

# A Snapshot of Austrian Philosophy on the Eve of Franz Brentano's Arrival: The Young Bernhard Alexander in Vienna in 1868–1871

## I. INTRODUCTION

When Bernhard (Bernát) Alexander arrived in Vienna in autumn 1868, he was still far from being the widely respected university professor, public writer, and art critic who would later influence entire generations of Hungarian philosophers and the intellectual climate of his native country.<sup>1</sup> What separated him from this status was not merely his young age (he had just turned 18) and the corresponding lack of academic career milestones he reached in the coming decades (in the face of the rising tide of antisemitism in Hungary), but, first and foremost, the lack of his strong philosophical commitment to Neo-Kantianism he acquired throughout the later stages of his academic peregrination which he spent in Berlin (WS 1871–1872), Göttingen (SS 1872), and Leipzig (WS 1872–

<sup>1</sup> Alexander was appointed to the University of Budapest as a lecturer (*Privatdozent*) in 1878, i.e., shortly after his return to Hungary. Yet, he was passed over when the successor of Cyrill Horváth, Alexander's own teacher (see Section II. 2 below) was elected in 1886 and had to wait until 1895 to become an extraordinary professor. Even then, this appointment proposal received only a minimal majority in the faculty, and Alexander's promotion to the rank of ordinary professor, which, according to normal academic procedure, would have taken place after three years, was repeatedly rejected between 1898 and 1902 (as presented on the basis of archival documents: Gergely 1976. 15 ff). As we are going to see below, Alexander, in retrospect, attributed these obstacles to latent antisemitism. In 1904, Alexander, however, managed to secure his professorial appointment by virtue of governmental intervention. As a full professor, he gained considerable fame (e.g., his public lecture course was attended by more than thousand people from all over Budapest, cf. Gergely 1976. 19), became dean of the faculty (1914–1915), and, *inter alia*, president of the Hungarian Philosophical Society (1914–1919). His career suffered a second blow due to his alleged support for the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 (cf. Turbucz 2017). In 1923, he returned from emigration and was partially compensated, but his career never fully recovered. (There is still no detailed intellectual biography of Alexander, pioneering preliminary work was done by Gábor 1986; for reliable biographical data directly based on primary sources, see: Kovács et al. 2012. 25–27.) Even though a complete bibliography of Alexander also remains a scholarly *desideratum*, it is indicative of the extent of his journalistic activity, that a collection of newspaper commentaries published by Alexander in German language in the *Pester Lloyd* during the last years of his life (i.e., in 1924–1927, including, literary, the last month of his life), which was preserved in his literary estate (Ms. MTAK 4110), consists of 24 newspapers cutouts alone (in addition to further 7 undated and one posthumously published items).

1873–SS 1873).<sup>2</sup> Given that it took decades for the mature Alexander's young students educated in Neo-Kantianism of their professor to discover phenomenology for themselves and introduce it to Hungary, it might be compelling to speculate as to which kind of different course the history of philosophy would have taken in Hungary, had the young Alexander arrived in Vienna just a few years later or had stayed just a few years longer in order for him to encounter the philosophical debut of Franz Brentano in Spring 1874 (see Brentano 1874b) who broke new grounds in Austrian philosophy. Yet, the present paper is not an exercise in counterfactual history-writing in philosophy. Rather, it is dedicated to reconstructing and exploring the historical perspective offered by Alexander's account of Austrian philosophy as it was actually practiced in Vienna on the eve of Franz Brentano's arrival who inaugurated Austrian Philosophy (with a capital 'P'), both according to the hagiographical narrative construed by the Vienna Circle and the more scientific, though still extrinsically motivated conception of Rudolf Haller.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the present paper is intended to augment the author's

<sup>2</sup> This historiographical judgement was already pronounced by Gyula Kornis (1885–1958), Alexander's colleague who became an ordinary professor shortly after Alexander's expulsion, see Kornis 1930. 196–197. (Technically speaking, Kornis inherited the chair of Alexander's teacher Horváth through Horváth's successor Pauer, while Alexander's chair, which was dedicated to the history of philosophy, had remained vacant for decades after Alexander's forced retirement in 1922, see Gergely 1976. 29.)

<sup>3</sup> Classical exposition: Haller 1979. 7 ff. (Haller notably employed an idiomatic capitalization: "*Österreichische Philosophie*", which I render by idiomatically capitalizing the English word "philosophy"). Already by that time, Haller was fighting against his critics who claimed that the historiographical idea of Austrian Philosophy is a "Procrustean bed" (Haller 1986), plainly "false" (40), or simply too "unclear and blurred" (42) to be useful as a historiographical category. His defense boiled down to asserting the exceptional nature of the "lineage of tradition [*Traditionslinie*]" that is constituted by Austrian Philosophy (41). Even as late as in the last year before his retirement (i.e., becoming a professor emeritus), Haller insisted on the idea of an Austrian *Sonderweg* in the history of modern philosophy (cf. Haller 1996. 153), supposedly characterized (see 14–155) by the shared rejection of Kantianism and subsequent German Idealism, aversion to existentialism, adoption of the methodology of the critique of language, and commitment to making philosophy scientific (even though Haller admitted that Brentano's philosophy exhibited "an impressive residual potential for metaphysics [*metaphysischen Restpotenzial*]" ; 155). In a telling passage of his late intellectual autobiography, however, Haller clearly stated that his introduction of the historiographical category was motivated by extrinsic consideration, namely "to pursue the tradition of Austrian philosophy from the vantage point of Russell, G. E. Moore and their followers", who, Haller confesses, embody the "*Weltgeist*" (Haller 2001. 583). The alleged exceptionalism of Austrian Philosophy, thus, seems to be rooted in Haller's admitted metaphilosophical preference for analytic philosophy. On the other hand, it is possible to make sense of Austrian philosophy not as an extrinsically motivated prescriptive notion, but rather as a descriptive notion pertaining to the local peculiarities of philosophy as it was practiced in the Habsburg Empire – which, however, obviously antedated the symbolical datum of 1874. Furthermore, as Katalin Neumer recently pointed out (notwithstanding her professional indebtedness to the research program initiated by Haller), Haller's thesis is not merely descriptively untrue (e.g., as she argued, Wittgenstein, who was probably the most prevalent Austrian philosopher, stood in the striking proximity of German *Lebensphilosophie* during the late stage of his thinking), but also disregards the historical fact that Austria (i.e., the Habsburg Empire) was far from being a homogenous

earlier research on overcoming the received view of the (pre)history of phenomenology, e.g. his attempts at reconstructing the biographical and conceptual links between Edmund Husserl and Herbartian psychology transmitted via Robert Zimmermann (see Varga 2015) or between the School of Brentano and the philosophical logic that was prevalent in German academic philosophy (*Universitätphilosophie*) prior to the slow reception of Boole-Jevons-style old English logic and the triumphant rise of Bertrand Russell's new English logic (see Varga 2016b). In any case, the story of Alexander's stay in Vienna in 1868–1871, no matter how brief it had been, represents one of the few authentic pieces of the history of Hungarian philosophy which are, at the same time, equally part of the history of Austrian philosophy proper.<sup>4</sup>

## II. THE HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF ALEXANDER'S STAY IN VIENNA

### 1. Courses attended

In the unpublished *curriculum vitae* that Alexander attached to his doctoral application at the University of Leipzig in July 1873, he wrote the following about his studies in Vienna and the brief prelude he spent at the university of his native city:

When I entered university, I have already chosen philosophy as the special field of studies. I have visited classes relating to this and philology for a year in Budapest and went then to Vienna where I had the pleasure of winning Professor [Robert] Zimmermann as a dear friend and supporter of my studies. On his advice, I enthusiastically studied natural sciences, [...] have attended – with the exception of Prof Zimmermann's lectures – only classes in theoretical branches of medicine, like anatomy and physiology. Of course, I continued my philosophical studies in a private way and prepared for the final university examination, mainly in order to obtain a supporting grant from the Hungarian government, so that my time, which, until then, was divid-

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and exclusively German-speaking *Nationalstaat* (Neumer 2004. 126). In the end, as Neumer insightfully remarked (see esp. 129), the idea of an 'Austrian Philosophy' is rooted in the general methodological dilemmas of writing the history of philosophy, insofar as Haller's thesis represents a markedly universalistic conception of philosophy (hence Haller's emphasis on the supposedly universal values embodied by analytic philosophy), while philosophy, Neumer believed, simultaneously purports the claim of universal validity and is embedded in locally determined networks.

