

# ***Professor Bernhardt: Schnitzler and the Place of Tendentious Drama***

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## **I**

When in October 1912 the Viennese censor banned Arthur Schnitzler's *Professor Bernhardt* from public performance, a prohibition that was to remain in place until after the fall of the Habsburg Empire in November 1918, no specific reasons were given.<sup>1</sup> This lack of information prompted much speculation in the Viennese press. Attention initially focused on the confrontation between doctor and priest, on the play's critique of what an aggressively phrased parliamentary question called the 'Verpfaffung der Krankenzimmer, [...] jene widerwärtigen Behelligungen, denen ahnungslose Kranke so oft durch zudringliche Proselytenmacher ausgesetzt werden' [clericalization of the sickroom, that repugnant harassment to which unsuspecting patients are so often subjected by intrusive proselytes].<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the ban, see Werner Wilhelm Schnabel, "'Professor Bernhardt' und die Wiener Zensur. Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Schnitzlerschen Komödie', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, 28 (1984), 349–83; Jacques Le Rider, 'Warum *Professor Bernhardt* von der Wiener Zensur verboten wurde', in *Textschicksale. Das Werk Arthur Schnitzlers im Kontext der Moderne*, ed. by Wolfgang Lukas and Michael Scheffel (Berlin and Boston, MA, 2017), pp. 231–50.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the parliamentary question is reproduced under the rubric 'Theater und Kunst', in *Arbeiterzeitung*, 30 October 1912, pp. 8–9 (p. 9).

But, as subsequently emerged, the reason for the ban lay not in the anti-clericalism of *Professor Bernhardt* but in what was described as its ‘tendenziöse und entstellende Schilderung hierländischer öffentlicher Verhältnisse’ [tendentious and distorted depiction of public life in this country].<sup>3</sup> Key concerns were therefore the explicitly Austrian setting and Schnitzler’s representation of political, judicial and governmental institutions.

In response to the premiere, which was directed by Victor Barnowsky at the Kleines Theater in Berlin on 28 November 1912, and to the readings given in Vienna by Ferdinand Onno, who but for the ban would have played the title role at the Deutsches Volkstheater, commentators made a point of trying to identify the play’s political bias. Surveying the reviews on 5 December, Schnitzler notes in his diary: ‘Die einen halten sich darüber auf — daß ich ein Tendenzstück geschrieben, die andern — daß ich keins geschrieben habe’ [Some rail at the fact that I have written a tendentious drama, others that I have not written one, Tb, 5.12.1912].<sup>4</sup> Pigeonholing *Professor Bernhardt* as a ‘Tendenzstück’ suggests that the play is aligned with a particular ideology or campaign, whilst simultaneously raising questions about the impact of that alignment on its status as literature and implying that any popularity it may enjoy will be shortlived, fading once the political moment has passed. As will be explored

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<sup>3</sup> This wording was made public by Karl Glossy, who from 1903 to 1926 was part of the three-man *Zensurbeirat* [Censorship Advisory Committee] and was the only committee member to support performance. See Glossy, *Vierzig Jahre Deutsches Volkstheater. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Theatergeschichte* (Vienna, [1929]), p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch 1879–1931*, unter Mitwirkung von Peter Michael Braunwarth et al., Kommission für literarische Gebrauchsformen der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Obmann: Werner Welzig, 10 vols (Vienna, 1981–2000). Henceforth cited as Tb, with date. Here Tb, 5.12.1912.

below, for Schnitzler the label also brings with it a set of formal expectations that he thematizes in the comedy *Zwischenspiel* [Intermezzo, 1905] and subverts in *Professor Bernhardi*.

For commentators who would have welcomed it as a liberal ‘Tendenzstück’ *Professor Bernhardi* starts well. The title figure, an eminent Jewish doctor, refuses a Catholic priest access to the bedside of a young woman who is dying of sepsis following an illegal abortion. He does so because she is unaware of the gravity of her condition and because he believes it to be his duty as a doctor to spare her an anguished death. Until the end of the third act he remains confident and assertive, and refuses to compromise his principles by issuing a public apology or to appease pro-Catholic, anti-Semitic groupings in parliament by appointing an inferior non-Jewish candidate (rather than a well-qualified Jewish one) to a vacant post. Thereafter liberal expectations are disappointed. Even once he has been found guilty of *Religionsstörung* [obstructing religious observance] and served two months in prison, Bernhardi stubbornly maintains that he did what he regarded as right in a specific medical circumstance and becomes increasingly comic as he resists attempts to politicize his case as part of a broader societal conflict pitting science against religion, liberalism against clericalism, or Judaism against Christianity. Faced in the final act with the prospect of a retrial in more favourable political circumstances, he resolves to leave and let matters take their course without him.

Reviewers who hoped to find a clear political message drew attention to what they perceived as the play’s inconsistency of argument or generic hybridity: the Berlin *Welt am Montag*, for example, describes *Professor Bernhardi* as a ‘Zwittergeschöpf [...], das wie ein Bastard aus ehrlich gemeintem Tendenzstück und unsicherer Satire anmutet’ [neither one thing nor the other, seeming a bastardized mixture of well-intentioned tendentious drama and

shaky satire].<sup>5</sup> Normally an admirer of Schnitzler's work, Fritz Engel in the *Berliner Tagblatt* likewise suggests that 'er gibt den Rahmen eines Tendenzdramas und beschwört uns zugleich, nur ja nicht an eine Tendenz zu glauben' [he sets up the framework of a tendentious drama and at the same time implores us not to sign up to any political credo]; like Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* [Nathan the Wise] *Professor Bernhardi* preaches tolerance but is reluctant 'gegen die Intoleranten etwas intolerant zu sein' [to be a little intolerant of intolerance].<sup>6</sup> Berta Zuckerkandl in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* is not alone in wishing that Schnitzler had resisted the temptation to write a fifth act.<sup>7</sup>

These were not charges that Schnitzler could answer in public but he insisted, in letters to the historian and journalist Richard Charmatz and later to the Danish critic Georg Brandes, that the play was not a 'Tendenzstück' but a 'Charakterkomödie' [comedy of

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<sup>5</sup> A. W., 'Der neue Schnitzler', *Die Welt am Montag*, undated press cutting held in Exeter University Library. For a detailed survey of the early reception of *Professor Bernhardi*, see W. E. Yates, 'The tendentious reception of *Professor Bernhardi*. Documentation in Schnitzler's collection of press cuttings', *Austrian Studies*, 1 (1990), 108–25.

