



# The Courage of Truth (Michel Foucault: Lectures at the Collège de France)

*Michel Foucault*

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The course given by Michel Foucault from February to March 1984, under the title *The Courage of Truth*, was his last at the Collège de France. His death shortly after, on June 25th, tempts us to detect a philosophical testament in these lectures, especially in view of the prominence they give to the theme of death, notably through a reinterpretation of Socrates' last words—'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius'— which, with Georges Dumézil, Foucault understands as the expression of a profound gratitude towards philosophy for its cure of the only serious illness: that of false opinions and prejudices. These lectures continue and radicalize the analyses of those of the previous year. Foucault's 1983 lectures investigated the function of 'truth telling' in politics in order to establish courage and conviction as ethical conditions for democracy irreducible to the formal rules of consensus. With the Cynics, this manifestation of the truth no longer appears simply as a risky speaking out, but in the very substance of existence. In fact, Foucault offers an incisive study of ancient Cynicism as practical philosophy, athleticism of the truth, public provocation, and ascetic sovereignty. The scandal of the true life is constructed in opposition to Platonism and its world of transcendent intelligible Forms.

'There is no establishment of the truth without an essential position of otherness. The truth is never the same. There can be truth only in the form of the other world and the other life.'

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