<sup>4</sup> Despite autobiographical documents made available already in the 1920s (see Section II. 2 below), in the research literature there are only cursory discussions of Alexander's academic peregrination (cf. note 1 above and, e.g., Kornis 1930. 196 ff.).

ed between jobs for earning my living and my studies, could be dedicated to the latter alone. I passed the final university examination in philosophy and German language and literature with excellent results and went then to Germany [...].<sup>5</sup>

It is worth comparing Alexander's autobiographical narrative with archival data pertaining to his university studies. The individual student records at the University of Budapest have, unfortunately, been destroyed during in the turmoil surrounding the uprising of 1956, but the University Archives of Vienna preserves detailed information on the classes Alexander registered for during the Austrian section of his academic peregrination (first partial publication in Varga 2016c. 262–263). According to this data, the young Alexander, aged 18 and specifying “Hungarian” as his native language and “Jewish” as his religion, enrolled on the basis of the record of his previous studies at the University of Budapest (until 1873: of Pest) in WS 1868–1869 and opted to attend the following classes:<sup>6</sup>

- *Practical philosophy* (Praktische Philosophie) by Robert Zimmermann;
- *Aesthetics* (Aesthetik) by Robert Zimmermann;
- *Advanced seminar* (Philosophisches Conversatorium) by Robert Zimmermann;
- *Sophocles (Sophocles)* [full title: *Philological Seminar: Ancient Greek (Interpretation of Sophocles' Ajax); Griechische Übungen im philologischen Seminar (Interpretation von Sophokles Aias)*] by Emanuel Hoffmann;<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ms. UA Leipzig, Phil. Fak. Prom. 03403 (1876). 10 (all translations and transcriptions are by the present author, unless indicated otherwise). Original (supplied only in case of quotation from unpublished sources): “Als ich die Universität bezug, hatte ich Philosophie schon als Fachstudium erwählt. Ich hörte ein Jahr lang diesbezügliche und philologische Vorlesungen an der Universität zu Pest und gieng dann nach Wien, wo ich so glücklich war, im H. Professor Zimmermann einen warmen Freund und Förderer meiner Studien zu gewinnen. Auf sein Anrathen studierte ich eifrig Naturwissenschaften, zu <?> hörte zwei Jahre lang, mit Ausnahme der Vorlesungen von H. Prof. Zimmermann<,> nur theoretische Zweige der Medicin, wie Anatomie und Physiologie. Ich setzte natürlich privatim meine philosophische Studien fort, und bereitete mich auf das Staatsexamen vor, hauptsächlich, um eine Unterstützung von Seiten der ungarischen Regierung zu erhalten und meine Zeit, die bis dahin zwischen den Beschäftigungen, mir meinen Lebensunterhalt zu sichern und meinen Studien getheilt war, nun ganz diesen letzteren widmen zu können. Ich bestand das Staatsexamen aus Philosophie, deutscher Sprache und Literatur mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg, gieng dann nach Deutschland <...>.”

<sup>6</sup> I provide a full transcript of Alexander's entries Ms. UA Wien, Nationalen Phil. Fak. WS 1868/69 ff. (Med. Fak. since Alexander's second academic year), collated against the corresponding course catalogues (*Öffentliche Vorlesungen an der k. k. Universität zu Wien im Winter-Semester 1868/9 [...]*. Wien, Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei. 1868 ff.). I have previously published the list of the philosophical courses (see: Varga 2016c. 262–263). The dates of Alexander's registration and de-registration from the faculties of the University of Vienna, as well as the personal data from his registration form, was already published in Patyi et al. 2015. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Emanuel Hoffmann (1825–1900), professor of classical philology at the universities of Graz (1850) and Vienna (1856), editor, amongst others, of Augustine's *De civitate dei*.

- *Euripides*[, *Cyclops*] (*Euripides*[, *Cyclops*]) by Johannes Vahlen;<sup>8</sup>
- *Theory of organic and inorganic chemistry* (*Theorie der organischen und unorganischen Chemie*) by E[duard] Lippmann;<sup>9</sup>
- *Mathematics* (*Mathematik*) by Joseph Petzval.<sup>10</sup>

In the subsequent SS 1869, Alexander registered for the following classes:

- *History of philosophy, Third Part; From Kant down to the modern age* (*Geschichte der Philosophie [III. Coursus; V]on Kant bis auf die Neuzeit [official title: bis auf die Gegenwart]*) by Robert Zimmermann;
- *[On] the life and works of Fr. Schleiermacher* (*[Über] Fr. Schleiermachers Leben und Werke*) by Robert Zimmermann;
- *[Presentation of the] Sankhya philosophy* (*[Darstellung der] Sánkhya[-]Philosophie*) by Ludwig Poley;<sup>11</sup>
- *Philosophy of law* (*Rechtsphilosophie*) by Lorenz von Stein.<sup>12</sup>

In the following semester (WS 1869–1870) Alexander transferred to the Faculty of Medicine; yet, he remained faithful to Zimmermann:

- *Descriptive anatomy* (*Descriptive Anatomie*) by Joseph Hyrtl (1810–1894);
- *Anatomy training course* (*Secierübungen*) by Joseph Hyrtl;
- *[General and medical-pharmaceutical] chemistry* (*[Allgemeine und medizinisch-pharmaceutische] Chemie*) by Joseph Redtenbacher (1810–1870);
- *Advanced seminar* (*Philosophisches Conversatorium*) by Robert Zimmermann;

<sup>8</sup> Johann Vahlen (1830–1911), professor of classical philology at the universities of Breslau (1856), Freiburg (1858), Vienna (in the same year), and Berlin (1874), commentator, *inter alia*, of Aristotle's rhetorical writings.

<sup>9</sup> Eduard Lippmann (1838–1919) obtained his habilitation in 1869 at the University of Vienna, where he would become an extraordinary professor of chemistry in 1875. He specialized in the chemistry of aromatic organic compounds.

<sup>10</sup> The class attended by Alexander was probably one or two of the sub-classes of the *Introduction to Advanced Mathematics* (*Einleitung in die höhere Mathematik*): *Algebraic Analysis* (*Algebraische Analysis*) or *Theory of Higher-Order Equations* (*Theorie der Höheren Gleichungen*). Joseph Petzval (1807–1891) started his professorial career at the University of Budapest (1835) but soon moved to Vienna (1835), where he had been ordinary professor of mathematics (1837–1877). Today, Petzval is mostly remembered for his pioneering work in the 1840s and 1850s on designing photographic lens. Contrary to what is indicated in Alexander's registration form, in WS 1868–1869, Petzval only taught the advanced theoretical classes. The introductory classes were held, instead, by the astronomer Edmund Weiss (Weiß, 1837–1917) who would become an extraordinary professor only in 1869 (ordinary professor: 1875).