<sup>6</sup> Fritz Engel, 'Der unpolitische Politiker. "Professor Bernhardi" im Kleinen Theater', *Berliner Tagblatt*, 29 November 1912.

<sup>7</sup> B. Z. [Berta Zuckerkandl], 'Professor Bernardi' [sic], *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 December 1912, pp. 4–6 (p. 6). See also –ß–, 'Arzt und Priester', *Die Wage*, 16.1 (January 1913), 24–28 (p. 26). The reviewer suggests that the play should have ended with the handshake between Bernhardi and the Priest, which concluded Act IV in the original Berlin production.

character].<sup>8</sup> The point is reiterated in one of several pieces of ‘Antikritik’ [anti-criticism] on *Professor Bernhardt* — ‘Antikritik’ being Schnitzler’s term for brief commentaries on the reception of his work that were intended not for publication but as a private means to vent his annoyance at perceived misreadings.<sup>9</sup> Admittedly a few prominently placed reviews, including Zuckerkandl’s (cited above), did foreground Schnitzler’s exploration of mentalities. Paul Goldmann, for instance, observes that the title figure is a man who lives only for his vocation as a doctor, a stance that renders him by turns heroic and comic;<sup>10</sup> but most commentators were more concerned to debate the play’s politics.

This article revisits the disputed tendentiousness of *Professor Bernhardt*, in the light of Schnitzler’s responses to the distinctive political and cultural climate in Austria in the period between approximately 1905 and 1912, when he first sketched, and then drafted and

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875–1912*, ed. by Theresa Nickl and Heinrich Schnitzler (Frankfurt a.M., 1981) and *Briefe 1913–1931*, ed. by Peter Michael Braunwarth et al. (Frankfurt a.M., 1984). Henceforth cited as B, with volume and page number(s). Here B, II, 1; 4.1.1913 and B, II, 100; 9.12.1915. In a later letter to Ludwig Hirschfeld Schnitzler insists that *Professor Bernhardt* is a ‘Charakterkomödie’ and not ‘eine geistvolle dramatische Diskussion’ [a witty dramatic discussion, B, II, 175; 22.2.1919].

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Professor Bernhardt*, in *Arthur Schnitzler digital, Historisch-kritische Edition (Werke 1905-1931)*, ed. by Wolfgang Lukas, Michael Scheffel, Andrew Webber and Judith Beniston. Henceforth references to individual text carriers cite the abbreviated identifier. Here BER\_P<sup>T</sup>13\_0001. The typescript is dated 17 December 1912.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Goldmann, ‘Berliner Theater. “Professor Bernhardt” von Artur [sic] Schnitzler’, *Neue Freie Presse*, 4 January 1913, pp. 1–4 (p. 4).

redrafted the play.<sup>11</sup> Reading the published text and the genetic material preserved in Cambridge University Library alongside the equally unlikely comedy *Zwischenspiel* will draw attention to Schnitzler's ongoing critical engagement with the literary conventions of tendentious drama and the impact of that engagement on the complex characterization of the title figure.

## II

The 1900s in Austria were a time of heightened political tension and polarization, when the bullish Christian Social Party, led until 1910 by Viennese mayor Karl Lueger, joined forces with Catholic conservatives to promote a re-Catholicization of Austrian society underpinned by strong anti-Semitism. It met with fierce opposition, in parliament and beyond, from a progressive alliance of Social Democrats, freethinking secularists and bourgeois liberals. Key flashpoints were marital law, which in Austria followed canon law and therefore made marriage indissoluble for Catholics, and education, where the Church was determined to reclaim ground that it had lost in the more liberal 1860s.

*Professor Bernhardi* alludes to topical debates on both marital law and educational reform. In Act II, the hospital's patron Prinz Konstantin reportedly demonstrates his support for Bernhardi with the quip that the Inquisition would have burned them both as heretics, but the politically astute Cyprian correctly predicts that Prinz Konstantin will abandon Bernhardi on the basis of the Prince's habits, which include regular attendance at mass, opposing the

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<sup>11</sup> See '*Professor Bernhardi: Entstehungsgeschichte*', *ibid.* A wideranging account of the historical background is given in Adolf Gaisbauer, 'Der historische Hintergrund von Arthur Schnitzlers "Professor Bernhardi"', *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, NF13 (1974), 113–63.

reform of marital law in the upper house of parliament and, in a subsequently omitted pencil addition to the typescript of Act II, regular confession (BER\_K5\_T1\_0189). Contemporary debates on educational policy are referenced at several points, thanks to Flint's remit as 'Minister für Kultus und Unterricht' [Minister for Culture and Education] and Professor Pflugfelder's impassioned defence of secular, liberal values. In Act V Flint smarts at Pflugfelder's mockery of him as 'Minister für Kultus und Konkordat' [Minister for Culture and Concordat],<sup>12</sup> an allusion to the 1855 agreement between Austria and the Catholic Church which, amongst other privileges, granted the Church supervisory rights over the staffing and curriculum of elementary schools. These rights were rescinded by the Reichsvolksschulgesetz [Imperial Law governing Elementary Schools] of 1869, which restored secular state control, extending compulsory attendance to eight years and improving teacher training. Following the collapse of the liberal majority in the late 1870s, amendments designed to roll back elements of this law were repeatedly proposed by Catholic conservatives, albeit without success.<sup>13</sup>

