the later editions of Zimmermann's *Propaedeutic* have been thoroughly reworked along the lines of Herbart's philosophy.

schools that several philosophers and scientists have been in touch with the basics of Bolzano's logic. For example, Twardowski (2017, p. 2), like most high school students in Austria, was introduced to philosophy via Zimmermann's *Propaedeutic*.<sup>40</sup> Most of Brentano's students<sup>41</sup> also significantly contributed to the dissemination of Bolzano's ideas: the most important are Benno Kerry (1885–1891), who influenced Twardowski (1894; 1999c, p. 24),<sup>42</sup> and Husserl, who, during the 1890s, in working manuscripts, lectures, and in *Logical Investigations*, specifically in relation to logical psychologism, paid much attention to Bolzano's philosophy.<sup>43</sup>

That being said, there is also a lesser-known aspect of Zimmermann's contribution to the reception of Bolzano in Austria, which is once again related to the Philosophical Society and which also involves Brentano's students. That episode begins with the rediscovery in 1903 of Bolzano's manuscripts, which Zimmermann inherited after Bolzano's death and which he had discreetly deposited at the library of the Vienna Academy of Sciences without mentioning their value,

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**40** Although the late version of Zimmermann's propaedeutic was severely criticized by Meinong and Höfler because of its Herbartian content (see Coen, 2007), it appears that Höfler's textbook, which replaced that of Zimmermann in the late 1880s, partially replicates the Bolzanian content of Zimmermann's textbook, which he integrates into Brentano's descriptive psychology framework (see Uebel 2000, p. 133). According to Uebel, Höfler's textbook would have exercised an influence on the Austrian members of the Vienna Circle comparable to that exercised by Zimmermann's *Propaedeutic* in circulating Bolzano's ideas (Uebel 2000, p. 109).

**41** Brentano himself taught Bolzano's *Paradoxes of the Infinite* in his 1884–1885 lectures in Vienna, although, as his correspondence with H. Bergmann shows, he always deplored Bolzano's influence on his own students: "Daraufhin ist es nun geschehen, dass Meinong sowohl und Twardowski als Husserl und Kerry, der allerdings auch mehr von mir als von Zimmermann beeinflusst worden ist und sich, nachdem er schon lange Wien verlassen, noch in den letzten Jahren vor seinem fruehen Tod in brieflichen Verkehr mit mir setzte, in das Studium von Bolzano vertieften. [...] Aber die Verantwortung fuer so vieles Absonderliche und Absurde, wozu sowohl Meinong als Husserl unter Beruecksichtigung von Bolzano gelangt sind, darf ich doch vollstaendig ablehnen. Und wie gesagt, wie ich selbst von Bolzano nie auch nur einen einzigen Satz entnommen habe, so habe ich auch niemals meinen Schuelern glaubhaft gemacht, dass sie dort eine wahre Bereicherung ihrer philosophischen Erkenntnis gewinnen wuerden." (Brentano 1946, p. 125–126; Bergmann 1909, 1966).

**42** At the very beginning of this book (1894, p. 15), Twardowski credits Bolzano and Zimmermann for the distinction between content and object of presentations.

**43** Husserl 2001, 1994a, 1975. Husserl claims to have "rediscovered" Bolzano's philosophy (1975, p. 37).

especially of Bolzano's unpublished mathematical writings.<sup>44</sup> An excerpt from a report of the Philosophical Society dated from 1902–1903 summarizes the circumstances of this rediscovery by the members of the Society:<sup>45</sup>

We still have to commemorate a bibliographical event, which could lead to a scientific achievement of outstanding importance for the Philosophical Society if everything goes as we wish thereafter. It was known to some members of the [...] Society that manuscripts from Bernhard Bolzano (1781 to 1848) were in the possession of the chairman and honorary president of the Philosophical Society, Dr. Robert von Zimmermann. Since this tradition almost threatened to break down, the board of the Society, at the beginning of this year, was keen to investigate the remaining of those precious manuscripts. After many unsuccessful attempts [...], a very comprehensive compilation of Bolzano's original manuscripts, whose content is partly philosophical but mainly mathematical, was in the Imperial Library. The Society's secretary, Robert von Sterneck, has subjected these unordered manuscripts to an examination, which already allows to reasonably estimate the size of the collection. For example, there was nothing less than a ready-to-print manuscript of a "theory of function" that testifies to a surprising degree of the actuality of his views. And these investigations, among others, are still unpublished fifty-five years after the author's death! Throughout this long period of time, however, until recently there were significant indications in Anton Marty's rectorate speech not to ignore the reminders to the effect that it would be worthwhile to give the outstanding thinker of Austria the only worthy monument by printing Bolzano's writings. Bolzano's relations with the longstanding chairman of the Society Zimmermann prompted the Philosophical Society to do everything in its power to contribute to the realization of that old wish cherished by so many.<sup>46</sup>

It was as a result of this discovery that Höfler and other members of the Society took steps to prepare the edition of Bolzano's manuscripts and to reissue his main works.<sup>47</sup> However, Höfler's project was delayed in part due to his moving to Prague in 1903.<sup>48</sup>

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**44** Morscher (1997, p. 180f.) calls into question Zimmermann's contribution to the dissemination of Bolzano's ideas, mainly because of his negligence in the management of this valuable heritage.