<sup>11</sup> The less-known Ludwig Poley (1812 [?] – 1885) obtained his *venia legendi* for indology at the University of Vienna in 1867 and started lecturing in the same year. His application in 1871 for the status of an extraordinary professor was, however, rejected. Poley continued lecturing until his death. For his biography, see Schroeder 1917 (which confirms Alexander's report, see below, of Poley's personal acquaintance of Hegel).

<sup>12</sup> After being forced to leave his native University of Kiel due to his involvement in the German Revolution of 1848–1849, Lorenz von Stein (1815–1890) became an ordinary political science at the University of Vienna in 1855 and launched a career as an influential, philosophically-inclined, and highly decorated professor.

- [crossed out: *History and critique of the*] *concept of God [in the modern world-views]* (*[Geschichte und Kritik des] Gottesbegriff[es in den modernen Weltanschauungen]*) by Carl Sigmund Barach-Rappaport;<sup>13</sup>

At the new faculty in the next semester (SS 1870), Alexander continued to take a combination of medical and philosophical courses:

- *Anatomy of the sense organ[, the brain and the nervous system]* (*Anatomie der Sinnesorgane[, des Gehirns und des Nervensystems]*) by Joseph Hyrtl;
- *Anatomy of the vessel system* (*Anatomie des Gefäßsystems*) by Anton Friedlowsky (?–?);
- *Organic chemistry [Part II: Carbon-rich compounds]* (*Organische Chemie[, Theil (Kohlenstoffreichere Verbindungen)]*) by Ernst Ludwig (1842–1915; different name provided by Alexander);
- *Psychology* (*Psychologie*) by Robert Zimmermann.

Alexander remained at the medical faculty in WS 1870–1871 as well:

- *Advanced seminar* (*Phil[osophisches] Conservatorium*) by Robert Zimmermann;
- *Topographical anatomy [of the neck and the trunk]* (*Topographische Anatomie [des Halses und Rumpfes]*) by Joseph Hyrtl;
- *Comparative osteology [after the completion of human osteology]* (*Vergleichende Osteologie [nach Abschluss der menschlichen Knochenlehre]*) by Joseph Hyrtl;
- *Anatomy Training Course* (*Secierübungen*) by Joseph Hyrtl;
- *Pharmacology[, general therapy and the theory of prescriptions]* (*Pharmakologie[, allgemeine Therapie und Receptirkunde]*) by Carl Ritter von Schroff (1844–1892);
- *Pharmacognosy* (*Pharmakognosie*) by Carl Ritter von Schroff;
- unidentifiable;
- *Physiology und advanced anatomy* (*Physiologie und höhere Anatomie*) by Ernst Brücke (1819–1892);
- *[History of the Old] German literature* (*[Geschichte der älteren d]eutsche[n] Literatur*) by Wilhelm Scherer.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The less-known Carl Sigmund Barach-Rappaport (1834–1885) was appointed as a lecturer (*Privatdozent*) at the University of Vienna after years-long faculty infighting in 1861. In 1870, he transferred to Lamberg and, in the subsequent year, to Innsbruck where he became an ordinary professor (see also: Wieser 1950. 13 ff., 85). He was regarded by his contemporaries as a representative of “ethical idealism” (Eisler 1912. 46).

<sup>14</sup> See note 21 below.

The present author was unable to locate Alexander's file for SS 1871, though Alexander reported to have attended classes in a pattern similar to that of SS 1870 (cf. Alexander 1928. 21–22). Let us now turn to other primary sources which permit a glance beyond the surface of archival data!

## 2. *Intellectual relationships*

There are a series of synchronous and diachronous autobiographical accounts pertaining to Alexander's stay in Vienna.<sup>15</sup> Shortly after Alexander's death, the incomplete set of the letters Alexander wrote to his professor Cyrill (József) Horváth Sch. P. (1804–1884), has been published (see Alexander 1928), together with the separate publication of the letters sent to Horváth by József Bánóczy (Weisz; 1849–1926), Alexander's fellow traveler (see: Bánóczy 1928). Horváth, who had been ordinary professor of philosophy at the University of Budapest since 1863, gained considerably fame in the historiography of Hungarian philosophy as the creator of an eclectic-Hegelian philosophical synthesis, termed the system of "concretism [*concretismus*]"<sup>16</sup> which, however, is supposed to have never been devised, let alone presented by Horváth in its entirety.<sup>17</sup> In his contribution to Bánóczy's *Festschrift*, Alexander described Horváth, the classes of whom they attended during their preparatory university years in Budapest, as somebody who "became aware of us, supplied us with books, but we have not learnt any philosophy from him, except from his books he supplied to us" (Alex-

<sup>15</sup> Separately published recollection of the Göttingen phase of his academic peregrination: Alexander 1919b. 164 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Horváth 1868. 15 ff.

<sup>17</sup> This historiographical scheme is already present in the obituary of Horváth delivered by his colleague Imre Pauer (1845–1930), successor to Horváth's chair in Budapest, at the general session of the Academy on November 23, 1885: Horváth's promised *opus magnum* "was never finished", the system the book intended to present "is far from being completed, the basement of it might not yet be stable, and its details not formulated even in the mind of its master" (Pauer 1885. 17, 18). Pauer reported to have gone through Horváth's literary estate but "failed to find the finished system anywhere" (*loc. cit.*). Pauer's evaluation is shared by the modern research literature (see, e.g., Mészáros 2000. 181), though Béla Mester has recently argued that the "topos" of Horváth's work on a system of philosophy is "construction" resulting from "external, non-philosophical requirements" (Mester 2011. 83), namely the requirement of reproducing the perceived role of Western system-making philosopher within his local Hungarian cultural context (cf. 82). At the same time, Mester believes, this requirement was "deeply interiorized" by Horváth himself as well (83). Without wishing to discount Mester's legitimate concern for external conditions of philosophical production, I believe that, from a purely philosophical point of view (i.e., without committing oneself to deliberately psychological or sociological approaches), it is very hard to distinguish between supposedly genuine intention of philosophical system-making and the one supposedly resulting merely from interiorized external requirements. In the end, all what the historian of philosophy could do is to point towards Horváth's manifest own intention of producing a philosophical system (cf., e.g., note 16 above).

ander 1919a. 8). At one occasion, the sexagenarian professor reportedly accused his young students “of trying to steal my philosophical system from me”.<sup>18</sup> As if that were not enough, one might conjecture whether there have been a latent confessional tension between the Piarist priest Horváth and his young Jewish students (or whether one of the parties have ever imputed such intentions to the another), even though there is no clear sign indicating that such thing has ever actualized. In any case, Alexander’s retrospective account recalls the latent and manifest antisemitism they faced during other stages of their early intellectual biography.<sup>19</sup> Last but not least, the content of their letters is obviously determined by the conscious or subliminal genre constraints of letters written by young students believing themselves to be at the mercy of their academic benefactors. From this point of view, it is hard to overestimate that we are now in the possession of a synchronous and relatively direct autobiographical source pertaining to the Viennese section of Alexander’s academic peregrination, namely the publication of his diary entries written in Vienna (see below in this special issue, 209 ff.).