In Act IV of *Professor Bernhardi*, Pflugfelder tests the political colours of the lawyer Dr Goldenthal, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, with two seemingly left-field questions: 'Wie, Sie sind für den Beichtzwang bei Schulkindern? Sie sind für die Gründung einer katholischen Universität, Herr Doktor?' [What, don't tell me you are in favour of forcing

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Professor Bernhardi*, in *Arthur Schnitzler digital, Historisch-kritische Edition (Werke 1905–1931)*, reading text, p. 224, <http://schnitzler-edition.net.org/edition/Lesetext/BER/224>. Henceforth cited as BER, with page number.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed and authoritative account, see Helmut Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens. Erziehung und Unterricht auf dem Boden Österreichs*, 5 vols (Vienna, 1982–88), IV: *Von 1848 bis zum Ende der Monarchie* (1986), pp. 108–34.

schoolchildren to go to confession? You don't support the founding of a Catholic university, do you, Doctor?, BER, 183]. The first question refers to the 'Schul- und Unterrichtsordnung' [Regulations for Schools and School-Teaching], the first substantial amendment to the Reichsvolksschulgesetz to be passed by parliament, which became law in 1905. Stating explicitly that schools had a duty 'die Kinder [...] sittlich-religiös zu erziehen' [to give children a moral-religious education], this legislation allowed Austrian clergy not only to deliver religious instruction in schools but also to mandate religious exercises, such as confession and attending mass on Sundays.<sup>14</sup> Opposition to these measures was co-ordinated by the Verein Freie Schule [Free Schools Association]. Founded in 1905, it formed a secular counterpart to the Katholischer Schulverein [Catholic Schools Association], which had been growing in membership and influence since 1886.<sup>15</sup> Viewed against the background of conservative Catholic aspirations, Flint's attempt to placate the clerical party by offering 'eine Vermehrung der Religionsstunden' [more religious instruction, BER, 222] is a naïve misreading of the political climate: what ultramontane Catholics wanted was not for religious studies to be treated as a school subject like any other but for the Catholic world-view to infuse the whole curriculum.

Pflugfelder's second question — 'Sie sind für die Gründung einer katholischen Universität, Herr Doktor?' — references a cherished aspiration of those Catholics who wanted the Church to exercise greater control not only in schools but also in higher education, where

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 123. As Schnitzler discovered when his son, Heinrich, was instructed by his teacher of religion to attend synagogue, this law also had implications for Jewish pupils. See B, I, 702; 10.10.1912 and B, II, 47–49; 7.10.1914.

<sup>15</sup> On the Verein Freie Schule, see John W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna. Christian Socialism in Power, 1897–1918* (Chicago and London, 1995), pp. 174–86.



a major concern was to restrict the spread of ideas — most obviously Darwinian science — that were perceived as being inimical to its teachings. Their focus was the city of Salzburg, where the Benedictine university founded by Archbishop Paris Lodron in 1622 had been closed down in 1810. A ‘Verein für Gründung und Erhaltung einer freien katholischen Universität zu Salzburg’ [Association for the Foundation and Maintenance of a Free Catholic University in Salzburg] had been established in 1884.<sup>16</sup> It was opposed by both liberal Catholics and the Salzburger Hochschulverein [Salzburg University Association], which from 1901 campaigned for the founding of a secular, state-funded university in the city. The plan for a Catholic university was nonetheless endorsed by the episcopacy in 1901 and energetically supported by Lueger. In November 1907 he reassured delegates at the Allgemeiner Österreichischer Katholikentag [Austrian Catholic Congress] ‘daß wir auch jene Universitäten zurückerobern, die unsere Kirche eigentlich gegründet hatte’ [that we shall also take back control of those universities which were in fact founded by our Church].<sup>17</sup> The Vienna University Medical School, where revelations about vivisection had fuelled public disquiet and a significant fraction of the students were Jewish, had long been a prime target for Lueger.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jan Surman, *Universities in Imperial Austria 1848–1918. A Social History of a Multilingual Space* (West Lafayette, IN, 2019), p. 226.

<sup>17</sup> Lueger’s speech was widely reported, especially in the Catholic press. See, for example, *Reichspost*, 18 November, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> On Lueger’s feud with the Medical School, see Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger. Mayor of Fin de Siècle Vienna* (Detroit, MI, 1989), pp. 180–89. In 1880, 38.4% of Viennese medical students were Jewish. See Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, rev. edn (London, 1988), p. 12.

It was partly in response to Lueger's speech that Ludwig Wahrmund (1860–1932), professor of canon law at the University of Innsbruck, published *Katholische Weltanschauung und freie Wissenschaft* [The Catholic World-View and Academic Freedom, 1908], a polemical attack on the Church's rejection of the modern scientific world-view. The ensuing 'Wahrmund-Affäre' [Wahrmund Affair], which brought Catholic anti-modernism to broad public attention, generated months of heated debate in the Austrian press, only dying down once Wahrmund had transferred to the University of Prague.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to a number of diary entries and a newspaper cutting preserved in Schnitzler's archive,<sup>20</sup> it is well known that the Wahrmund Affair, which was at its height in March 1908, stimulated Schnitzler's thinking as he began to draft his 'doctors play': 'Mit O[lga] über das Aertzestück viel geredet (anlässlich der Affaire Wahrmund, gegen den die Clericalen eine infame Hetze vollführen) und über meinen Vater' [Talked a lot with Olga about the doctors play (prompted by the affair concerning Wahrmund, against whom the clericals are conducting a dreadful smear campaign) and about my father, Tb, 14.3.1908]. Schnitzler read *Katholische Weltanschauung und freie Wissenschaft* a fortnight later (Tb, 28.3.1908). It held particular interest for him