**45** See also Kreibitz 1914, p. 276; Höfler 1921, p. 10f.; Winter 1933, p. 218.

**46** *Jahresbericht* 1902–1903, p. 6f.

**47** It should be noted that well before the rediscovery of these manuscripts, Marty announced, in 1896, in his address as Rector of the German University in Prague, the establishment of a Bolzano Foundation in the German and the Czech University, whose primary mandate was to prepare a new edition of Bolzano's works (Marty 1916, p. 91; Künne 1997, p. 57). Hugo Bergmann, the author of an important book on Bolzano (Bergmann 1909) and a student of Brentano and Marty, also took steps to publish Bolzano's *Wissenschaftslehre* (see Künne 1999, p. 58).

**48** Once in Prague, Höfler became a member of the *Deutsche Förderungsgesellschaft für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, which enabled him to obtain some of the financial support for his publication project (see Winter 1976, p. 29) despite Marty's opposition in the commission in charge of the

The next important step in the reception of Bolzano in Vienna is the creation of a Bolzano Commission on March 9, 1914 by the members of the Philosophical Society. A few months earlier, Höfler presented to his colleagues and several members of the Society (*Jahresberichte* 1912–1913, p. 10) a draft of this commission project whose mandate was both to make known the works of the philosopher and to support the growing interest at that time for the father of Austrian philosophy.<sup>49</sup> Höfler highlighted the importance of the rediscovery of Bolzano's manuscripts in 1903 and the many initiatives undertaken by Brentano's students and some members of the Society to promote the innovative nature of Bolzano's thought and the value of his philosophical ideas:

If I allowed myself to mention the establishment of a Bolzano Commission in the Philosophical Society, it is first and foremost to prevent that this interest in the great Austrian philosopher disappears and that it grows in a sustainable way [...] It is sufficient for the moment to emphasize that the Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna, by what it does for the work of Bolzano, now wishes to pay homage to him in the name of a philosophical society.<sup>50</sup>

In the year of the foundation of the Bolzano Commission, the Society published the first volume of *Wissenschaftslehre*<sup>51</sup> along with an article by Kreibig (1914) on the reception of Bolzano in Austria.<sup>52</sup> Kreibig argues that even though Bolzano's philosophy was ignored at the time by his contemporaries because they were “intoxicated by dialectics”,<sup>53</sup> Bolzano remains the first Austrian thinker who deserves the name:

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evaluation of Höfler's application (see Marty's letter to Brentano from February 19, 1905; Gimpl 1999, p. 20f.).

**49** According to Article 1 of the Statutes and Regulations of the Bolzano Commission, its main mandate was “Neudrucke der Werke Bernard Bolzanos zu veranstalten und die noch ungedruckten Schriften desselben herauszugeben”.

**50** *Jahresbericht* 1912–1913, p. 14.

**51** Bolzano 1914. In 1920, the Society published Bolzano's *Paradoxien des Unendlichen* with H. Hahn's annotations (Bolzano 1920), and the four volumes of *Wissenschaftslehre* were reissued several years later by Höfler's student W. Schultz, who was also a member of the Bolzano Commission (Bolzano 1929–1931).

**52** See also Kreibig (1905, p. 375f.), who insists on the importance of the Bolzanian distinction between content and object of presentation and its usage by Husserl, Höfler, Twardowski, Meinong, G. Uphues, the young Zimmermann, Kerry, and himself.

**53** Kreibig offers an explanation of Bolzano's historical situation based on Brentano's four phases theory: “Bolzano war in Wahrheit um mehr als ein Menschenalter zu früh gekommen, um nach Verdienst gewürdigt zu werden. Seine Zeit war die des dialektischen Rausches, der

So, it would seem that the history of philosophy in the last century on the soil of Austria was not a truly significant phenomenon unless it has a thinker in Bernard Bolzano, whose universality, depth, and acuteness deserve far more scientific admiration than so many glittering poetical thoughts of his deified contemporaries.<sup>54</sup>

To celebrate this occasion, one of the most loyal members of this organization since its founding, K. Twardowski, was invited to give a talk at the general meeting of the same year. Twardowski's two-part talk served as a basis for one of his most important philosophical treatises, "Actions and Products" (Twardowski 1999a), in which he conceives of intentional content on the model of Stumpf's *Gebilde* and Bolzano's *Sätze an sich*.<sup>55</sup> Twardowski's main concern in this talk is logical psychologism and Husserl's objections against Twardowski's psychologizing conception of meaning and intentional content in his 1894 book (Ingarden 1948, p. 28f. Twardowski's talk raised so much interest from the members of the Society that two further discussion sessions were added on this occasion.