Taken together, these sources permit a glance beyond the surface of archival data. Alexander, e.g., was attracted by Poley’s originality and first-hand experience of Hegel, though simultaneously alienated by Poley’s lack of systematic rigorousness.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Alexander had fond memories of Lorenz von Stern’s lecture course on the philosophy of law (cf. Alexander 1928. 12). With regard to classes attended by Alexander, it is intriguing to ask why he dedicated such amount of his precarious time to studies of natural sciences. Éva Gábor, whose merits in Alexander scholarship cannot be overestimated, believed that this was motivated by Alexander’s own “recognition that the profound study of philosophy indispensably presupposes the scientific, anatomical-physiological knowledge of the human body” (Gábor 1986. 12); though, few sentences earlier Gábor hinted at medicine being a typical career path for offspring of (lower) middle-class families like Alexander (see 10). In a similar vein, the Jewish scholar Lajos Blau (1861–1936) who published the letters sent by Bánóczi to Horváth conjectured that the equally conspicuous amount of interest Bánóczi dedicated to studies of natural sciences and medicines are indicative of his intention of “becoming a physician” (Bánóczi 1928. 109), pointing at Bánóczi’s passing remark according to which the study of anatomy “paints the uncertain future in a more comforting color” (120; quoted by 109). In stark contrast to these mundane

<sup>18</sup> Alexander 1919a. 8; Alexander’s anecdote logically implies that there was something to be stolen in the first place; though it could be colored by the retrospective historiographical assumptions of Alexander’s age and hence cannot be taken as a direct evidence that Horváth actually believed himself to be in possession of an elaborated system worth misappropriating.

<sup>19</sup> See Alexander 1919a. 6 ff. This assessment was shared by Alexander’s contemporaries, see, e.g., Sebastyén 1934. 37–38.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander 1928. 12–13; hitherto not identified due to the fact that Alexander did not explicitly use the name of Poley.

existential reasons, Alexander's doctoral *curriculum vitae* from Leipzig, quoted at the beginning of the current section, makes the intriguing claim that it was Robert Zimmermann, ordinary professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna between 1861 and 1896, who directed the attention of his young student towards natural sciences, more specifically towards theoretical medicine. In fact, Zimmermann's role is supported by a closer reading of Bánóczy's letter's to Horváth in which the need to study natural sciences first surfaces upon the explicit recommendation of Zimmermann ("he recommended", 113). Who was this strange professor of philosophy who dared to direct the attention of his students *away from philosophy*? Before attempting to address this question, let us take a closer look at the aforementioned *existential aspect* of Alexander's stay in Vienna.

Already in his heavily stylized letters to his former university professor, Alexander made a passing remark on the seclusion he suffered in the university city of Göttingen: "one lacks social circle [*literally: szociális köre*]" that would "counterbalance" the "tedious studies" (Alexander 1928. 39). His private diary entries, however, reveal the true nature of Alexander's longing for »social circle«. As a young man away from home, he was far from leading an ascetic life: e.g., he co-organized a "carousal [*Trinkelage*]" to celebrate the publication of his first feature (*Feuilleton*) in the Viennese daily *Die Presse*.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Alexander's "social circle" went beyond the confines of usual pass-time social activities by young adults. Alexander's diary entries witness a curious kind of informal "fraternity [*Bruderschaft*]",<sup>22</sup> which exhibits traits both of the more formal student fraternities (*Corps, Burschenschaften* etc.) which were prevalent in nineteenth-century universities in the German-speaking cultural area, as well as of the less specific, though recurring behavioral patterns and intellectual inclinations that characterize young students of philosophy. When Franz Brentano's students, who would later establish the official *Philosophical Society at the University of Vienna (Philos-*

<sup>21</sup> See orig. p. 6. As mentioned in the corresponding footnotes by the editors, the *Die Presse*, once the flagship of Vienna's journalistic landscape (and predecessor of today's eponymous daily), had already been on the decline when its actual owner, Carl Dreger issued a journalistic *carte blanche* for the newcomer Alexander. By the way, it is indicative of the *Die Presse*'s situation – and it, to a certain extent, also deducts from the value of Dreger's offer – that in 1870 the bulk of the cultural sections (*Feuilleton*) of the daily issues was filled with endless instalments of the same novels (in case of the three-volume novel *La Pucelle* by the schoolteacher-turned-writer Karl Fren(t)zel [1827–1914], more than hundred instalments were published; biographical data based on *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon*). On the other hand, even though the non-fiction content in the cultural section was unsurprisingly tilted towards literature, history, and music, Alexander was not alone in reporting on novelties of the philosophical literature. E.g., the Germanist Wilhelm Scherer (1841–1886), professor at the university between 1868 and 1872, who was incidentally Dilthey's friend and, precisely in 1870, lobbied heavily for Dilthey's appointment to Vienna (cf. Dilthey 2011. 544 ff., esp. 545, n. 1), published a review of the first (and only) volume of Dilthey's biography of Schleiermacher (Scherer 1870).

<sup>22</sup> Orig. p. 5. Cf. also: „das wir zu Ehren eines neuen Bruders veranstaltet hatten" (orig. p. 4), „der neue Bruder" (orig. p. 5).

*ophische Gesellschaft an der Universität zu Wien*) convened in the Café Kaiserhof<sup>23</sup> in WS 1887/87, they were, as they recalled two decades later, „arguing over the existence of the external world and, for this purposes, questioning the existence of the stone tables, causing astonishment on the faces of uninvited listeners”.<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, it is fascinating to read Alexander’s description of their debating about the “big secrets of mankind” (orig. p. 4) and the futility of “increasing the number of the many question marks already possessed by human race” (*ibid.*). In contrast to the more formally-epistemologically oriented problems discussed by Brentano’s disciples in the late 1880s (probably not devoid of the vague influence of Neo-Kantianism), the burning issues for Alexander and his »brothers« were unapologetically metaphysical: “attaining truth” (orig. p. 4) and the “luring idea” of “immortality (orig. p. 3). They were also not afraid of dedicating their fraternity to overcoming individualism towards the advancement of humanity. As if that were not enough, Alexander’s description seems to attest an emotional, almost mystical facet of their experience, even though this facet is articulated in pantheistic terms (see esp. the description at the bottom of orig. p. 5). It is probably not without reason, that the young Alexander was reportedly entertaining the idea of becoming a rabbi (cf. Gábor 1986. 11) and he retained his distinctly Jewish identity throughout his entire life.<sup>25</sup>

The “fraternity” of Alexander and his fellow students might constitute a promising subject matter for comparative studies of cultural forms among nineteenth-century students of humanities in German-speaking area; but what could turn it into a piece of genuine history of philosophy is, of course, the ability of its professional articulation in terms of the historical tradition of philosophy, i.e., Alexander’s ability to connect his vague ideas to what he was taught at the university. In this regard, the diary preserved an explicit declaration of Alexander’s philosophical preferences that is worth being quoted in its entirety:

<sup>23</sup> This is probably not identical with the bar of today’s hotel, but rather located in the *Josefstädterstrasse*.

<sup>24</sup> Anonymous 1913. 3. According to the historiography of the Society, the crystallization process that transformed the debating circle into an officially organized structure was initiated by the external example of the Philosophical Society at the University of Berlin, see: Meister 1938. 4.

<sup>25</sup> In one of his juvenilia published during his last Viennese winter term, Alexander revealed strong sympathy for regarding religion as a merely cultural phenomenon: “In religions, all old is new and all new is old, and all progress consists in a combination of basic elements. Everywhere, the chords of the soul are struck in a way that the resulting tone is religion, because the chords – the human soul – are of the same composition, because the sublime phenomena of nature, which elicit that tones from these chords, are essentially of the same nature everywhere.” (A[lexande]r 1871a. 9.) The reviewed author was Max Müller (1823–1900), an Indologist who, besides making a stellar career in Oxford academia, was a successful popularizer of his science not shy of drawing wide-ranging, and often far-fetched, conclusions on the basis of comparative linguistics and history of religions.