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<sup>19</sup> A detailed account is given in Hermann Kuprian, "Machen Sie diesem Skandal ein Ende. Ihre Rektoren sind eine nette Gesellschaft." Modernismuskussion, Kulturkampf und Freiheit der Wissenschaft. Die Wahrmund-Affäre', in *Politische Affären und Skandale in Österreich. Von Mayerling bis Waldheim*, ed. by Michael Gehler and Hubert Sickinger, 2nd edn (Vienna, 1996), pp. 99–127.

<sup>20</sup> On the newspaper cutting, BER\_Z1\_0002, taken from the *Neue Freie Presse* (Abendblatt), 22 August 1908, pp. 1–2, Schnitzler has made pencil marks alongside the suggestion that Wahrmund (like Bernhardi) may be charged with *Religionsstörung* if he refuses to move to Prague or accept retirement.

because he had known Ludwig Wahrmund since university and had renewed personal contact with him in 1904.

It is characteristic of the multiple, interlocking concerns of liberal activists at this time, and significant for a contextual understanding of *Professor Bernhardi*, that Wahrmund not only helped to found the Innsbruck branch of the Verein Freie Schule,<sup>21</sup> becoming its chair in 1906, but was also separated from his wife and had campaigned since around 1902 against Austria's marital laws. When he visited Schnitzler in December 1905, the latter noted:

Prof. Wahrmund da, der Kämpfer für die Reform des Eherechts. Erzählte von sich. Ist seit beinah 10 Jahren geschieden. Sein Leben in Innsbruck. Nimmt er sich Bedienerin, so lebt er im Concubinat, spricht er mit einer Frau, so hat er ein Verhältnis, verkehrt er mit einem jungen Mädchen, so will er sie verführen. — Lebt ganz einsam und beklagt seine ruinirte Existenz.

[Professor Wahrmund here, the campaigner for the reform of marital law. Talked about himself. Has been separated for almost 10 years. His life in Innsbruck. If he has a maid in the house, he's living with her; if he speaks to a woman, he's having a relationship; if he's seen in company with a young girl, he's trying to seduce her. — Lives all alone and bemoans his ruined existence. Tb, 22.12.1905]

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<sup>21</sup> Ludwig Wahrmund, *Religion und Klerikalismus. Rede, gehalten bei der Gründung der Ortsgruppe Innsbruck des Vereines 'Freie Schule'* (Innsbruck, [1902]).

Wahrmund's polemical treatise, *Ehe und Eherecht* [Marriage and Marital Law, 1906], is included in a list of books from his father's library that Heinrich Schnitzler asked the Austrian National Library to return to him after World War II.<sup>22</sup>

Another prominent activist who supported the secularization of both marital law and public education was Schnitzler's friend and mentor Max Burckhard (1854–1912), to whose memory *Professor Bernhards* is dedicated and who provides the model for Hofrat Winkler.<sup>23</sup> A lawyer whose career in public service had taken him from the Ministerium für Kultus und Unterricht to the directorship of the Burgtheater (1890–98), Burckhard was a high-profile supporter of the Verein Freie Schule and wrote both plays and newspaper articles advocating reform of Austria's marital laws.<sup>24</sup> In January 1908, Schnitzler records the following in his diary:

Prof. Boeck und Frau Marie Markofski mit Empfehlung Wahrmunds und Burckhards bei mir; in Sachen der Scheidungsreform etc.; es soll ein Comité gegründet werden, das die Concubinate sozusagen bestätigt. Überdies möge ich 3 Einakter über die Frage schreiben.— Zeigte mich dem ideellen Theile zugeneigt, dem formellen skeptisch.

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<sup>22</sup> The list is in Heinrich Schnitzler's archive, held at the Österreichisches Theatermuseum in Vienna.

<sup>23</sup> A character called Hofrat Winkler, described in very similar terms, also appears in the posthumously published drama *Das Wort*, and Burckhard's tenure at the Burgtheater provides the inspiration for Dr Heinfried in the fragmentary *Theaterroman* [Theatre Novel].

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Max Burckhard, 'Reform des Eherechtes', *Neue Freie Presse*, 2 April 1905, p. 2, reprinted alongside several other articles on the topic in *Quer durch das Leben. Fünfzig Aufsätze* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1908), pp. 206–10.

[Professor Boeck and Frau Marie Markofski came to see me, with recommendations from Wahrmund and Burckhard; about reforms to the divorce laws, etc.; the idea is to set up a committee that would, as it were, confirm the status of cohabiting couples. What's more they wanted me to write 3 one-act plays on the topic. Made clear my sympathy with the thinking but not with the methods. Tb, 30.1.1908]

This reluctance to give the campaign his public support was typical for Schnitzler. The Verein Freie Schule indeed fared no better, as the following diary entry indicates: 'Vm. dictirt "Bernhardi". — Nm. am "Bernhardi"— Frau Jenny Schnabl, wegen einer Vorlesung und dergl. für die "Freie Schule". Ablehnend' [Morning: dictated 'Bernhardi'. — Afternoon: worked on 'Bernhardi' — Frau Jenny Schnabl, wanting me to give a reading and so forth in support of 'Free Schools'. Turned her down, Tb, 26.10.1909]. Schnitzler's habitual stance was a radical individualism that appears to have been fundamental to his identity as a writer and led him repeatedly to refuse to join Concordia, the Viennese association of writers and journalists. Noting that other 'freie Schriftsteller' [independent writers] such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal continued to stand aloof, he records his response as 'Ich. Princip, nein. Bei keinem Verein' [Me. Matter of principle, no. Won't join any society, Tb, 25.4.1909]. It is probably not a coincidence that the representative of Concordia who approached him on this and other occasions was the journalist Julius Stern (1865–1939), who may well be the model for the importunate journalist Kulka in *Professor Bernhardi*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See BER\_K5\_T2\_0639. On this isolated sheet, which was rejected from the second full draft of *Professor Bernhardi*, the journalist has the speaker name 'Stern'. Unfortunately, most of this draft is not preserved, and the name appears nowhere else.

