

Editor's Note

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The story of Heinrich Bluecher's lectures at the New School is at least two-folded. On the one hand, there is Heinrich Bluecher's backstory as a German immigrant without any academic education, who married the famous thinker Hannah Arendt, and who miraculously made it to the New School (New York City) and later to Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson). This story is told in the introduction of this publication. On the other hand, there is the story of how his lectures found their way into our present. Heinrich Bluecher did not write anything down, and it is therefore astonishing that we are able to read his lectures today. How did that happen?

Everything started with his enthusiastic students at the New School. In the 1950s, the New School was very different from today. Mainly two separate parts constituted the school. The most famous part was the *Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science*, whose origins went back to the *University of Exile*. In the *Graduate Faculty* taught the former European academic elite who were forced to flee Europe due to the German Totalitarianism. The *Graduate Faculty* tried to establish itself as a college where students could acquire ordinary degrees and graduate just like in other U.S. colleges and universities. However, the core element of the New School in the 1950s was a very different one. The school was founded as a place for education for New Yorker citizens. Therefore, the *Adult Education Program* constituted the main part of the New School. Mainly New York citizen, who worked during the daytime, attended evening classes at the school to either broaden their knowledge or to find further intellectual stimulation.¹ Every Friday night from 6.20 pm to 8 pm, Heinrich Bluecher hold a lecture on philosophy and the philosophy of art.² He intrigued his students with his behavior of an European intellectual and his appearance of a German professor. He performed a very unconventional kind of philosophy. Seemingly, it did not take long for Bluecher to become popular with his students who attended his Friday class after a long working week. Since they were likely to realize that Bluecher would never publish a book on his philosophy, they started to record his lectures on reel-to-reel tapes.

Today, 101 reel-to-reel recordings of Bluecher's lectures are preserved at the Stevenson Library at Bard College. Hannah Arendt herself, after a considerable disappointment, handed them over to the Bard College Archives. Shortly after the death of Heinrich Bluecher in

¹ The history of the New School and the University in Exile is best described by Judith Friedlander: *A Light in Dark Times. The New School for Social Research and its University in Exile*. New York: Columbia University Press 2019.

² Cf: Introduction to this publication.

October 1970, Arendt was very engaged in trying to publish Bluecher's lectures. At the beginning, she asked Bluecher's former students, Alexander Bazelow being the most prominent of these students, to work with the handed-down material of the lectures. He may have found two types of material. First, the 101 tape-recordings of the lectures and secondly, early transcriptions of the lectures which are likely to have been produced by Ruth Schulz and other former students. There is still a difference between these two kinds of sources until today. Many recordings do not have any transcriptions, yet there are some transcripts — bound into book-manuscripts — which do not have any recordings either. We assume that, after the transcriptions have been made, some of the original tapes have been destroyed or simply been reused for other lecture recordings. This is definitely the case for the lectures series »Sources of Creative Power« out of which only half of the recordings are handed down, but almost every lecture transcription has been preserved. Unfortunately, neither Arendt's efforts for a publication nor the students' work have been lead to a publication of the lectures in the form of a book. Arendt gave up and handed over most of Bluecher's material to the Bard College.³

Until today, the Bard College Archives preserve nine reel-to-reel tapes which are marked as recordings of »Sources of Creative Power.« Thanks to George Rose, all of these tapes have been transferred to 21 cassettes (each having a running time of about 60 minutes) in the 1980s and were digitized in the past years. Therefore, it is possible to listen to Bluecher's voice again. In total, we can listen to 42 hours of him. Additionally, 28 lectures of »Sources of Creative Power« have been transcribed. 24 of them went through an editing process in which Bluecher's German-English has been converted into proper English. Assumably, Alexander Bazelow did so in the 1970s in order to prepare the lectures for a publication, which unfortunately never has been realized. However, that is the reason why the Bard College stores three types of documents from this lecture series: the audio recordings, the first transcripts, and the edited transcripts of the 1970s. With this publication, we are primarily publishing the edited transcripts.