Therefore, I am not a Hegelian in metaphysics, since I feel that it is not the path on which the common sense should wander, if it is intent on providing viable results. I hope to arrive at a natural world view that is equally distant from a flat ethical and scientific naturalism, as well as from a blurred idealism. Being a child of my time, I am a realist and compelled towards the views of a Herbart and a Lotze. As to how I would diverge from them, I do not know yet; but I think I will do [so].<sup>26</sup>

The part of Alexander's above declaration which is, *nolens volens*, the most authentic is probably his confession of being under the influence of the philosophical *Zeitgeist*. This, of course, leaves open the question as to which extent the latter, culminating in Alexander's avowal of "being a realist" corresponds to his latent philosophical convictions and preferences expressed in other parts of his diary analyzed above. In order to resolve this tension, one has to take into account Alexander's professional philosophical activities in Vienna – which would bring us back to Zimmermann.

### 3. *Writing projects*

During his period spent in the Imperial city, Alexander pursued a cluster of philosophical writing projects. Already the sources published in 1928 univocally testify that Alexander's involvement in philosophy originated in Zimmermann's advanced seminar (*Philosophisches Conversatorium*), which, as indicated by our data in Section II. 1, Alexander consistently visited in each semester of his stay in Vienna. Even in the earliest report, the first one of Alexander's preserved letters to Horváth which was written shortly after the start of Alexander's second semester in Vienna, he characterized Zimmermann as "my teacher in philosophy" (Alexander 1928. 9), and in the diary entry from January 16, 1870 (i.e., almost one year later), Zimmermann is referred to as "my professor" (orig. p. 6), not to mention Zimmermann's description in the doctoral *curriculum vitae* as "dear friend and supporter of my studies." In contrast to Brentano, whose advanced seminars, regularly announced under the title *Together with the students: Reading, commentary and critical review of selected philosophical writings (In Gemeinschaft mit den Studierenden: Lesung, Erklärung und kritische Besprechung ausgewählter philosophischen Schriften)*,<sup>27</sup> was dedicated to one book per semester (often opting for classical authors of the history of philosophy); Zimmermann let each student present separate papers during his seminar sessions on a philosophical novelty. Alexander, as well as his companion Bánóczy excelled in this genre: Already in

<sup>26</sup> Orig. p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> For the most complete list of the classes announced by Brentano, see: Antonelli 2001, 496 ff.

the first semester, Zimmermann “approved” Alexander’s paper and invited him to a discussion in his flat (Alexander 1928. 11). Zimmermann “became very fond of us”, Alexander recalled, “and assigned us the most important papers” (Alexander 1919a. 10). “He told me several flattering things, I returned from his flat beaming with delight, in elevated spirits”, Alexander recorded in his diary with regard to a publication that originated from his presentations on Zimmermann’s seminars (orig. p. 6).

It is precisely Alexander’s writing projects originating from these seminar assignments which render Alexander’s student relationship to Zimmermann especially worth our attention. A detailed look permits us to reconstruct two major distinct writing projects which are outlined below. In none of them did Alexander’s main unpublished manuscript survive, but some of them Alexander managed to publish short pieces of writings representing the tips of the icebergs of his researches. These icebergs are surrounded by the floating debris of Alexander’s minor occasional articles in the *Die Presse* (often only in its local edition, the *Local-Anzeiger der “Presse”*), published pseudonymously under various monograms and hence hard to identify in unambiguous manner.<sup>28</sup>

(1) Alexander’s first distinct writing project originated in the first semester from his assignment to review a booklet written by Heinrich Adolf Rinne (1819–1868), an inconspicuous German physicist who died a premature death in the summer of the very year of the publication of his pamphlet.<sup>29</sup> Rinne’s work indeed lacked any reference to names of philosophers, let alone their works; and Alexander claimed to have demonstrated its dependence on Hermann Lotze’s early book, the *Medical Psychology* (Lotze 1852; see Alexander 1928. 10–11). Alexander was not alone in raising such concerns: The anonymous editorial reviewer of Rinne’s booklet in the influential *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* clas-

<sup>28</sup> The monogram „B. A–er.” could definitely be assigned to Alexander, as it is used for the article he explicitly mentioned in his diary (see note 21 above) and it seems specific enough. Probably the same applies to the monogram “B. A.”. On the other hand, the present author is reluctant as to whether articles signed simply as “B.” could unambiguously be ascribed to Alexander (especially articles which are not specifically philosophical), even though he demonstrably employed this monogram in case of an article he explicitly mentioned as his own in his letters ([Alexander] 1870; cf. Alexander 1928. 21; for a probably different author using the same monogram, see the issue of January 27, 1870, p. 13). Barring any supplemental information, anonymous reviews cannot be ascribed to Alexander, even if they content would suggest Alexander’s authorship. Furthermore, Alexander probably continued contributing to the *Die Presse* even after he left Vienna (cf. A[lexander?] 1871).

<sup>29</sup> Rinne 1868. In his letters, Alexander misreported its title as *On the Significance of Materialism in Psychological and Ethical Regard (Über die Bedeutung des Materialismus in psychologischer und ethischer Beziehung*; see Alexander 1928. 10), which was reproduced by Gábor 1986. 13–14 and Zóka 2012. 54, without providing any bibliographical reference to it. Heinrich Adolf Rinne studied in Munich and Göttingen and obtained his doctoral degree at the latter university. Subsequently, he embarked on a professional medical career and died in 1868, shortly after being appointed at a mental hospital in Hildesheim (biographical data based on his entry in *Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte und aller Zeiten und Völker*).

sified the first three sections as being on the verge of “plagiarism” (Anonymous 1869). This issue of the *Literarisches Centralblatt* was published on April 17, 1869; i.e., two days before Alexander’s letter to Horváth in which Alexander reported his discovery to his former teacher. It is, thus, far from being surprising that Alexander’s acrimonious running commentary, which was allegedly 40 pages long (see Alexander 1928. 11), remained unpublished.<sup>30</sup> It is worth mentioning, though, that this preoccupation made him aware of Friedrich Albert Lange’s book on materialism which is a seminal, yet still underestimated contribution to the genesis of Neo-Kantianism (besides being named by Brentano as the forerunner of his own idea of psychology, cf. Brentano 1874a. 13).<sup>31</sup> The fruits of Alexander’s study of Lange’s *opus magnum* are already manifested in a short newspaper review article (A[lexande]r 1871c) he published in March 1871 about Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899) who had been one of the protagonists during the controversy on materialism that raged in the 1850s and, precisely through the voluminous pamphlet reviewed by Alexander (Büchner 1869), had just ignited another controversy centered around the philosophical implications of Darwinism that would preoccupy philosophers and philosophically-inclined scientists in the 1860s and 1870s. Alexander adopted from Lange the main thrust of the argumentation by virtue of which early Neo-Kantian professional philosophers attempted the recapture the ground they had been forced to cede to natural scientists after the demise of Hegelianism and other absolute systems of philosophy. Alexander instantiated this argumentative strategy claiming that, “[t]he materialism, which, at the beginning, had been a reaction against philosophy, wanted to become a philosophy” (A[lexande]r 1871c. 14). In trying to do so, however, scientific materialism “regularly becomes shipwrecked” (*ibid.*), he claimed. In other words, the new wave of philosophers not only attempted to legitimate their endeavor by pointing out that their scientific critics are also engaged in doing philosophy, but their true strategy was to lure their enemy into the foreign terrain of philosophy where professional philosophers would prevail. Alexander, too, claimed by relying on Lange that Büchner is “entangled in the bonds of the old *Naturphilosophie* that is so much ridiculed by him”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> It must be said in Alexander’s favor that the long benevolent review of Rinne’s booklet by Heinrich Ritter (1791-1869), the aging historian of philosophy, in the renowned *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* on August 5 of the previous year did not mention Rinne’s indebtedness to Lotze (besides suggesting the presence of a broadly-speaking Herbartian framework; cf. Ritter 1868. 1242).