Although Schnitzler refused to put his creative energies explicitly at the service of political causes, others had fewer qualms. In the decade leading up to World War I, a steady stream of plays written in support of liberal reforms were staged in Vienna's commercial theatres, notably at the Raimundtheater and Deutsches Volkstheater, with several more being banned by the censor.<sup>26</sup> Despite continuities of style and purpose with Ludwig Anzengruber's anticlerical *Volksstücke* of the 1870s and 80s, later protest plays were not of comparable literary merit. They tended to be authored by journalists or activists and rarely lasted more than a handful of performances — *Eine g'sunde Person* [A Strapping Lass] by theatre critic Stefan Grossmann and renowned investigative journalist Max Winter, which played six times in 1905, is typical. As a Social Democrat member of parliament, Winter was one of the instigators of the parliamentary question (quoted above) that was submitted after the banning of *Professor Bernhardi*.

Schnitzler's diary suggests that he rarely engaged with explicitly tendentious drama unless prompted by personal friendships. For example, he had met the former schoolmaster Max Dreyer, a protégé of Otto Brahm, during a visit to Berlin in 1901–02, declaring him 'nett und gradeheraus' [friendly and forthright, B, I, 448; New Year 1902], and attended the Viennese premiere of his widely performed play *Der Probekandidat* [The Probationary Teacher, 1899] when Brahm's company brought it to the Deutsches Volkstheater (Tb, 10.5.1900). As Glossy reveals, *Der Probekandidat*, in which a trainee teacher comes into conflict with local worthies and loses his livelihood as a result of teaching Darwinian science,

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<sup>26</sup> Glossy, *Vierzig Jahre Deutsches Volkstheater*, gives brief details of three plays campaigning for reform of marital law that were banned (pp. 27–28) and discusses several that were performed (pp. 154 and 203).

was only approved for performance in Vienna because it is not set in Austria.<sup>27</sup> What Schnitzler thought of *Der Probekandidat* is unknown, but he did record his responses to Burckhard's *Im Paradiese* [In Paradise, 1907] and *Jene Asra* [Those Asra, 1909], both of which problematize the indissolubility of Catholic marriage. After the dress rehearsal, he told its author he found *Jene Asra* unconvincing, privately declaring it a 'recht schlechtes Stück — fast unbegreiflich' [really bad play — practically incomprehensible, Tb, 15.10.1909]. Reading *Im Paradiese* on the day of the premiere he called it 'klug und sympathisch; aber fern von allem, was "Stück" oder "Kunst" heißen könnte' [clever and appealing; but far removed from anything that could be called a 'play' or 'art', Tb, 22.12.1906]. Presenting four marriages, three of them far from Edenic, *Im Paradiese* is a series of illustrative scenes rather than a dramatic action. Although, with twenty-six performances, it was to fare considerably better than his own effort, Stefan Grossmann likewise observed that it was a play where one might frequently want to call out "'Sehr richtig!' [...] aber doch nicht ein herzwarms Wort geredet wird' ['Very true!' (...) but not one warm-blooded word is spoken].<sup>28</sup> On 31 January 1905 Wärmund sent Schnitzler a rallying call: 'der Dichter kann auf diesem Gebiete mindestens ebenso viel, vielleicht mehr leisten, als der Jurist' [the writer can achieve at least

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 97–98. By contrast, the unmistakably Austrian setting of Rudolf Hawel's loyal but tactless one-act play *Erlösung* [Deliverance], which simultaneously celebrates the Reichsvolksschulgesetz and the sixtieth anniversary of the Emperor's accession, prompted the censor to delay the premiere for almost six months (p. 160), until well after the anniversary. Glossy discusses Hawel's play alongside another glorification of secular education, Karl Sloboda's comedy *Der kleine Herrgott* [Lord of All He Surveys, 1910].

<sup>28</sup> st. gr. [Stefan Grossmann], 'Deutsches Volkstheater', *Arbeiterzeitung*, 23 December 1906, p. 8.

as much as the lawyer in this area, perhaps more].<sup>29</sup> The evidence suggests that no writer of sufficient calibre took up the challenge.

### III

There can be no doubt that in principle Schnitzler supported the cause of liberal reform. As evidence one might cite his radically secular responses to a questionnaire on Austria's marital law,<sup>30</sup> or his remark to Charmatz that without question Bernhardi did the right thing: 'So wenig es eine Frage sein kann, auf welcher Seite in der Eherechtsreform Recht und Vernunft zu finden sind' [That is no more in doubt than where justice and common sense are to be found in the debate on the reform of marital law, B, II, 2]. But Schnitzler's refusal to write a play on the topic suggests that, unlike Wahrmund, he was highly sceptical about the value —