## 7 Zimmermann's Legacy in Vienna

In 1895, Brentano resentfully left Austria, after having waited in vain for 15 years as a private lecturer, and despite the efforts of Zimmermann and his colleagues of the Faculty of philosophy for Brentano's reappointment as a full professor. Höfler considered the hiring of Mach to replace Brentano, and later, of Jodl, an affront to Brentano (Höfler 1917, p. 325). In fact, Zimmermann initially disagreed with the Minister's recommendation to grant Brentano's chair to Mach, but he later rallied by proposing a compromise which is summarized in this excerpt:

In Ernst Mach one has an epistemologist based on inductive and experimental methods. With Jodl, there is now a representative of ethics and history of modern philosophy. In the classical philologist Theodor Gomperz [the father of the future professor of philosophy Heinrich Gomperz] one has a representative of ancient philosophy. It is now necessary to make room for Christian philosophy. In any case, Müllner, who was attended by many

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blendenden Paradoxie, der mystischen Phrase. In solchen Epochen wird ein Denker von Bolzanos Art hochmütig ignoriert, wenn nicht verspottet." (Kreibitz 1914, p. 287).

<sup>54</sup> Kreibitz 1914, p. 274.

<sup>55</sup> Twardowski took over the main distinction between action (*Function*) and product (*Gebilde*) from another student of Brentano, Carl Stumpf (1906a, 1906b), who also significantly contributed to the reception of Bolzano in Germany. See Fisette 2021a.

students of the faculty of philosophy at the theological faculty, should represent the philosophy of the Middle Ages.<sup>56</sup>

But this is not the only decision taken by the ministry after Brentano's departure that had direct consequences on the orientation of philosophy in Vienna. In 1896, Friedrich Jodl, known for his anticlerical positions, and his antidote, the theologian L. Müllner, were appointed in Vienna not only to fill Zimmermann's chair but also to counterbalance the hiring of Mach the previous year. Jodl was also known for his resolutely anti-Brentanian positions and his many manoeuvres aimed at breaking the monopoly of Brentano's students in Austrian universities.<sup>57</sup> As Höfler pointed out in his autobiography, Jodl's main mission, when he left Prague, was to eradicate from Austria this provincial clique of priests or former priests whom he called the Brentanoids:

The philosophy at the German university is occupied and dominated in turn by the clericals, more precisely, "Brentanoide" or "Brentanote," as he calls them: the "clique" of a fashionable philosophy which retreats in its "provincial seclusion" – that is Jodl's view at any rate – with his rotten compromise between a "research without presupposition" and the deeply suspicious reactionary of a "liberal theology".<sup>58</sup>

Jodl's crusade against Brentano and his followers was carried out on several fronts, particularly in the Philosophical Society, which Jodl chaired after Höfler's departure for Prague in 1903 and until 1912 (Fisette 2014).

After Müllner's death in 1911 and Jodl's in 1913, the department appointed Robert Reininger as extraordinary professor in Vienna, and in 1922 as ordinary professor, the same year as K. Bühler and M. Schlick. Reininger was a student of Zimmermann who defended a dissertation on Schopenhauer in 1903 and was one of the few advocates of Kantianism in Vienna (see Nawratil 1998, 1969). Reininger became a member of the Philosophical Society at the turn of the twentieth century, under Jodl's presidency, with whom he was rather close, he became Vice President between 1906–1912, and after Höfler's death in 1922, he took over the chairmanship of the Philosophical Society until its dissolution in 1938.

Under Reininger's lead, the Philosophical Society underwent profound transformations which would later have as a consequence the distortion of the initial

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<sup>56</sup> Zimmermann, quoted in Wieser 1950, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> Jodl's career is closely related to Brentano's students. He moved to Prague in 1884 to replace C. Stumpf and became a colleague of Marty and Masaryk; in 1896, he was appointed in Vienna to fill Zimmermann's chair, and he was himself replaced in Prague by another student of Brentano, C. von Ehrenfels, who was also very active in the Philosophical Society.

<sup>58</sup> Höfler 1892, p. 16; see Gimpl 1999.

vocation of the organization. Indeed, Reininger virtually abolished discussion time in the Society, which means, at the same time, its democratic character. He also reduced to a minimum the number of lectures delivered by scientists and non-philosophers, thus minimizing the interdisciplinary vocation of the Society, and abandoned the main projects dear to his predecessors, namely, that of the Bolzano Commission. In short, under his chairmanship, the society became just an organization among others, and it was quickly supplanted in Vienna by the Ernst Mach Verein, and later by the Vienna Circle. The final phase of the decline of the Philosophical Society was its annexation to the Kant-Gesellschaft, which Reininger celebrated on November 18, 1927.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> "On November 18, 1927 was held, under the presidency of Professor Robert Reininger in Vienna, the general meeting of the 'Philosophical Society' during which the 'Philosophical Society', to the request of the commission, was acknowledged as a local group of the Kantian Society. From now on, it will bear the title of 'Philosophical Society of the University of Vienna', local group of the Kantian Society in Vienna." (Bericht 1927, p. 556).



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