<sup>31</sup> At that time, only the first, single-volume and less-discussed edition was available: Lange 1866. On the significance of Lange for the genesis of Neo-Kantianism, see Klaus Christian Köhnke’s seminal investigations (1986. 233 ff.).

<sup>32</sup> A[lexande]r 1871c. 14. The passages Alexander had in mind were probably Lange’s claim that Büchner is under the spell of the “after-effect [*Nachwirkung*] of the Schellingian-Hegelian philosophy” and occasionally even falls into “vague pantheism” (Lange 1866. 304). In accordance with the general line of his argumentation, Lange also attempted to prove that Büchner “propounds a completely new concept of philosophy without, however, exactly

Hence, the philosophical standpoint manifested by the young Alexander in Vienna might, from a level general enough, be described as being committed to scientific ideals and, thus, subsumed under the historiographical concept of Austrian Philosophy. What such historiographical classification overlooks, however, is specifically the early Neo-Kantian approach to sciences, as exemplified by the young Alexander's critique of Büchner. What else does the case study of Alexander's juvenilia teach us about Austrian philosophy as it was actually practiced on the eve of Brentano's arrival that inaugurated it in the historiographical sense?

(2) It is only the present critical edition of the Viennese entries from Alexander's diary which reveals Alexander's second distinct writing project (hitherto apparently conflated with the previous one),<sup>33</sup> namely the presentation and critique of a philosophical-cultural sensation *du jour*, receded into oblivion since then (even the author's name was overshadowed by an eponymous twentieth-century philosopher): Eduard von Hartmann's (1842–1906) *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, which was first published in November 1868 (Hartmann 1869) and went through eight editions within a decade. Already in February 1869, the Leipzig-based cultural weekly celebrated Hartmann's book as one of the „outstanding publications of recent philosophical literature” (Gottschall 1869. 113), and the book was reviewed at great length in the leading professional philosophical journal already during the second half of the same year (see: Reichlin-Meldegg 1869). Alexander himself prepared a paper that consisted of 53 densely written pages and presented it spanning three sessions of Zimmermann's advanced seminar in November 1869 (see: Alexander 1928. 13). Alexander also reported that Zimmermann recommended him to submit his paper to the *Zeitschrift für exacte Philosophie* (*ibid.*; full title of the journal: *Zeitschrift für exacte Philosophie im Sinne des neuern philosophischen Realismus*). This passage in Alexander's letter has hitherto been taken at its face value, without looking into the issue as to whether Hartmann's bestseller was actually reviewed in that journal or not. This question can be answered in affirmative mode; however, the author of the review was, unfortunately, not Alexander but rather Friedrich Bartolomäi,<sup>34</sup> a lesser-known German Herbartian pedagogue who belonged to the

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defining it” (298), because Büchner insisted on philosophy being generally intelligible and accessible to lay audience; though this argumentation of Lange verges on being a sophism.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Gábor 1986. 14–15; Zóka 2012. 55; I was unable to locate any writing of Alexander published in the *Neue Freie Presse*, as claimed by Zóka. Szemere, the editor of Alexander's letters to Horváth, was careful enough not to try to guess what Alexander's writing project, described at lengths by Alexander in the letters without exactly telling its subject matter, was about (cf. Alexander 1928. 5).

<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Bartolomäi (1817–1878) studied mathematics and philosophy in Jena (since 1840), where he joined the Herbartian pedagogical circles and worked as a teacher at the flagship teacher training school. From 1866 he was employed as a statistician in Berlin (mental health problems since 1877). Biographical data from *Lebensskizzen ausgewählter Herbartianer* of the *Arbeitsstelle für Internationale Herbartianismusforschung* at the University of Düsseldorf,

inner circle of the self-avowedly Herbartian journal (Bartholomäi 1871). The review was published in issue no. 3 of vol. 9, which spanned 1869–1871, so its submission probably coincided with the incubation of Alexander’s own plans. In March 1870, Alexander reported to have submitted his paper “to the journal of the Herbartians”, even though the “journal appears to be discontinued, as only one issue was published in the previous year and no issue so far in the current year” (Alexander 1928. 17). It must have been a bitter disappointment for Alexander to find out that his juvenilia collided with a review originating from the inner circle of the journal.

In this case, however, Alexander managed to publish a condensed version of his paper as a feature article spanning the bottom parts of four pages in the cultural section (*Feuilleton*) of the declining Viennese daily *Die Presse*.<sup>35</sup> His diary provides the useful information that this article was definitely the first one he published in the cultural section of German-language newspapers (cf. orig p. 6). Collated with his letters to Horváth, it also becomes clear that he sent the printed text to his Hungarian mentor who benevolently compared it to the aforementioned review<sup>36</sup> that was published in the mainstream professional *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* (cf. Alexander 1928. 17), and that Alexander was entertaining the idea of publishing a Hungarian version of the article.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the lost longer manuscript which reportedly “sharply criticize[d] the inconsistencies and falsehoods” in Hartmann’s book (Alexander 1928. 13) and attempted to demonstrate that Hartmann’s “inductive method fails to attain the results on which he based his system” (17); Alexander’s published feature article is self-avowedly descriptive (e.g., he does not want to “impose a judgement on the reader”; A[lexande]r 1870. 2). At the same, time there is, to a certain extent, a *harmonia praestabilita* between Alexander’s more general remarks in the article and the views expounded by Brentano when he ascended to the lectern two years later (see: Brentano 1874b). Both were situated in what Frederick C. Beiser has recently so aptly termed as the post-Hegelian “obsolescence crisis”<sup>38</sup> of philosophy – even though the young Alexander was more sympathetic to the idea that

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Germany (<https://www.uni-due.de/herbartianismus-forschungsstelle/Skizze.shtml>; last visited: 10-12-2018).

<sup>35</sup> A[lexande]r 1870. First identified by: Varga 2016c. 261.

<sup>36</sup> Reichlin-Meldegg 1869; hitherto not identified.

<sup>37</sup> See: Alexander 1928. 17. I was unable to locate a possible realization of this plan by Alexander.

<sup>38</sup> Beiser 2014. 49 and passim. As I have argued elsewhere (see esp.: Varga 2016a), Early Phenomenology (i.e., the School of Brentano, Edmund Husserl and his Munich, Göttingen, and, to a certain extent, early Freiburg students and collaborators) constitute the blind spot of Beiser’s investigations, even though his framework, namely the rehabilitation of German theoretical academic philosophy (*Universitätsphilosophie*) of the post-Hegelian decades during the second half of the so-called long nineteenth-century as a legitimate object of scholarly history of philosophy (which, under a different label, was actually pioneered by Köhnke, see Köhnke 1986), is apparently promising for contextualized understanding of Early Phenome-