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<sup>29</sup> Unpublished letter from Ludwig Wahrmund to Arthur Schnitzler, 31 January 1905. Arthur Schnitzler Papers, Cambridge University Library (henceforth CUL), B715. Emphasis in original.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, 'Rundfrage über das Eherecht', in *Aphorismen und Betrachtungen*, ed. by Robert O. Weiss (Frankfurt a.M., 1967), pp. 317–18. The typescript (CUL, A3, 3) is undated and dactylographic analysis suggests that it was typed no earlier than 1911, but a handwritten source text may have been produced in the context of the 'Enquete betreffend die Reform des Österreichischen Eherechts' [Public Hearings into the Reform of Marital Law in Austria], co-ordinated by the Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft [Society for Cultural Politics] in January and February 1905. Although the *Neues Wiener Journal*, 28 January 1905, p. 4, lists Schnitzler as attending one session, neither his name nor this text appears in the published minutes.



literary or political — of drama that is explicitly written in support of a cause. Such plays characteristically adopt a simplistic approach towards their subject matter and rarely do more than preach to the converted. As Karl Leydecker has pointed out, the theme of marital crisis features in several of Schnitzler's plays in this period, and notably in *Zwischenspiel*, which had the working title 'Neue Ehe' [New Marriage].<sup>31</sup> That comedy, which won the Grillparzer Prize in 1908, is not tendentious, as it focuses on a couple's private relationship rather than its legal status, but the husband, Amadeus Adams, strikingly anticipates Bernhardt in his insistence that he is 'kein Neuerer' [no innovator] and does not wish to see his conjugal arrangements become a matter of public debate.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, *Zwischenspiel* incorporates a metatheatrical discussion of tendentious drama. The playwright Albertus Rhon claims that he could stop people gossiping about his friend's unconventional marriage by writing a play on the topic: 'Dann werden sie ohne weiters diese neue Art von Ehe begreifen — wenigstens von halb acht bis zehn' [Then they will readily understand this new type of marriage — at least between seven-thirty and ten]. Pursuing this idea, Rhon outlines characteristic features of tendentious drama: in order to add clarity to the play's message he would strip away 'das überflüssige episodische Beiwerk, mit dem uns das Leben verwirrt' [the superfluous episodic clutter that life confuses us with, D, I, 924]. He would also make the protagonist 'klüger, energischer, konsequenter' [cleverer, more energetic, more resolute, D, I, 925] than his real-life model and give the play a memorable

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<sup>31</sup> Karl Leydecker, 'Marital Crisis, Open Marriage, Separation and Divorce in Schnitzler's Dramas', in *Arthur Schnitzler. Zeitgenossenschaften / Contemporaneities*, ed. by Ian Foster and Florian Krobb (Bern, 2002), pp. 275–88.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Die Dramatischen Werke*, 2 vols (Frankfurt a.M., 1962), I, 924.

Henceforth cited as D, with volume number and page number(s).

central image. While Rhon warns his friend that things rarely end well for the hero of such a play, Adams rejects tragedy, insisting instead on the inclusion of the comic archetype Hanswurst (D, I, 926).

What would Albertus Rhon have made of *Professor Bernhardt*? One facet regarded as superfluous by some early commentators was the title figure's Jewish identity. If Schnitzler had wanted to make an unequivocal statement on the conflict between science and religion, he should, as Charmatz suggested, have made Bernhardt an 'Urteutone [...]: einen Mann mit treuen blauen [sic] Augen und langem blondem Bart' [thoroughly Teutonic: a man with true blue eyes and a long blonde beard] and not muddied the waters with anti-Semitism.<sup>33</sup> In a lengthy, considered response, Schnitzler concedes that if the priest's antagonist had been called not Bernhardt 'sondern etwa Wahrmond' [but Wahrmond, for instance], there would still have been a dramatic conflict but a far simpler, less realistic one: 'höchst wichtige uns allen nicht unbekannteste Bestandteile der österreichischen Atmosphäre hätten sich nach farblosen Himmelsregionen zu verflüchtigt' [extremely important elements of the Austrian atmosphere with which we are all familiar would have vanished into thin air, B, II, 3].

Rhon would also have wanted to sum up the problematic in a single striking image, perhaps in the manner of Ibsen's *A Public Enemy* (1882), a 'doctor play' with which *Professor Bernhardt* has often been compared.<sup>34</sup> Whereas Ibsen presents the contaminated

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<sup>33</sup> Unpublished letter from Richard Charmatz to Arthur Schnitzler, 14 December 1912 (CUL, B21).

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, B. Z. [Berta Zuckerkandl], 'Professor Bernhardt' [sic], p. 4; and for a more recent discussion, Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature 1749–1939. Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 105–12.

water source as an unequivocal metaphor for political corruption, it is in line with Bernhardt's insistence on her as an individual case that the young woman dying of sepsis — the word literally means putrefaction — is not explicitly politicized within the play as a symbol of what is 'rotten in the state of Austria'. Furthermore, *Professor Bernhardt* follows Ibsen's taboo-breaking *Ghosts* (1881) by including numerous references to syphilis. The vacant post is in dermatology, a specialism that in the 1900s included the treatment of syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases; Ebenwald refers to Tugendvetter being called out 'zu einem ang'steckten Fürsten' [to an infected prince, BER, 18]; Adler mentions tabes (dorsalis), a symptom of tertiary syphilis (BER, 31); Bernhardt reminds Flint that Engelbert Wagner might have been saved by 'eine andere (antiluetic) Behandlung' [a different (anti-luetic) treatment, BER, 98]; and Wenger's 'Serumarbeit' [serology research paper, BER, 28] identifies him as working towards a treatment for syphilis, the causative bacteria of which were isolated in 1905. Anticipating Susan Sontag's insistence that the most truthful way to regard illness is one that is resistant to metaphorical thinking,<sup>35</sup> Schnitzler refuses to build these references into an explicit reflection on the state of the nation, one that might perhaps have been akin to the association of 'Civilisation' and 'Syphilisation' with which Richard Krafft-Ebing famously concluded his Moscow lecture in 1897.<sup>36</sup> This approach is also entirely consistent with Bernhardt's unease at the prospect of his case

