

We must pose the question: what is this curing, this activity by which both Socrates and his disciples have been cured with the help of the god who must be thanked? There is no sense in asking, as some may perhaps be tempted to do, whether this operation of cure is a medical activity, or if it is already something like psychiatry, whether or not the Greeks, and Socrates, really thought that this kind of error might be seen as a mental illness. We cannot discover what is at issue in this kind of anachronistic *a posteriori*. It makes more sense to try to situate this operation of cure, to which Socrates alludes several times, in the field of practices in which it could figure for the Greeks in general and for Socrates in particular. And this general field of practices is precisely all that is called "epimeleia." Caring for someone, looking after a flock, taking care of one's family, or, as is often found with regard to physicians, caring for a patient, are all called "epimeleisthai." The curing that Socrates speaks about here is part of all those activities by which one cares for someone, takes care of him if he is ill, sees to his diet so that he does not fall ill, prescribes the food he must eat or the exercises he must perform, and it is also part of those activities by which one points out to him the actions he should perform and those he should avoid, by which one helps him to discover the true opinions he should follow and the false opinions he should guard against, it is that activity by which one nourishes him with true discourse. All of this belongs to the *epimeleisthai*. Or we may say again that there are some cases in which this great many-sided activity of *epimeleia* (of the care of oneself and others, of the care of souls) may take on the most urgent, intense, and necessary form. These are the cases in which precisely a false opinion is in danger of ruining a soul and making it ill. It is important to remember that the whole cycle of Socrates' death which I tried to evoke in the previous hour, this great cycle which begins with the *Apology*, continues with the *Crito*, and ends with the *Phaedo* is permeated by this theme of *epimeleia*.

I tried to show you how, in his *Apology*, Socrates defined his *parrhēsia*, his courageous truth-telling, as a truth-telling whose final objective and constant concern was to teach men to take care of themselves. Socrates took care of men, but not in the political form: he wants to take care of them so that they learn to take care of themselves. The whole of the *Apology* is therefore underpinned by this theme of *epimeleia* and care.