Hegel had been “dead long enough” to be regarded as “classical writer of philosophy” (A[lexander] 1870. 13) who is no more able to “engender new enthusiasm” (A[lexande]r 1871b. 14); while Brentano acrimoniously recalled Jakob Friedrich Fries’ (1773–1843) remark that Hegel’s philosophy would “belong to the history of policing the schools [*Schulpolizei*], rather than the history of philosophy” (Brentano 1987. 67; cf., e.g., Fries 1840. 671). Disregarding the differences in their magnanimity towards their historical predecessors, both regarded the current crisis of philosophy as a chance, rather than a malady. In the concluding part of his inaugural address, Brentano called the “rich burgeoning” of “natural science and its subspecies” the precondition for the arrival of “springtime for philosophy” (Brentano 1874b. 20). Alexander, too, declared that “[w]ithout accurate knowledge of natural sciences one could hardly dare to engage in speculations” (A[lexande]r 1870. 1), and he praised Hartmann for attempting to ground his “system” on an “empirically [...] unshakeable basis” (2). Vice versa, he chastised Hegel for failing to account for the source of “the creative efficacy of his ideas” which are “nothing else than pure concepts” (1). In sum, one is really compelled to construct a counterfactual narrative (as mentioned in Section I above): Had Alexander remained at the University of Vienna, he might have found his new philosophical hero in Brentano who ascended to the lectern in Spring 1874. Instead, Alexander wrote to Horváth at the end of SS 1871 that, despite his strong personal and professional ties to Zimmermann, he is bored by the Viennese menu in philosophy and his ship is bound to sail to Berlin (see: Alexander 1928. 21–22). There is, however, a factual (rather than a counterfactual) hero of Alexander’s Vienna period, namely his actual teacher Zimmermann. Even the plethora of Alexander’s occasional minor writings testify to Zimmermann’s influence – and to the influence of the ideas transmitted by him, most notably the philosophy of Herbart. E.g., Alexander’s relatively mature review of Zimmermann’s treatise on Samuel Clarke concludes in highlighting Clarke’s significance for the development of the ideas of Herbart (cf. A[lexande]r 1871d. 15), even though the original text of Zimmermann’s academy lecture – delivered on January 19, 1870, i.e., during the heydays of Alexander’s admiration for Zimmermann – barely announced Herbart’s name (cf. Zimmermann 1870b. 360) and even its expanded version published subsequently only mentions Herbart within the general context of overcoming the one-sidedly emotive grounding of ethics and aesthetics.<sup>39</sup> Hence, in the last section of the present paper I am going to look into the intellectual fruits of Alexander’s stay in Vienna, respectively what they could tell us about Austrian philosophy itself (regardless of the capitalization of ‘p’).

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nology. The present paper, together with other works by the present author, intends to serve as a small contribution towards realizing this approach.

<sup>39</sup> Zimmermann 1870a; the existence of this separate, expanded version of Zimmermann’s talk, published in the *Denkschriften* of the Academy, is often overlooked.

### III. ALEXANDER AND THE “ZIMMERMANN RIDDLE”

#### 1. *The contested relevance of Alexander’s philosophical master in Vienna*

The relevance of the young Alexander’s Viennese period for the historiography of philosophy is, to a certain extent, rooted in nothing else than his relationship to Robert Zimmermann. Zimmermann, not unlike Alexander, was a productive author but an elusive thinker. Since the vast body of Zimmermann’s writings is mostly dedicated to aesthetics (respectively, consists of occasional pieces of writing), the true extent of his philosophical views, which he must have expounded to his students in his lecturing activity that spanned almost all major historical periods and disciples of philosophy (cf. Wieser 1950. 78–83), remains in the shadow, especially during the later decades of his professorship. Alexander recalled that he and his travel companion Bánóczy “had been the only ones amongst [Zimmermann’s] students who made philosophy the main course of study of their lives” (Alexander 1919a. 10). This claim is historically untrue, as Zimmermann, who had been an ordinary professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna (the only one after Brentano’s demotion to the rank of *Privatdozent* in 1880),<sup>40</sup> oversaw entire generations of Brentano’s Viennese students, including, most notably, Edmund Husserl, who studied in Vienna in SS 1881 – WS 1881–1882 and WS 1884 – SS 1886 (see Schuhmann 1977. 9–17; full course list: Varga 2015. 99–101), not to mention the fact that one of the examiners during the philosophical part of Husserl’s mathematical doctoral examination was Zimmermann himself (see already: Schuhmann 1977. 11). Alexander’s claim is, however, historically true in the sense that he (and Bánóczy) had been the only famous philosophy students of Zimmermann whose *loyalty to their master was undivided*. It is, namely, not by chance that, decades later, Alexander and his audience were unaware of the fact that Husserl, who, by then, had already reached the zenith of his philosophical influence, was a counterexample to Alexander’s claim of being the only student of Zimmermann who made a career in philosophy. Quite the contrary, as I have argued elsewhere (see Varga 2018. 108 ff.), it was Husserl’s own deliberate decision to reduce his philosophical lineage to Brentano alone (which was cemented precisely around this time by Husserl’s hagiographical account of his study at Brentano in Vienna, completely ignoring the classes he took under Zimmermann; see Husserl 1919, 1989. 304–315). During his Halle period in 1896, in contrast, Husserl still mentioned in a letter *both* Brentano and Zimmermann as his most influential teachers in philosophy (see Purkert and Ilgauds 1987. 206).

<sup>40</sup> Concerning the historical circumstances of Brentano’s demotion from the point of view of the development of early phenomenology (based on a combination of printed and unpublished sources), see Varga 2014. 86 ff.

What is at stake philosophically is whether Zimmermann had been in the position to transmit ideas from the outside to Husserl and other fellow disciples of Brentano in Vienna. Furthermore, what renders this question especially pertinent is Zimmermann's exposure to the philosophy of Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), the polymath thinker from Prague whom Husserl believed to have rediscovered (see, e.g., Husserl 1900. 224–227; 1975. 226–229) and who indeed anticipated many fundamental tenets of early phenomenology (as well as of contemporary analytical philosophy and logic). After all, both Robert Zimmermann and his father Johann August Zimmerman (1793–1869) had been member of the inner circle of the disciples of Bolzano, who explicitly called Zimmermann junior his “beloved son [*Herzensjunge*]” (Bolzano 2006. 229) and put “great trust” in him (Bolzano 2005. 521), namely in Robert Zimmermann's capacity as “an effective tool for the propagation of our ideas” (47). Indeed, the young Zimmermann verifiably advertised Bolzano's ideas when historical circumstances permitted (see, e.g., Zimmermann 1849). Especially Eduard Winter (1896–1982), the pioneering Bolzano scholar who had personal ties to the late phase of the Prague wing of the School of Brentano, was an ardent supporter of Zimmermann's role as a transmitter of Bolzano's ideas (already: Winter 1933. 252). In the face of the mounting evidence of the mature Zimmermann's public silence on Bolzano, Winter later developed the irrefutable hypothesis that Zimmermann conspiratorially denied Bolzano even if he remained attached to Bolzano's ideas at the bottom of his heart.<sup>41</sup>

In the specific context of the historiography of early phenomenology, it has been alleged that Zimmermann as a professor of philosophy in Vienna “was in a position to promote Bolzanian doctrines at least to some extent” (Rollinger 1999. 69); while Zimmermann's role as a transmitter has recently come under heavy criticism from the point of view of the general historiography of Austrian philosophy (see, e.g., Morscher 1997). The present author has argued (Varga 2016c) that Husserl had indeed been significantly exposed to Zimmermann, whose classes he regularly attended in *Vienna* in 1884–1886 (though not through the philosophy textbook he used in the secondary school). At the same time, the doctrines Zimmermann verifiably transmitted to Husserl were not of Bolzano, but rather general Herbartian ideas (which are relevant on their own right to the development of Husserl's specifically phenomenological idea of intentionality). From a philosophical standpoint, the crux of the issue is whether the concept (*Begriff*) is defined in a logical way that clearly anticipates the phenomenological idea of intentional content (as exemplified by the original, Bolzanoian edition of Zimmermann's logic textbook, see esp. Winter 1975. 41–42, 45) or rather by virtue of a pictorial theory of representation, e.g., as a “certain *picture* of a tree

<sup>41</sup> See Winter 1993. 34; it must be said in Winter's favor that Bolzano and his disciples indeed employed conspiratorial method to counter censorship and other repressive measures.

[*gewisses Bild eines Baumes*]” that is distilled from the series of the corresponding experiences, as Zimmermann wrote in the more widespread, Herbartian version of his logic textbook (already: Zimmermann 1860. 17; emphasis in original). Is Alexander’s acquaintance of Zimmermann, reconstructed in the above section of the present paper, is of any avail when reconstructing the influence Alexander’s philosophical master might have exerted a decade later on his students who would originate phenomenology?