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<sup>35</sup> Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and Aids and its Metaphors* (London, 1991), p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Krafft-Ebing's striking word play was reported in E. S., 'XII. Internationaler medicinischer Congreß', *Neue Freie Presse* (Abendblatt), 27 August 1897, pp. 2–3.

becoming ‘ein Symbol für unsere ganzen politischen Zustände’ [a symbol for our political circumstances as a whole, BER, 112].<sup>37</sup>

As Rhon observes, the hero of a politically tendentious drama invariably pays dearly for his principles: examples cited in reviews of *Professor Bernhardt* include not only Ibsen’s Dr Stockmann and Dreyer’s Fritz Heitmann but also the title figure of Karl Gutzkow’s *Uriel Acosta* (1846). Whereas Rhon would have built the play towards a tragic outcome, Schnitzler heightens the comedy. Although he claims that the first four acts are ‘geradeso Komödie im höheren Sinn als der fünfte’ [just as much comedy, in the higher sense, as the fifth, BER\_P<sup>T</sup>13\_0005], with the introduction of Hofrat Winkler the play unmistakably acquires its Hanswurst, whose homespun wisdom that people who are constitutionally unsuited to it should not meddle in politics is barely challenged.

A glimpse of how *Professor Bernhardt* might have concluded, had a crude political message been allowed to take primacy, can be found in the unpublished text ‘Nachahmenswerter Entschluss eines bekannten Wiener Autors’ [Exemplary Decision of a Well-Known Viennese Author, 1913], in which Schnitzler mocks his critics by sketching out two alternative endings. In the first, Bernhardt is acquitted but vows to continue the fight,

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<sup>37</sup> By contrast Ludwig Tils, the most critical member of the *Zensurbeirat*, does use images of sickness in order to justify the performance ban: ‘Alles, alles scheint in dem Stücke entweder von erschreckender innerer Fäulnis zerfressen oder von alberner Rückständigkeit, Feigheit und Intoleranz durchseucht’ [Everything, everything in the play seems to be either eaten away by a terrible inner rotteness or infected by stupid backwardness, cowardice and intolerance]. Quoted in Le Rider, ‘Warum *Professor Bernhardt* von der Wiener Zensur verboten wurde’, p. 237.

banning Catholic clergy from his hospital and forbidding patients to make confession; this Bernhardi is shot dead by a Christian Social member of parliament as he leaves the courtroom. In a second alternative ending, Bernhardi has a stroke as he leaves the courtroom and is taken home by his friends: ‘und während ein Hagel von christlich-sozialen Steinen durch das Fenster hereinklirrt, knien die Freunde an Bernhardis Sterbelager nieder und schwören ihm Treue bis ~~ans~~ übers Grab’ [and as a hail of Christian Social rocks are heard smashing in through the window, Bernhardi’s friends kneel at his deathbed and swear to remain true to him ~~until~~ beyond the grave, BER\_PT14\_0019]. In this riposte, as in *Zwischenspiel*, Schnitzler demonstrates an ironic awareness of the distance between his approach and the less sophisticated methods of the *Tendenzstück*.

#### IV

*Professor Bernhardi* has no equivalent figure to Rhon, but Schnitzler nonetheless incorporates a metatheatrical dimension that is expressive of the contrast in self-perception between Bernhardi and Flint and draws attention to the relationship between characterization and dramatic genre. In Act II first Cyprian and then Ebenwald offers Bernhardi a potential method of damage limitation, and he initially accepts, telling Cyprian ‘Ich habe nämlich wirklich gar keine Lust, den Helden um jeden Preis zu spielen’ [I really have no desire to play the hero at all costs, BER, 82]. Despite this disinclination, he tears up his draft apology after rejecting Ebenwald’s proposal. By the end of the act, Ebenwald has arrived as would-be ally and departed in the more honest role of enemy, while Flint has moved in the opposite direction, arriving as enemy and departing with a hollow promise to share Bernhardi’s fate, however tragic. Aptly described by Konstanze Fliedl as ‘bloßer Schauspieler seiner

Überzeugungen' [a man whose convictions are merely playacting], Flint is even less suited than Bernhardt to self-destructive heroics.<sup>38</sup>

The play's critical relationship to the *Tendenzstück* is foregrounded most strongly in the fourth act, where Bernhardt becomes comically exasperated not only by the politically motivated blandishments of his friends and his lawyer but also by the overtures of the liberal journalist Kulka and of the 'Vorstand des Vereines der Brigittenauer Freidenker' [President of the Brigittenau Association of Freethinkers, BER, 204]. Guaranteed to raise a laugh from Viennese audiences, this moment of localism is nonetheless strongly suggestive of Austrian civil society at the time of the play's composition and was particularly important in the first full typescript draft, completed in June 1910. At this point in the genesis of *Professor Bernhardt* Schnitzler envisaged a four-act play that included Bernhardt's second meetings with both the priest and Flint in Act IV. This version closes with Bernhardt stating emphatically that he wants to serve his prison sentence and return to medical practice as soon as possible. And as the curtain falls, he adds: 'aber vor allem die nötigen Schritte unternehmen, um nicht Ehrenmitglied eines Freidenkervereins zu werden' [but above all to take the necessary steps to avoid becoming an honorary member of an association of freethinkers, BER\_K5\_T1\_0713]. The play's last laugh is at the expense of what is arguably the most receptive audience for a liberal *Tendenzstück*, an audience whose expectations it acknowledges but repeatedly frustrates.