What did we do and how did we do that? First of all, we took photos of all transcripts (first ones and edited ones, we call them Original Scripts) at the Stevenson Library/Bard College. Given that the first transcripts are often painstaking to read and hard to understand for English native speakers, we decided to work mainly with the edited transcripts. What was, and still is, the problem with Bluecher's English? Bluecher spoke grammatically correct English but with a strong German accent, and most importantly, he often translated German idioms and sayings literally. For this reason, some of his sentences and phrases are incomprehensible to a readership that does not have a German background. Thanks to the edited transcripts, most of these »faults« have been corrected. However (sic!), we can't guarantee that no other mistakes found their way into the transcripts or even worse, that Bluecher's original thought got lost. Yet, we are convinced that reading the edited transcripts is much

³ The process of Arendt's efforts, the involvement of the students and the failure of the publication is documented in the Hannah Arendt Papers in the Library of Congress. Folder: Family Papers / Blucher, Heinrich – Writings – Publication of Blucher's manuscripts and correspondence (Box 7, Box 8).

more promising than trying to study the first transcripts. Nevertheless, some of the lectures have not survived in an edited version. Here, we have instead used the first transcripts from the 1950s, which were made on yellow paper. In these cases we have kept the yellow as the color of the pages. What else did we do?

In the first step, we improved the photos of the transcripts and converted them into PDF-documents. These are the documents called Original Scripts. In a second step, we reviewed these transcripts and made completely new ones out of them (called Edited Scripts). We corrected some minor mistakes, added sources and footnotes, and we put lexical links behind commonly unknown names, terms and philosophers Bluecher was referring to. Preferably, we relied on Wikipedia and Wikisource. We did that on purpose as we assume that Wiki currently guarantees the most long-lasting and fixed links, and it keeps the information constantly up to date. We also hope that all links will work long after the publication of these now called Edited Scripts. Moreover, these Edited Scripts can be used as OCR (optical character reader) documents.

Nevertheless, we did some other changes as well in these Edited Scripts: Bluecher performed his lectures theatrically. In contrast to common teachers, who use specific quotes and try to be as factual as possible, Bluecher held his lectures very differently, in quite a personal way so to say. One of these main characteristics is his very free use of quotes and thoughts taken from the thinkers he talked about. By doing so, he brought their thoughts onto the New School's classroom stage. How did he do that? First, he himself took the position of the thinker itself. He played Lao-tze or Heraclitus. He quoted them, and addressed his audience in a way he was convinced they would have done it. Secondly, he put himself into a dialogue. This means he used questions like »What should we do?«, »What can we do?«, »What is that supposed to mean?«, to engage in kind of an interrogative dialogue. Thirdly, he raised or dimmed his voice like a storyteller when retelling an adventure. Bluecher was no ordinary teacher of philosophy, he was a performer. For this reason, we had some problems separating real quotes from Bluecher's own versions of them, and converting Bluecher's theatrical performances into readable texts. Our solution was to put all the real quotes we could find into double quotation marks (« »). Bluecher's attempts to recite, to imitate a dialogue or to engage in a dialogue with the audience have been put into simple quotation marks (› ›). However, whenever we could come up with the original source we put it into a footnote. We hope that we could translate Bluecher's »art« of giving lectures into the text without causing unnecessary confusion and without destroying its originality.

During our research, we found two missing lectures which have been preserved only on the reel-to-reel tapes respectively on the cassette tapes marked with 16b – 18b. This goes for the lectures IX and X of the spring term 1954, which we are very pleased about as these lectures contain Bluecher's talks on Heraclitus and Solon which were announced in the syllabus of the New School Bulletin but have not been transcribed so far. We made completely new transcripts and added them to the Edited Scripts. The lecture series is now complete with 29 lectures which have been fully transcribed.

All this could not have been achieved without the help of the staff of Stevenson Library at Bard College. Therefore, we like to thank Helene Tieger and Betsy Cawley who both are

in charge of the Bluecher Archive. Without their supporting help, this project could not have been realized. Moreover, there are many other people out of different decades who made this possible. Ruth Schulz, Jack Blum, and Alexander Bazelow who were in charge of Bluecher's intellectual inheritance; George Rose who transferred the tapes to cassettes; and last but not least Jeff Katz who brought the first lectures online (www.bard.edu/bluecher) and made the first step to discover Bluecher anew. Many thanks go to Carsten Kinder who worked on the Original Scripts and Edited Scripts in endless nightshifts, Tom Quasthoff and Jakob Schober who helped with the English texts, and Felix Bielefeld who found the missing lectures and contributed considerably to publishing this lecture series at all.