## *2. Alexander’s juvenilia as a baseline of Austrian philosophy prior to Austrian Philosophy?*

The possibility of using Alexander’s Viennese period as a baseline for reconstructing philosophy, more specifically philosophical logic, as it was practiced in Austria prior to the birth of Austrian Philosophy – in other words, the possibility of obtaining an unfiltered picture of Zimmermann’s thinking that, in case of the 1880s, was mixed with that of Brentano – hinges on reconstructing the entirety of the corpus that is presented by Alexander’s juvenilia. His longer manuscripts reconstructed above, if we were in their possession, might provide detailed information on the logical doctrines Alexander acquired during his philosophical apprenticeship in Vienna, but his feature articles are apparently not specific enough. Is it possible to look beyond the surface of these occasional writings? It is less known that there exists a partial print (Alexander 1876) of Alexander’s original dissertation by virtue of which he obtained his doctoral degree at the University of Leipzig in August 1873, and it is even lesser known that the original dissertation itself has been preserved in the Hungarian Jewish Archives.<sup>42</sup> Unlike the dissertation, which discusses the contemporary critique and defense of Kant’s transcendental deduction of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the original manuscript is simultaneously more broadly conceived and closer to Kant’s letter: it presents Kant’s general intellectual biography with a special focus on pre-critical works (furthermore, the partial print does not exactly correspond to any of the seven chapters of the original dissertation, which, in turns, differs from Alexander’s mature work on Kant [Alexander 1881]). The original dissertation manuscript unmistakably attests Alexander’s adherence to the Herbartian philosophy, as the opening sentence of its introduction is a direct quotation from Herbart on the long-lasting significance of Kant for the contemporary condition of German philosophy (Herbart 1850. 513, lines 5–10). Yet, this

<sup>42</sup> Ms. HJA, XIX-113. I am grateful to Péter Turbucz for directing my attention to this item. It contains both the handwritten fair copy of Alexander’s dissertation (with a few marginalia, presumably from the reviewers of the dissertation) and Alexander’s so-called half-way (*halbbrüchig*) manuscript of the former. I am not aware of any extensive discussion in the scholarly literature of the partial print of Alexander’s dissertation, let alone of its original manuscript.

source is, again, not suitable for providing a glimpse into Zimmermann's ideas. Alexander's dissertation exemplifies interesting early strata of Neo-Kantianism precisely before its institutional crystallization (see, e.g., Pollok 2010); yet, by the same token, Alexander's loyalty is here divided between what he might have learnt from Zimmermann and what he acquired during the later stages of his academic peregrination.

There is, however, another source pertaining to Alexander's Vienna period. "I must write anthropology as a prize essay for the Hungarian academy", he recorded in his diary on January 16, 1870 (orig. p. 6). The prize competition was announced during the General Assembly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in April 1869 (see the corresponding editorial footnote); but it was declared unsuccessful during the General Assembly in May 1871.<sup>43</sup> According to the rules, the applicants must have submitted code-named fair copies handwritten by somebody else and, in case the prize competition was deemed unsuccessful, the accompanying envelopes containing the authors' data must be destroyed without opening them. This is what happened in 1871, so it seems impossible to tell whether Alexander realized the plan he recorded in his diary entry and, if so, which one of the two submitted prize essay manuscripts was written by him. Fortunately, in a letter written to Horváth in October 1871, Alexander confessed that he indeed submitted a prize essay during the last year and, furthermore, his essay was the second one (see Alexander 1928. 24). The manuscript itself – as far as I know, hitherto unidentified – is preserved in the archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Ms. MTAK). Alexander's voluminous prize essay, arrived on September 30, 1870 and inventoried under the number 913/870 (volume XXXIX), provides a comprehensive survey of many fields of philosophy relevant to anthropology, including, fortunately, a specific discussion of philosophical logic and psychology. Already Alexander point of departure is unmistakably Herbartian (see 162 ff): our presentations (*képzetek*) of human are different (e.g., the presentation of an infant); how is it then possible to attain a concept (*fogalom*) which "encompasses [*át fogl*]" several presentations (163)? According to the renowned tradition of philosophical logic, Alexander clearly distinguishes between content (*tartalom*) and extension (*kör*) of a concept (see 164), but there are at least three specific and compelling aspect of his theory: He also takes account of the name (*név*); (2) he provides a Herbartian account of the fusion of the particular presentations like "the rays of a fan" (162); and, what especially anticipates the so-called genetic phenomenology that would be devised by another student of Zimmermann a few decades later, he raises the issue of how the genetically fused perceptual elements constitute a "network [*háló*]" (166) that make subsequent generalizing object recognition possible in the first place (this

<sup>43</sup> See: *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia 1871. május 20-án tartott ünnepélyes közgyűlésének tárgyai* (*A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Évkönyvei* XIII/VII). 1871. 73.

is why, Alexander says, a small child recognizes a dog even on a picture and, if confronted with a wolf, she would recognize it as a dog).

According to the evaluation report, Alexander's prize essay was "richer" than his competitor, but lacking an "independent, coherent, organized unity." It was deemed rather like a "collection of material [*anyaggyűjtemény*]," on the basis of which somebody could "write an essay worthy of the prize."<sup>44</sup> Indeed the text looks like a collection of dense summaries, lacking specific bibliographical references. At the beginning of his work, Alexander listed a series of authors he relied upon (including, e.g., Lotze, Lange, Hartmann, Voigt, I. H. Fichte; but notably missing Zimmermann himself). Given that Alexander's prize essay indeed represents an unfiltered, synchronous, and detailed imprint of the philosophical ideas he acquired in Vienna under the guidance of Zimmermann, I think it warrants a closer and more extensive study in the form of a critical edition that would identify the sources of the individual elements which coagulated in the prize essay (maybe even a partial translation of the text). The young Viennese student Alexander, after all, did not leave us with empty hands.

Rudolf Haller explicitly claimed that "the beginning of Austrian Philosophy could be identified with" Brentano's Vienna period, thus, "in a slightly exaggerated form", the year 1874 was "the year of birth of Austrian Philosophy" (Haller 1986. 36). There is a considerable discrepancy – both in terms of the *dramatis personae*, their writings, and the involved philosophical doctrines – between the content of Haller's Austrian Philosophy (with capital 'P') and what was reconstructed above based on the snapshot provided by the Viennese section of Alexander's academic peregrination. At the same time, the latter not only temporally preceded the former, but it must also be regarded as its precondition, though obviously not the single one, both historically and philosophically. Furthermore, I think it is possible to draw a more general lesson from these investigations that transcends the narrow confines of the history of late nineteenth-century philosophy in Vienna: The discrepancy between Austrian Philosophy (with capital 'P') and what seems to have been depicted on Alexander's snapshot could be said to epitomize the methodologically relevant difference between a historiographical construct and the actual richness and *materiality* of the history of philosophy (notwithstanding the necessity of devising such constructs). If Austrian Philosophy was born in 1874, then Alexander, his teachers, and his fellow philosophers might represent the philosophical equivalent of a premature birth – but they have equal right to live and capture our scholarly attention.

<sup>44</sup> *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia 1871. május 20-án tartott ünnepélyes közgyűlésének tárgyai.* 73.

## UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

- Ms. HJA *Hungarian Jewish Archives* (Budapest, Hungary)  
 Ms. MTAK *Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*  
 (Budapest, Hungary)  
 Ms. UA Leipzig *Universitätsarchiv Leipzig* (Leipzig, Germany)  
 Ms. UA Wien *Universitätsarchiv Wien* (Vienna, Austria)

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