In the published text of *Professor Bernhardt*, the freethinkers of Brigittenau are reduced to a moment of comic repartee (BER, 204) and Act IV ends with the more grandiose

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<sup>38</sup> Konstanze Fliedl, 'Professor Bernhardt. Integrität und Intrige', in *Interpretationen. Arthur Schnitzler. Dramen und Erzählungen*, ed. by Hee-Ju Kim and Günter Saße (Stuttgart, 2007), pp. 148–58 (p. 154).

curtain-line that Bernhardi cannot choose his enemies but can still choose his friends. In line with the new Act V, his recalcitrance is now couched in more theatrical terms:

Ich führe keinen politischen Kampf. Das lächerliche Kriegsgeschrei, das sich von einigen Seiten erheben will, wird mich nicht zu einer Rolle verführen, die mir nicht behagt, zu der ich mich gar nicht tauglich fühle, weil es eben nur eine Rolle wäre.

[I am not engaged in a political struggle. The ridiculous battle cries starting to be raised in some quarters will not seduce me into a role that I'm not comfortable with, that I'm not remotely capable of, precisely because it would just be a role. BER, 211]

Behind this statement lies an Enlightenment notion of stable and consistent selfhood that almost amounts to an anti-theatrical prejudice.

Flint, by contrast, most readily understands public life in terms of role-play and the self as performatively constituted. He suggests that Bernhardi is refusing to enter a plea for clemency because he is enjoying the role of victim, 'als eine Art Märtyrer [...], als ein politisches Opfer klerikaler Umtriebe, als eine Art medizinischen Dreyfus' [as a kind of martyr, as a political victim of clerical machinations, as a kind of medical Dreyfus, BER, 225]. Such stylization, associating Bernhardi with a Europe-wide *cause célèbre*, brings with it the danger that, if Bernhardi is cast as martyr, then Flint may find himself in the role of tyrant. This unease prompts Flint, in a speech that Bernhardi receives with sarcastic applause, to mock him for acting out 'eine Tragikomödie des Eigensinns' [a tragicomedy of obstinacy, BER, 241]. The classical distinction between genres that underpins the conventional *Tendenzstück* has been lost as the modern judicial system has become more humane.

From Flint's perspective, Bernhardi has spent a couple of months in relatively comfortable incarceration; he could only be deemed a hero or a martyr, 'wenn heute noch in Österreich die Scheiterhaufen gen Himmel lohten' [if people in Austria today were still burned at the stake, BER, 242]. Whereas in the published text of *Professor Bernhardi*, this allusion to the Inquisition is anticipated only by the remark attributed to Prinz Konstantin in Act II, in the typescript draft Flint elaborates: 'Es ist billig geworden ein "sie bewegt sich doch" auszurufen, seit die Scheiterhaufen nicht mehr brennen' [It has become easy to declare 'yet still it moves', now that the no-one is burned at the stake any more, BER\_K5\_T1\_0671]. By quoting the motto *eppur si muove*, Flint contrasts Bernhardi unfavourably with Galileo Galilei. It may be suggested that Bernhardi's refusal to play what is essentially a pre-modern role anticipates Bertolt Brecht's anti-heroic reading of the conflict between scientist and Church in *Leben des Galilei* [Life of Galileo, 1943]. Just as Brecht's Galileo thinks only of completing the *Discorsi*, so Bernhardi is adamant that he wants only to return to medicine, even once the political tide seems to be turning in his favour; and just as Galileo rejects the overtures of the forward-thinking iron founder Vanni, so Bernhardi pours scorn on representatives of a progressive, secular middle class.

Bernhardi's disdain for the freethinkers of Brigittenau had a curious but revealing afterlife. In the autumn of 1913, Schnitzler was approached by Edgar Herbst on behalf of the Österreichischer Monistenbund [Austrian Monist League], an offshoot of the secularist organization founded in 1906 by the scientist Ernst Haeckel. The League proposed to circumvent the Viennese ban on public performance by staging *Professor Bernhardi* as a private, members-only event. Discussions continued for several months and included the following, somewhat sheepish apology:



Daß ich schon vorher die Monisten von den Brigittenauer Freidenkern wohl zu unterscheiden gewußt habe, brauche ich Sie wohl nicht erst zu versichern, und so ist mir auch der gelegentliche nicht nur politische, sondern auch ethische Sinn eines auch nach Außen hin betonten Zusammenschlusses von Gleichdenkenden keineswegs verborgen geblieben, wenn es auch immer in meiner Art gelegen ist, auch dort außerhalb der Reihen zu spazieren, wo ich mich mit Freunden auf gleichem Weg befinde.

[I hardly need to assure you now that I already well knew the difference between the monists and the Brigittenau Freethinkers, and therefore it has also in no way escaped my notice that on occasion it makes both political and ethical sense for likeminded people publicly to make common cause, even if it has always been in my nature not to walk in step with others, even when I find myself sharing the path with friends. B, II, 29–30; 6.10.1913]

The world that is reflected, often humorously, in *Professor Bernhardt* is also the world that receives the play. And for the most part it does so generously. The Monist League was indeed not the only organization to propose a closed staging. On 4 February 1913 Julius Stern approached Schnitzler on behalf of Concordia, and on the same day Paul Speiser, editor of the magazine *Die Freie Schule*, did so on behalf of that organization. *Professor Bernhardt* might be said to reflect Schnitzler's misgivings about plays that are explicitly written in support of political campaigns and, in his characterization of the title figure, he stages aspects of his own reluctance to engage in conventional literary activism. Perhaps it is in that spirit that the following diary entry should be read: 'Es gibt Sachen von mir die ich lieber habe,—

aber mich hab ich nirgends lieber als im Bernhardi' [There are things of mine that I like better,— but nowhere do I like myself better than in Bernhardi, Tb, 27.3.1918].