

## Bolzano's Lehrjahre

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Bernard Bolzano (1781-1848) was born into a Prague catholic family (his father was Italian) with cultural interests. His younger years took place under the auspices of the reforms of the Austrian emperor Joseph II, which resulted in the modernisation of the society and the awakening of sciences. Bolzano spent the most important formative years in the Class of philosophy, where he became interested in mathematics and philosophy. His mathematical notebooks show his extensive knowledge of the literature of the 17th and 18th centuries and contain entries about current mathematical problems and also reflections about methodology and critique of some fundamental concepts. In 1800, he decided to study theology, but at the same time he prepared his first publication on the Euclidean postulate of parallels (published in 1804). Having finished his studies, he participated in the contest for the chair of “science of religion”, newly founded by the Emperor Franz to fight atheism and the ideals of the French revolution, and another for the chair of mathematics. He won both and the commission appointed him for the “science of religion”. Bolzano did not perceive the larger political context and thought that this chair could be a forum for spreading his own ideas of the reform of the society. At the end of 1819, the contradiction between the intentions of the Emperor and Bolzano's own representation of an ideal society led to the dismissal of Bolzano from the university of Prague.